

Implementation of the HFA and Pacific Regional DRM Framework for

Action: Achievements and Challenges

SOPAC Intervention by Cristelle Pratt (SOPAC Director)

Item 3 - Progress towards achieving a substantial reduction in disaster losses:

global and regional perspectives

11.00am – 1.00pm, Tuesday 16th June 2009

Chair, Excellencies and Delegates to this the 2nd Global Forum for Disaster Reduction

SOPAC is indeed honoured by the invitation to attend this 2nd Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and as the Pacific regional intergovernmental organisation with the remit for coordinating disaster risk management we are equally honoured to be presenting the region's report on achievements and challenges in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action on behalf of the Pacific Region.

SOPAC is part of a delegation of more than 20 representatives from the Pacific Islands Region and this includes representatives of Pacific governments, civil society, regional intergovernmental and other partner organisations. This is a significant increase from 2007 when only two representatives participated from the Pacific. We therefore thank the UNISDR, AusAID and other partners for helping us to have this more meaningful representation to this years meeting. We look forward to being able to fully participate in the very interesting programme that is ahead of us and of course to capitalise on the opportunity that such gatherings allow in renewing and strengthening relationships and to forging new partnerships that will we hope be of mutual benefit.

I am pleased to report that in the intervening two years the Pacific has made some significant strides consistent with the global architecture for disaster risk reduction. The Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management is now established and its inaugural session was convened last month in Fiji. It provides the comprehensive forum necessary for exchange and sharing of experiences within the Pacific, in relation to policy and operational aspects of disaster risk reduction, disaster management and the ever important link to climate change adaptation. The Pacific Platform harmonises existing regional mechanisms for DRM and serves as the link between Pacific Island Countries and their partner organisations with the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. It comprises annual meetings of **Regional Disaster Managers** and also of the **Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network**; and biennial meetings for **Pacific CEOs of Finance and Planning and of Disaster Management**.

The CEOs meeting is held specifically to enhance the involvement and participation of key chief executives in Pacific governments in disaster risk management, as a cornerstone requirement and imperative for supporting sustainable national development.

In light of the need to ensure an improved whole-of-government, whole-of-country effort to address disaster risk reduction, SOPAC working with other partner organisations have advocated extensively for the involvement of the most senior levels within the various Public Service jurisdictions in the Pacific to ensure that risk considerations are given greater prominence in planning and budgeting systems within Government and at each level within the national economy.

Pacific countries recognise the importance of planning for and dealing with natural disasters and have developed several policy and strategy instruments at the regional level

to deal with this issue. The overarching policy framework for the region, approved by Pacific Leaders in 2005, is the *Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action 2005 – 2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* also known as the Madang Framework. Pacific Leaders reflect the need for improved disaster risk management practices and policies to enhance efforts for sustainable development as a key priority in their *Pacific Plan*, which is the overarching regional strategic development policy instrument also endorsed in 2005

With the support of regional and international donor and development partner organisations the Pacific has been able to chart its progress against the implementation of the HfA and the Madang Framework. A Pacific regional synthesis report of the achievements as well as challenges faced by the Pacific has been submitted to the UNISDR for tabling at this Global Platform meeting and I would like to take a few minutes to highlight some of these.

Achievements

In relation to HfA and correspondingly the Madang Framework the following are some key achievements.

Under **Priority Area 1 (to) Ensure that DRR is a national priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation** - the Pacific region has, since 2007, made some significant progress in relation to supporting the development and implementation of DRM National Action Plans. DRM NAPs have been developed in Vanuatu, the Marshall Islands, Samoa and the Cook Islands and efforts are underway to address their implementation. Funding support from AusAID and more recently from the European

Union under the ACP/EU Natural Disaster Facility provides resources to assist countries with their NAPs. Over the course of 2009 SOPAC and other regional partners such as the UNDP Pacific Centre will collaborate to develop NAPs for four other Pacific countries namely: Solomon Islands, Palau, Tonga and Fiji. To assist with this exercise of NAP development a set of guidelines for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster management (DM) were developed by UNDP PC, World Bank and SOPAC.

In addition to assisting member countries in the development of their National Action Plans, SOPAC is also assisting with the review of national DRM institutional arrangements and associated legislation. To date this has been completed for Vanuatu, the Marshall Islands and the Cook Islands with reviews still underway in Palau and Fiji.

Another significant achievement is the progress made toward the development of a web information portal called the **Pacific Disaster Net**. It provides an easily accessible and maintainable web-based database/portal providing a comprehensive overview of data, information and analysis related to all aspects of disaster risk management in the Pacific. The Pacific Disaster Net was formally launched in Suva, Fiji in September 2008 and is now live and on-line and I invite delegates to view it at the Pacific booth in the Global Platform marketplace.

Another information system comprising remote sensed imagery from satellites and marine multibeam surveys acquired under a large EU funded initiative which ended in 2008 has been established. It provides essential baselines for all forms of hydrodynamic and inundation modelling for sea-level rise incursion, storm wave and tsunami impacts and inundation; and most importantly provides an effective tool for visualizing the impacts of

natural hazards on coastal areas and is useful for development planning for high risk areas.

