

Snapshots

DISASTER REDUCTION PROGRAMME

Snapshot 66

February 2011



The Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (SOPAC) through the Disaster Reduction Programme is committed to working with officials and communities around the Pacific to strengthen the ability of countries to protect people as much as possible from the impact of natural and manmade disasters

From the Managers Desk



Mosese Sikivou

Bula and welcome to the February edition of Snapshots. There's quite a hive of activity within the Disaster Reduction Programme and we're happy to be able to share with you some of the successes of our Pacific island countries in disaster risk management.

Many of the staff did not have a moment to waste this past month and a number have been travelling around the region addressing a country priorities. You'll hear about some of them in this issue.

We are going to press with this issue shortly following the major devastating earthquake in Christchurch New Zealand where a number of lives have unfortunately been lost. We remember the families of those who lost loved ones in our prayers and also our untiring colleagues in the New Zealand Ministry of Civil Defense and Emergency Management, and all emergency workers that have converged on Christchurch to assist in the rescue and recovery effort.

We also extend our best wishes to colleagues in the Vanuatu NDMO and other agencies in Vanuatu who have had to deal with relief efforts linked to 2 recent cyclones. It has kept them busy but they've still had time to support the on-going effort on a second phase of implementation for their DRM NAP which is currently underway. You'll read more about this later.

Enjoy!

Mosese Sikivou

IN THIS ISSUE

- Establishment of a DRM Fund in the Cook Islands
- Vanuatu National Action Plan Implementation Programming for 2011 - 2013
- National Stakeholder Workshop to review Samoa's National Disaster Management Plan
- SPC and New Caledonia Sign Pacific OCT Agreements
- New Vehicle Donated For Hydrogeological Field Work
- Kosrae State's new Emergency Operation Centre
- Disaster Risk Management Training for Local Municipal Government officials from Fiji's Central/Eastern Divisions
- Upcoming Events

Establishment of a DRM Fund in the Cook Islands

A new Disaster Funding Policy drafted by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), in collaboration with Emergency Management Cook Islands (EMCI) and Ministry of Finance & Economic Management (MFEM) was presented to National Disaster Risk Management Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, Henry Puna on 20th January 2011. Included in the new Policy is a recommendation that 2% of the national budget be set aside for an Emergency Fund during a disaster in the Cook Islands.

The Prime Minister requested that MFEM look at ways where the Cook Islands can become self reliant, generating new income streams to fund a pool specifically for Disaster Management purposes e.g. response and recovery. It is hoped that this will improve national response times as currently the Cook Islands, like many other Pacific Island Countries, is heavily reliant on donors.

Although the establishment of a DRM fund is fully supported in principle, the reality is that there are other pressing priorities (infrastructure, education, health, water and sanitation, etc) competing for the same pool of government funding. Towards this end, the Prime Minister, as Minister for EMCI, requested the possibility of exploring various options of generating its own fund from, for example, taxing petrol a certain portion which would then go towards the Emergency Fund.

The EMCI requested the Applied Geoscience and Technology Division's (SOPAC) support to help draft a feasibility assessment for a variety of options available to the Government of the Cook Islands to establish an Emergency Fund. The main challenge is to develop a concept note and detail the various options that can realistically create an Emergency Fund that is both sustainable and fulfils its primary objective. The options paper produced will be presented to the Prime Minister during the first half of March.



Vanuatu National Action Plan Implementation Programming for 2011 - 2013

In February 2011 members of the Policy and Planning team at the Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (SOPAC) undertook a mission to Vanuatu to finalise the implementation programme for the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Disaster Management (DM) NAP for the period 2011 – 2013. A draft implementation program for the NAP had been developed following a series of meetings and workshops conducted in December 2010 involving officials of the Ministry of Finance & Economic Management (MFEM), Reserve Bank of Vanuatu (RBV) and NAP Task Force.

