

# Integrating participatory disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the Pacific: Case studies from Fiji and Samoa



Australian Government  
Aid Program



## Project Outline



Participatory disaster risk reduction (DRR) is becoming an increasingly integral approach amongst disaster management actors (government and civil society) in the Pacific as it has the potential to make projects more sustainable, empowering and effective. A number of challenges to the effective achievement of participatory disaster management activities, such as limited conceptual understanding of 'participation', issues of trust between government and communities, and inconsistencies between policy and practice have been identified (Méheux, 2007). The need to integrate climate change adaptation (CCA) into DRR (UN/ISDR, 2008), in addition to the multiplicity of actors engaged in these activities, and the traditionally top-down approach to climate change adaptation (Venton and La Trobe, 2008) present further layers of complexity to the challenge of effective community participation. Despite this there is limited critical analysis of the practice of both participatory disaster management and participatory/community based climate change adaptation in the Pacific (and indeed globally).



### *Aims and objectives*

To address the existing gaps this research aims to critically review existing relationships and initiatives within and between participatory DRR and CCA in the Pacific. It also aims to further the understanding of the relationship between participants (institutions, community groups, individuals) engaged in DRR and CCA at a community level. This process will also highlight the challenges facing the integration of DRR and CCA and propose a strategy to address these challenges, and identify examples of best practice to support the development of guidelines and recommendations for integrated participatory DRR and CCA in the Pacific. Specifically, it will answer the following:



1. Who is engaged in community based DRR and/or CCA in the Pacific; what do they do and how are they connected?
2. What are the challenges to integrating participatory DRR and CCA in the Pacific?
3. What are the characteristics of best practice in integrated community based DRR and CCA in the Pacific?
4. How can this information be used to enhance community resilience in the Pacific?

Moreover, as a major donor in the Pacific, AusAID seeks to ensure aid is spent in the most effective way. This project will provide recommendations to improve aid and development effectiveness in the Pacific for DRR and CCA.

## ***Project Components***

***Step 1:*** Mapping DRR/CCA actors and initiatives. A desktop remote mapping exercise will be conducted to identify the DRR and/or CCA actors and initiatives in the case study countries, highlighting the relationships/connections between actors and initiatives.

### ***Step 2:*** Case studies of community-based DRR/CCA

- i) **Identification of case study initiatives:** The mapping exercise conducted in Step 1 will be used to identify two or three participatory DRR and CCA initiatives that will be the subject of in-depth case studies.
- ii) **Data collection: interviews and focus groups.** A range of techniques will be utilized, including focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and observation. Data collection will focus on identifying the relationships between actors in the initiative, the challenges encountered during the initiative and aspects of the initiative that were particularly successful.
- iii) **Data validation:** findings will be presented to participants to provide an opportunity for validation.



DRR and CCA partners at the inaugural meeting of the Inter-agency contingency planning, Fiji, July 2008



***Step 3:*** Data Analysis: Case study data will be compiled and analysed. Analysis will involve the identification of common characteristics shared by case studies, traits of successful initiatives, challenges to successful integration.

***Step 4:*** Develop guidelines for integration: Based upon the data analysis, guidelines for integration will be developed. These will draw upon the characteristics of best practice identified in Step 3

and will represent a series of recommendations to enhance integrated community based DRR and CCA planning and decision making.

***Step 5:*** Dissemination (Development of training and education package): The guidelines will be available in a booklet form and electronic versions will be made available through outlets such as the Pacific Disaster Net website in addition to a proactive method of dissemination of guidelines amongst relevant Pacific partners and UNSW Hazards Group website.



## ***Project Outcomes***

This project will be undertaken over a 12 month period from April 2009 and will result in a better practical and conceptual understanding of the relationships and connections between community based DRR and CCA in the Pacific. The improved knowledge base will enable the development of guidelines and recommendations for integrated community based DRR and CCA in the Pacific to enhance planning and decision making. Knowledge will be transferred to local actors through a training and education package including simple and accessible 'bite-size' (~1 hour) modules.

### References:

- Méheux, K. (2007) An Evaluation of Participatory Damage Assessment Policy and Practice in Fiji. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Physical Geography, Macquarie University, Sydney.  
UN/ISDR (2008) Disaster Risk and Climate Change, ISDR Secretariat, Geneva.  
Venton, P. & La Trobe, S. (2008) Linking climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, Tearfund and the Institute of Development Studies, London.

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