For hydrological hazards, the current Pacific Hydrological Cycle Observing System – Project seeks to attain a sustainable level of capacity in Pacific Island Countries to be able to assess and monitor the status and trend of Pacific countries' water resources, and to provide the water-related information and hazard warnings (such as flood and drought forecasts) needed to support sustainable development.

Under **Priority Area 2 (to) Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning systems - the** Pacific ACP countries have been assisted through the EU EDF 9 Project: Reducing the Vulnerability of Pacific ACP States through Integrated Planning and Management across three focal areas of hazards, aggregates and water resources. Among results have been the development of comprehensive hazard and risk management tools for the safeguarding of communities and targeted capacity building of disaster management officials and technicians in-country in GIS and remote sensing applications for more effective planning, management and decision making. *The use of such applications was aptly illustrated following the 02 April 2007 earthquake and tsunami in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands where analysis of pre-and post-event satellite imagery, coupled with ground-truthing has enabled tsunami run-up and landslide prone areas as well as tectonic zones to be identified.*

Implementation of the **Regional Early Warning Strategy** (REWS) which identifies a range of priority initiatives for early warning for the different hazards facing Pacific countries is being pursued through a number of mechanisms such as Tsunami Capacity Assessments funded by AusAID, and led by their Bureau of Meteorology, in partnership with SOPAC,

and Emergency Management Australia. Assessments over the two years have been conducted in nine of the 14 Pacific countries (*Tonga, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Nauru and Papua New Guinea*). The assessment of the capacity of individual nations to manage tsunami events seeks to guide targeted improvements in current systems and protocols within PICs in respect of receiving, communicating, preparing for and responding to tsunami warnings.

Other initiatives include the development of a Melanesian Volcanological Network (MVN) to address volcano risk in Vanuatu PNG and the Solomon Islands. It will be a sub-regional facility established to: support capacity development in volcanological monitoring; provide essential equipment to conduct monitoring during times of significant volcanological activity with a view to informing emergency planning and response and supporting education and public awareness raising.

As well a review of early warning services for extreme weather and climate events for the Pacific has been carried out to seek a strengthening of the current arrangements on the basis of a political directive from Pacific Leaders given the development implications of such events. In May SOPAC in collaboration with the WMO and SPREP coordinated and facilitated a Joint Pacific Regional Meeting of Directors of Meteorology and Disaster Managers in order to strengthen links for enhancing end-to-end early warning systems.

In relation to **Priority Area 3 (to) Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels** - SOPAC, as part of a partnership arrangement with *The Asia Foundation/Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance* (TAF/OFDA) supports the provision of six training courses at regional and national level for PICs. Training courses have been implemented at the sub regional level and at national

levels in 15 Pacific countries for the reporting period. Funding support concludes this year and we are hopeful that some extension of support to the Pacific will be considered by the *Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance* and other partners.

A number of cost-benefit analyses have been undertaken for the region. Two in the reporting period have focussed on economic assessments of flood warning systems in Samoa and Fiji in order to guide development policy on floodplains.

A project to analyse the relationship between natural disasters and poverty in the Pacific using Fiji as a case study has recently been completed and has been included as part of the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Reduction.

In relation to **Priority Area 4 (to) Reduce the underlying risk factors** - the World Bank in collaboration with SOPAC and relevant national stakeholder groups has undertaken the first part of a study to determine the feasibility of a Catastrophic Risk Pool for the Pacific. The aim of the study is to investigate options for affordable and effective sovereign catastrophe risk financing solutions to help Pacific islands states to cover their exposure to natural disasters. Linked to this initiative is an ADB-sponsored technical assistance project which will develop national risk databases in eight (8) Pacific countries and as well a regional risk database, which will also inform development planners and decision-makers.

A school retrofitting project is being implemented in 6 schools in Fiji with support from the UNCRD and is a pilot for the Pacific under the UNCRD *“Reducing Vulnerability of School Children to Earthquakes”* project for the Asia-Pacific region.

Through the World Bank GFDRR - Pacific Initiative, a pipeline of projects and activities related to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation has been identified and is undergoing further discussion. The Initiative has thus far involved a stock take of current and planned disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation projects and activities across the Pacific at regional and national level with design and implementation imminent.

In relation to **Priority Area 5 (to) Strengthen disaster preparedness for response** - support to strengthen disaster management capacities and planning arrangements with Pacific countries has been extended to the Cook Islands, Fiji, Palau and the Solomon Islands.

Another initiative involves support to the Pacific Islands Fire Services Association (PIFSA) wherein SOPAC provides funding to support training and capacity building to PIFSA members which are provided by AFAC members in Australia and New Zealand.

Other DRM partners involved in the strengthening of disaster management capacities include UNOCHA Pacific Office which coordinates inter-agency contingency-planning for humanitarian assistance in the region. UNOCHA has introduced a humanitarian cluster approach whereby all UN and partner agencies have agreed to collaborate more effectively to provide support to Pacific countries in term of preparedness for and response to major disasters. This approach which was launched in 2008 effectively provides the Pacific with the latest tools and practices to improve disaster management.