During the workshops conducted in December 2010 SOPAC delivered a presentation on the economic impact of disasters to help stimulate exchanges between Vanuatu stakeholders in terms of specific actions to be implemented to improve the mainstreaming of disaster considerations into development planning and budgeting processes at national, sectoral and local or community level. Stakeholders subsequently developed a range of strategies and actions along these lines. The February 2011 mission built on the work developed in December 2010 and a draft implementation programme for the NAP evolved as a result.



Participants at the Mini Workshop in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

During the February mission a number of innovative ideas have emerged to support disaster risk mainstreaming within the Vanuatu Government system. For example, suggestions were made as to how the economic impact of disasters could be included some of the RBV's key publications. In particular, the inclusion of disaster related questions in the Business Sentiment Survey and the Market Survey. The Director of Research & Statistics of the RBV, has provided his full support and SOPAC is to work closely with the RBV on the surveys.

The Acting Director General of MFEM, Benjamin Shing, expressed his ongoing support for the mainstreaming work taking place in Vanuatu. Mr. Shing reiterated his willingness to act as a high level advocate/champion for DRR to appear more prominently at the sectoral policy level within the Vanuatu Government system and also with national Finance/Planning agencies in other Pacific island countries.

An important outcome of the mission is the endorsement from the Climate Change focal point and the Director of the Vanuatu Meteorological and Geohazards Department for the integration of the implementation programmes for the DRR & DM NAP with those for both the Vanuatu National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) and the Climate Change Policy. The integration of the major national DRM and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) policies and plans will ensure a more coherent and coordinated approach to dealing with issues of natural hazard risk within Vanuatu. Such an approach resonates well with similar initiatives being undertaken by other countries in the Pacific such as Tonga, the Cook Islands, Fiji and the Federated States of Micronesia, and is a reflection of a recent global and regional emphasis. SOPAC will continue to support Vanuatu in its efforts to integrate its DRM and CCA agenda and is now waiting on the key Vanuatu agencies to formally endorse the proposed implementation programme.

National Stakeholder Workshop to review Samoa's National Disaster Management Plan

The Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment in its capacity as the Chairman of the Disaster Advisory Committee invited the Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (SOPAC) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to participate in the national stakeholder workshop to review the National Disaster Management Plan of Samoa. The review progress was broken down into a series of stakeholder consultations to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are consulted and that their views are considered and addressed.

The national stakeholder workshop was a consultation to develop a revised implementation plan to realize the revised National Disaster Management Plan. At the same time the workshop discussed the gaps and challenges in implementing disaster risk management programmes and activities at national and village level in Samoa.

Further the purpose of the review is to determine the progress of the implementation of disaster risk management in the Samoa and associated plans and regulations. The results will inform the implementation of the revised National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) and provide inputs into the mid term review of the Pacific DRR and DM Framework for Action being undertaken by UNISDR and SOPAC at the regional level in the course of 2010/2011.

Some of the sector-focused issues are presented below:

Sector	Issues
Public Policy	Lack of Awareness on Disaster Management Act and NDMP, Response Coordination, Corporate Plans and Implementations Plans, Staff Capacity to implement DM Acts and plans,
Risk Financing	Evacuation Plans don't consider needs of disabled and other vulnerable people- respective procedures of how to transport/ evacuate vulnerable people needs to be in place, Data Repository (data needs to be located in a safe location during a disaster), Financial& Insurance Institutions Assistance, Government/ Central Bank of Samoa to subsidize commercial banks in times of disaster, Member of the Bankers Association to become member of DAC
Community Development	Coordination, DRM Awareness, too many different types of assessments, there is a need for clear process and channel of funding from overseas agencies and donors,
Tourism	Lack of awareness on DRM, Lack of Response Plans for the Tourism Sector, continued training for Tourism sector on DRM
Infrastructure	Transport systems are usually badly affected by Disasters as they are in vulnerable locations, Building codes are not implemented, how can American Samoa assist in case of a disaster (e.g. usage of their airport etc.)
Education	No multi-hazard Emergency Response Plans in most of the school, Safety of educational infrastructure, Schools are mostly used as Evacuation Site, Lack of DRM programmes and courses in formal education, insufficient research in DRM (e.g. on Food Security etc.), Need to integrate drills into school programme, Lack of Emergency Supplies in Evacuation centers,
Agriculture	Crop damage, safety of fishermen (search and rescue) in Disasters, loss of fish stock, lack of integration of DRM in Land use plans and environmental assessments, settlement pressure due to rural-urban movement

