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Pacific *insight*

“INTEGRATING PARTICIPATORY DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN THE PACIFIC”

Pacific Insight is the newsletter for the AusAID funded project on community based disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) in the Pacific. Here we share research findings and update our partners on recent project activities, including ...

Update from the “Earth Systems Governance” conference in Amsterdam December 2009



On the 2nd—4th December 2009, a conference was held in Amsterdam on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change. The specific topic for this conference was “Earth System Governance”, and it formed part of a series of annual conferences that focus on aspects of human’s impact on the environment.

The conference had over 300 participants. Over 250 papers were showcased, and we were pleased to be accepted to present a paper with a Pacific perspective in the session titled “Adaptiveness: Managing Climate Risks and Disasters”. Feedback was positive and included comments that people appreciated the inclusion real examples of action on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, rather than theory alone. For this we have you—our partners in the Pacific—to thank. It is you who work to ensure that

Pacific people are as prepared as possible for the implications of climate change and disasters.

The conference emphasized the importance of understanding governance issues—not only for DRR and CCA, but for all environmental management issues. The opening plenary session noted that we need “an ethical framework for global stewardship”, a statement which comes from the Amsterdam Declaration on Global Change (see [here](#) for details). Parallels can be seen in this statement with regard to climate change in the Pacific.

Another useful point raised was the need to adapt governance to local situations and context, as mentioned in our own paper, which can be found [here](#).

What is governance and specifically, Earth System Governance?



Decision Making: Namuka Village Simulation Exercise, Fiji, July 2009

Who exercises authority? Who makes important decisions? What formal and informal groups, organisations, networks and institutions are involved in decision making? These questions are intrinsically related to governance. Earth system governance is defined as:

“the interrelated and increasingly integrated system of formal and informal rules, rule-making systems, and actor-networks at all levels of human society (from local to global) that are set up to steer societies towards preventing, mitigating, and adapting to global and local environmental change...” See <http://www.earthsystemgovernance.org/> for details.

Over the coming issues we will continue to focus on the theme of governance, particularly environmental governance as it has significance for DRR and CCA in the Pacific.



COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Assessing a community's vulnerability to disaster risk and climate change has become common practice. It exposes the specific needs and capacity of the community from an economic, cultural, environmental and social perspective.

BUT IS IT THE BEST APPROACH?

It has been argued that it may be better to understand the *processes and dynamics* of exposure and responses (see Thomalla et al., 2006). Furthermore, there is little formal objective evaluation of these techniques.

We list existing vulnerability tools below. What do you think about community vulnerability assessments? We are keen to hear your thoughts. Also please let us know if we missed any!

- **Community Risk Assessment (CRA) Tool Kit** : Provention Consortium
- **Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA)**: International Federation of the Red Cross Societies
- **Community Based Risk Screening Tool – Adaptation and Livelihoods (CRiSTAL)**: International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), World Conservation Union–IUCN
- **Climate change and Environmental Degradation risk assessment (CEDRA)**: TearFund
- **Opportunities & Risks of Climate Change & Disasters (ORCHID)**: Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
- **Capacity and Vulnerability Assessment (CVA)**: Citizenry-Based & Development-Oriented Disaster Response (CDRN)
- **Disaster Risk Assessment**: UN-HABITAT
- **Community Wide Vulnerability and capacity assessment (CVCA)**: Emergency Preparedness Canada
- **Gendered Community Risk Assessment**: International Hurricane Centre
- **Hazard and Vulnerability Assessment (HVA)** : Part of NOAA's toolkit
- **Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessment (HVRA)** : British Columbia, Provincial Emergency Program
- **Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (HVCA)**: Citizens Disaster Response Network (CDRN), Philippines
- **Participatory, Vulnerability & Capacity Assessment (PVCA)**: PROYAS
- **Participatory Disaster Risk Assessment**: Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre
- **Participatory Vulnerability Analysis (PVA)**: ActionAid
- **Resilience and Vulnerability Assessment (RVA)**: Emergency Management Australia (EMA)
- **Community Vulnerability and Adaptation (CV&A)** : SPREP, part of CBDAMPIC Project
- **Climate Witness**: WWF
- **Participatory Vulnerability Assessment (PVA)**: WWF
- **Community Owned Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (COVACA)**: World Vision
- **Risk And Capacity Assessment Tool**: World Vision
- **Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (RVA) Tools** : NOAA Coastal Services Centre
- **Damage, Needs and Capacity Assessment**: Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre

Next issue...

Our next issue will continue with the theme of governance and introduce some terms which assist in analyzing the current challenges to integrating DRR and CCA in a Pacific context.

As usual, feedback is encouraged! Feel free to contact us on the details below.



Red Cross volunteers performing VCA. Photo courtesy of Red Cross

WHAT IS VULNERABILITY?

Vulnerability is a term which has several meanings and definitions. Even the IPCC use inconsistent meanings! For our purposes, we use the following definition:

“the characteristics of a person or group and their situation that influence their capacity to cope with, resist, and recover from the impact of a natural hazard”.

(Wisner et al., 2004:11)

Vulnerability is closely linked to sensitivity, exposure, and the ability to respond (resilience, see below).

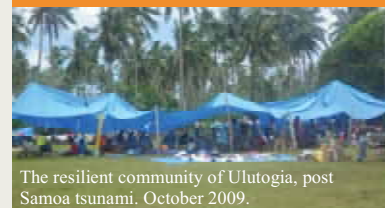


WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Put simply, resilience refers to the ability to respond. The Stockholm Resilience Centre defines resilience as:

“the capacity to deal with change and continue to develop”. They break resilience into two groups: **Ecosystem resilience** measures how much disturbance an ecosystem can cope with before shifting to a different state.

Social resilience refers to the ability of humans to withstand and recover from stresses such as environmental change or economic or political upheaval. See [here](#) for details.



The resilient community of Ulutogia, post Samoa tsunami. October 2009.

See our website for more details: www.nhrl.unsw.edu.au/research/projectdrcca.html



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