

Nadi Meeting Discusses Opportunities to Build Disaster Risk Management Capacity in the Pacific

Written by Administrator

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The 19th Annual Meeting of the Heads of National Disaster Management Offices (NDMOs) of Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) is being held from July 01-3 at the Tanoa International Hotel in Nadi, Fiji.

Moses Sikivou, Deputy Director of the SPC's Disaster Reduction Programme, says the meeting will provide Regional Disaster Managers with the opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities for institutional strengthening and capacity building.

Mr Sikivou says a main objectives of the meeting is to provide Regional Disaster Managers with an increased understanding of the Disaster Risk Management services and products available to them from SPC and other partner organisations

"The meeting also allows SPC, as the regional body mandated to coordinate Disaster Risk Management capacity building, the opportunity to learn from participants and to focus its work programme to better meet the needs of the group," he says.

This meeting is also supporting preparation for the 2013 Joint Meeting of the Pacific Platform for DRM and Pacific Climate Change Roundtable from July 08-11, also in Nadi.

Mr Sikivou says the Disaster Reduction Programme will also continue to play a critical role in supporting member countries to integrate Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change into all relevant regional and national planning and policy measures. He says that SPC's commitment to integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk management efforts will

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help Pacific Island countries to improve the way they identify and manage a range of risks that their communities are exposed to.

“At community level, there is little practical difference between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction both aim to reduce the vulnerability of communities and contribute to sustainable development,” he says.

Charles Carlson, Director of Emergency Management in the Cook Islands, says there has been a big shift in the region towards reducing risks before a disaster actually happens.

“For the Cook Islands we are looking at developing a joint legislation for climate change and disaster risk management. I think it’s a better approach because you’re actually sharing resources rather than climate change and disaster risk management doing their own thing. So, if we can bring these two together, we can actually share resource and probably be more effective at the same time too,” he says.

“SPC has been the backbone in developing disaster risk management within the region. It provides us with a wide range of services from dealing with the governance and the legislation through to all the practical things needed to minimize disaster risks.

“When we looked at developing a disaster emergency trust fund after Cyclone Evan we didn’t have a template so we basically had to start from scratch, again with the support of SPC. It took us a whole year but the good thing is we got our trust fund established, the first in the Pacific,” he says.

Greg Grimsich, from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), believes more work is needed to ensure that capacity building efforts include both preparedness and emergency response.

“The work SPC has done over the past decades has had a tremendous impact in increasing capacity for governments requiring external assistance from organisations like UNOCHA.

Mr Grimsich believes SPC’s capacity development work to improve preparedness in Pacific Island Countries would benefit from closer cooperation with partners like UNOCHA to assess how these training tools and services are being used in emergency response situations.

“Increasingly it would be really encouraging to see that SPC capacity be used also in disaster response. I think it would also complement the trainings are being done, how they are working, how they aren’t working and where they need to improve,” he says.

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