Health	Lack of Sector wide Emergency Response Plans, Health implications due to Climate Change, need for trauma counseling, service continuity during disasters, CBDRM projects need to include health component, need for disaster/ climate change proof housing in villages
Communication	Need to improve SMS-mass broadcasting, back up power, exposure of Communication infrastructure during disaster, Need for improved Emergency Communications System and equipment, Land rights are an issue when it comes to the installment of equipment in villages, NEOC needs a system back up, lack of preparation at village level to use SMS, need for standardized Emergency number

The availability of data (baseline data) was identified as an overall crucial issue in nor and as well disaster times. Baseline data on local resources, location of vulnerable people etc. would be essential particularly in disaster times as well

The finalised workshop report as well as the revised implementation plan will shortly be submitted to UNISDR and SOPAC.



Participants at the National Stakeholder Workshop in Apia, Samoa.*



Filomena Nelson (Head of Samoa NDMO) going through the priorities for action at the Workshop.*

* Photo credits: Laura Niskanen (niskanen@un.org)

SPC and New Caledonia Sign Pacific OCT Agreements

The Government of New Caledonia and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community have signed three agreements on Wednesday 16th February, 2011, to fund interventions to reduce public health risks resulting from contaminated drinking water, inadequate sanitation and drought.

In welcoming this signature, SPC Deputy Director-General Richard Mann noted the ‘importance of these agreements to the ongoing development of the country’ and their focus on ‘addressing priorities set by New Caledonia.’

The agreements worth € 1.55 million in total will support New Caledonia in the areas of water safety planning, sanitation, and integrated water resource management. These initiatives fall under a larger regional project aimed at reducing disaster risk in Pacific Overseas Countries and Territories thereby benefiting New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna and Pitcairn Islands.

The project is managed by the Applied Geoscience and Technology Division of SPC (SOPAC) and funded by European Union Development funds. Following SOPAC’s integration into SPC in January 2011, “all SOPAC services are now accessible to New Caledonia on the same terms as they are to other SPC members,” Mr. Mann said.

The New Caledonia President Philippe Gomès and government ministers noted the unanimous support from municipalities in New Caledonia to enhance the safety of drinking water and bridge the sanitation gap which puts the population and the lagoon (a UNESCO world-heritage site) at risk. The second Vice-President of Northern Province Jean-Pierre Djiawé pointed that ‘fresh water is a finite resource’ hence ‘the necessity to identify, manage and protect it in the face of strong demographic growth and rapid industrial development in the Vok-Koné-Pouembout area.’



New Vehicle Donated For Hydrogeological Field Work

A brand new red Toyota Hilux 4WD has been donated to the Tongan Government's Geology Services Unit, Ministry of Lands, Survey and Natural Resources, by the Disaster Risk Reduction Project (B-Envelope Project). The project is being implemented by the Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (SOPAC), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and funded by the European Union.

The vehicle is specifically for the purpose of conducting hydrogeological field trips, which the Geology Unit do frequently to monitor the Kingdom's underground water resources.

The project manager, George Beck, of SOPAC says "the project is working with the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Natural Resources to strengthen their capacity to monitor water quality of the freshwater lens at the Matakī'eua well field and other boreholes on Tongatapu. The supply of a Toyota Double Cabin Hilux to MLSNR will assist the Geological Services Unit to undertake regular monitoring of the boreholes."

Regularly monitoring of the Kingdom's underground water resources is very important as it is the primary water source for many Tongans. With increased demand, due to development, and more infrequent rainfall due to climate change, understanding and managing the underground water resources is vital for Tonga's future.