Under the EDF9 B-Envelope SOPAC is implementing a multi-country disaster risk reduction project which will see the construction of Emergency Operations Centres (EOC) and the installation of emergency communications systems in 8 countries.

And now Chair to the Challenges that we continue to face in the Pacific in terms of disaster risk management. They are numerous and cannot be fully described in this brief intervention. However, some of the key challenges include the need to link *Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation*. This requires continued high-level political advocacy and leadership, to seek genuine and ongoing political commitment for disaster risk management and climate change adaptation as key sustainable development imperatives at international, regional and national levels.

There is a particular need to elevate efforts to mainstreaming at national and also at sectoral level within our member states. In this connection there is a need to strengthen the collaborative integration of DRM and CCA at the regional and national levels and ensure coordinated development and implementation of the DRM NAPS and Climate Change NAPAS. Mindful of the issues of absorptive capacity of Pacific countries there is a need to consolidate approaches to reflect demand-side realities and not supply-side capacities.

At a global level we feel that some serious consideration is required by the UNISDR and other global partners to harmonise their efforts in relation to DRR and CCA. It is acknowledged that there are overlaps between the two initiatives; CCA in our view is a 'subset' of DRR in that it helps to address issues of vulnerability and risk in relation to the extremes of climate/hydro-meteorological hazards. DRR in its fuller sense of course covers both climate/hydro-met and as well geo hazards.

Community Level DRM - There is a need to increase community awareness and preparedness programmes, and promote engagement and ownership of ground-level

initiatives in DRM and CCA. Involving the community in DRM and CCA is crucial to enhancing resilience particularly in small island countries in the Pacific.

Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building within Key Agencies - There is a need to continue to support institutional strengthening of DRM and CCA agencies and encourage robust and evidence-based governance to facilitate the implementation of DRM and CCA programmes for increased resilience and sustainable development.

In addition the training and capacity development in disaster risk management remains an important concern for national disaster agencies and for other key actors at national level within Pacific countries. There is a need to explore opportunities to maintain the current suite of training and to identify additional training opportunities that contribute to the strengthening of key agencies such as meteorology and hydrology services, agriculture, health, and other stakeholders including NGOs and community groups.

In respect of Partnerships toward DRM, there is a need to better consolidate efforts. In this regard we are to broaden the Pacific DRM Partnership Network, a key element of DRM support to Pacific countries, to include relevant stakeholders, such as the private sector, utilities and services that are essential stakeholders. In this regard we in the Pacific welcome expressions of interest from partner organisations within this forum to come and work with us to deliver services to our countries and territories. We also look forward to improve coordination and collaboration in the interests of cost effectiveness and most importantly the ability of the Pacific countries to absorb and capitalise on the multitude of DRM and CCA opportunities that now exist. A significant step is the proposed establishment of formal links with Caribbean countries and organisations.

Accurate and timely Baseline Data and Information is critical for meaningful decisions in terms of a more secure future and therefore the acquisition of these remains a high priority as well as a challenge in respect of resourcing. For the future we need the involvement of those partners and donors that can provide disaster risk information to assist us in our DRM and CCA efforts.

Scientific and Technical Assessments - In relation to the provision of baseline data and information there is a need for expanding the knowledge base regarding DRM and climate change in the Pacific through hazard, vulnerability and risk assessments, post-disaster physical, socio-economic, and environmental damage and loss assessments across all sectors such as agriculture and tourism and lifeline services such as water, to inform decision making and build resilience. In this connection we also need to incorporate best practices and lessons learned from traditional DRM practices with applied scientific and technical methodologies and approaches.

We continue to be challenged by the physical remoteness of many of our communities in terms of developing and supporting end-to-end multi hazard **early warning systems** appropriate and sustainable within our context. In this regard we must invest in greater community preparedness, continue support for relevant technical agencies such as meteorological and hydrological services and identify new and innovative approaches through dialogue and exchanges with our partners.

In terms of improved disaster response capacity we acknowledge the efforts of our international partners like UNOCHA, the IFRC and national Red Cross societies and The Asia Foundation working with SOPAC and others to support governments to develop or strengthen national arrangements, laws and policies for enhanced preparedness for

national and international disaster response. There however is still a lot that we have yet to do and so must continue to labour towards improved and strengthened systems and processes.

We do realise the immensity of the challenge that lies before us. This has certainly been exacerbated by the current global economic crisis and so we must think and act smarter. While some results have been achieved we continue to look for new and interesting opportunities. We continue to look for new friends and partners. In this regard we are encouraged by an opportunity to engage in South-South Cooperation with partners and countries in the Caribbean region.

We have been ably guided in our efforts to ensure safer and resilient communities by the wisdom of the HfA and our Madang Framework and other policies. We however do feel that the mid term review of the HFA provides an opportunity to ensure closer links with the climate change adaptation agenda at a global level and encourage all parties to work towards this end.

Let us not continue to keep separate and make more unnecessarily complex the challenge of being safe and secure in our most vulnerable regions. We of the Pacific commend to this forum that as a starting point a greater effort be made to harmonise the global DRR and CCA agendas and to align the related mechanisms accordingly. Let us make it easier to be safer.

Thank you Chair