George Beck adds "We appreciate the opportunity in working with the Government of Tonga to strengthen management of water through this project."



Dr. Sione Nailasikau Halatuituia, CEO for Lands, Survey & Natural Resources (left) receiving the new vehicle.



Kosrae State's new Emergency Operation Centre

Kosrae State will receive a new Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) outfitted with early warning communication equipment. This is made possible through funding from the Disaster Risk Reduction Project (B-Envelope Project) implemented by the Applied Geoscience and Technical Division (SOPAC) and funded by the European Union.

Renovation on the building, adjacent to the Governor's Office commenced in February 2011. The respective work is being undertaken by Semo-Micronesia Construction Inc. at a cost of US\$51,967.00. Company Director, In-Ho Jung stated that although there was some delay in clearing the construction site he was confident of completing the renovation around April 2011.

The new EOC will provide Kosrae State with a dedicated operational centre to coordinate responses in the event of a disaster. Being strategically located near the Office of the President will be an added advantage for quick decision making and efficient coordination. The EOC will accommodate communication equipment and office space which can be transformed into an operational centre to coordinate responses to hazards.

The Project Manager, Mr. George Beck, was quite pleased that work has started following the initial planning stages. He added that the project will also be procuring communication equipment for Kosrae State to strengthen their early warning network. This is important for communities such as Walung that are located on the other side of the island that is not accessible by road and difficult to communicate with due to the terrain.

The project will be investing Euro 1.4 million to upgrade infrastructure and strengthen early warning systems in the Federated States of Micronesia.



Channel cutting at the new EOC, Kosrae.



The new Kosrae State EOC under construction.

Disaster Risk Management Training for Local Municipal Government officials from Fiji's Central/Eastern Divisions

The SOPAC-based Pacific Disaster Risk Management (Training) Program (PDRMP) in collaboration with the Fiji NDMO delivered for the first time training for officers from city and town councils in the Central and Eastern divisions. The Introduction to Disaster Management (IDM) course was delivered for officers from the Suva City Council, Lami Town Council, Nasinu Town Council, Nausori Town Council, and the Levuka Town Council. Also participating were officers from the Ministry of Local Government, Town & Country Planning, Department of Environment, the Nausori Chamber of Commerce, and NDMO staff.

The participants expressed much appreciation as the course provided them an opportunity to work through the following issues:

- Identifying the hazards their municipality are vulnerable to;
- Determining the level of vulnerability and risks for each of the hazards that could impact their municipality;
- Mainstreaming disaster risk management into their planning and budget sessions;
- Establishing disaster risk management committees with a view to including representation from the private sector, NGOs, as well as their ratepayers;
- Formulating disaster response plans.

The Fiji NDMO has plans for 3 more similar trainings this year to cover city and town councils in the Western and Northern divisions of Fiji.



Group photo at the Disaster Risk Management Training for Local Municipal Government officials, Fiji.

Upcoming Events

- March 6th – 25th: Bathymetric and topographic survey, Tonga.
- March 7th – 11th: Initial consultations on CC/DRM NAP for Niue.
- March 8th – 17th: DRM arrangements review, Kiribati.
- March 14th: Video Production on B-Envelope activities in Tonga.
- March 14th – 18th: Pacific Climate Change Round Table, Niue.
- March 14th – 25th: Final Morobe Action Plan engagement to complete the Action Plan, PNG.
- March 21st – 22nd: Initial Damage Assessment Training for Roko Tuis, Fiji.
- March 22nd – 25th: Economic Impact of Disaster Training Course, Vanuatu.
- March 23rd: Meeting of the Fiji Disaster Management Training Advisory Committee, Fiji.
- April 4th – 8th: Begin of Review of PNG Disaster Management Act, Papua New Guinea.



Postal Address: Private Mail Bag, GPO, Suva, Fiji Islands
Street Address: Mead Road, Nabua, Fiji Islands
Tel: +679 338 1377 Fax: +679 337 0040
E-mail: s.zoll@sopac.org
Web site: www.sopac.org