

Snapshots

DISASTER REDUCTION PROGRAMME

Snapshot 67

March 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

Another month and unfortunately another major devastating event. We must all take a moment to remember those whose lives have been changed forever by the earthquake and tsunami that ravaged North East of Japan earlier this month. The tragedy is quite immense and each day we hear and see stories that remind us of why we work in this area of disaster risk management.

In the region there have been a number of interesting developments as this issue of Snapshots will portray. In Papua New Guinea we're into the home stretch in relation to a DRM Action Plan for Morobe Province. The work on this started last year and Waisale Naqiolevu, our man on the ground has an interesting piece on this.

Also in this issue Niue is the latest Pacific island country to demonstrate a desire to integrate their DRM and Climate Change Adaptation initiatives into a single National Action Plan. Next up for DRP is Nauru.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue.

Mosese Sikivou

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SPC and French Polynesia sign agreements to reduce natural disaster risk

Another milestone was achieved this month by the project “Reducing Disaster Risk in Pacific Overseas Countries & Territories.” After signing agreements with New Caledonia last month – aimed at reducing the country’s exposure to public health risks, the project will now extend support to French Polynesia.

Under two new agreements, French Polynesia will receive technical expertise and funding from SPC’s Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (SOPAC) to mitigate the risk of natural disasters facing the country.

The agreements worth € 1.085 million in total will support French Polynesia to reduce two types of risks. The Marquesas archipelago is highly exposed to tsunamis, yet its alert system is deficient, with half of its sirens not working. In the Tuamotu archipelago, cyclonic waves threaten the safety of the population and the security of its infrastructure. Both initiatives will seek to reinforce the safety of populations: in the Marquesas by repairing sirens and developing local capacity to maintain them in the future; in the Tuamotus by identifying precise zones at risk and refining building codes.

In a ceremony bringing together the Government of French Polynesia, the French High Commission, the European Union and SPC, President Gaston Tong Sang praised ‘the perfect symbiosis’ between all parties. He remarked that ‘when we all pull in the same direction, we can achieve high results to the benefit of our people, particularly the most vulnerable.’ SPC Deputy Director-General Richard Mann noted the ‘importance of these agreements for the safety of populations exposed to natural disaster risk’ and their focus on ‘addressing priorities set by French Polynesia.’ French High Commissioner Richard Didier emphasised the ‘concrete, tangible and on-the-ground’ results to be achieved by the partnership.

Only a few hours after the signing ceremony, French Polynesia activated its tsunami alert system following the Japan earthquake and tsunami. “This makes these agreements even more relevant and timely,” said Frédérique Lehoux, the SOPAC Team Leader for “Disaster Risk Reduction in Pacific Overseas Countries/Territories.”



President of French Polynesia Gaston Tong Sang and French High Commissioner Richard Didier sign agreements with SPC, as Frédérique Lehoux from SPC’s SOPAC Division and European Union representatives look on.



Niue Climate Change Adaptation & DRM National Action Plan

In 2009 SOPAC and SPREP collaborated in supporting Niue to develop a Climate Change Policy (CCP) and Coastal Development Policy (CDP). Both policies were approved by the Niue Cabinet in early 2010. As a direct result of this the Niuean Secretary to Government requested SOPAC in October last year for assistance to develop a Joint Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management National Action Plan. The JNAP, as the initiative is now referred to is seen as a mechanism to address the structured implementation of the CCP and CDP and as well address a range of other policy initiatives related to climate change and DRM which have not made significant progress. One such initiative is the Niue National Disaster Management Plan.

SOPAC and SPREP decided to collaborate to support Niue in early 2011 and developed a joint team.

The first country engagement was undertaken by the joint SOPAC and SPREP team from 7th – 11th March 2011. This involved the conduct of individual and as well group consultations to:

- Develop a NAP planning process for consideration and approval by the Secretary to Government and Cabinet
- Ascertain implementation progress for the Climate Change and Coastal Development policies
- Determine gaps in implementation and foreshadow actions to be included in a preliminary draft of a JNAP Results Matrix

At the conclusion of consultations a draft progress update for the Climate Change Policy was developed. This has been submitted to the Director of Environment to coordinate further input prior to the next SOPAC/SPREP country engagement.



SOPAC & SPREP officials with Niuean Cabinet Ministers following a briefing on the Joint Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management National Action Plan

A national stakeholder's workshop was held on Wednesday 9th March. The purpose of the workshop was to:

1. Create an understanding of the Niue National Disaster Plan, Climate Change Policy and 2nd National Communications Priorities
2. Identify challenges and gaps in relation to disaster risk management and climate change adaptation
3. Create an understanding and invite feedback on the proposed National Action Plan process.

The workshop involved representation across all Government departments. In addition, members of Cabinet were in attendance with the Acting Premier supporting consultations throughout the day-long event. Workshop participants expressed an eagerness to progress the work on the JNAP particularly since it is being viewed as an opportunity to integrate the many CCA and DRM initiatives that seem to be in proliferation across the Government in different forms. The workshop revealed an anxiousness to get the local communities further involved in CCA and DRM and specifically to improve community preparedness for disasters.

The Premier of Niue, Hon Toke Talagi, who had been overseas during the country engagement, requested a briefing on the JNAP on his return. During the briefing he reiterated Cabinet's commitment and expressed a desire that the JNAP be completed as soon as possible to allow integration within the revised national sustainable development strategy and as well the upcoming national budget.

As a result of the discussions with the Premier and other stakeholders SOPAC and SPREP have agreed that the JNAP results matrix and linked costing be completed by May 2011. The matrix and costs would then be provided immediately to the Secretary to Government. The full JNAP is targeted for completion by June 2011.

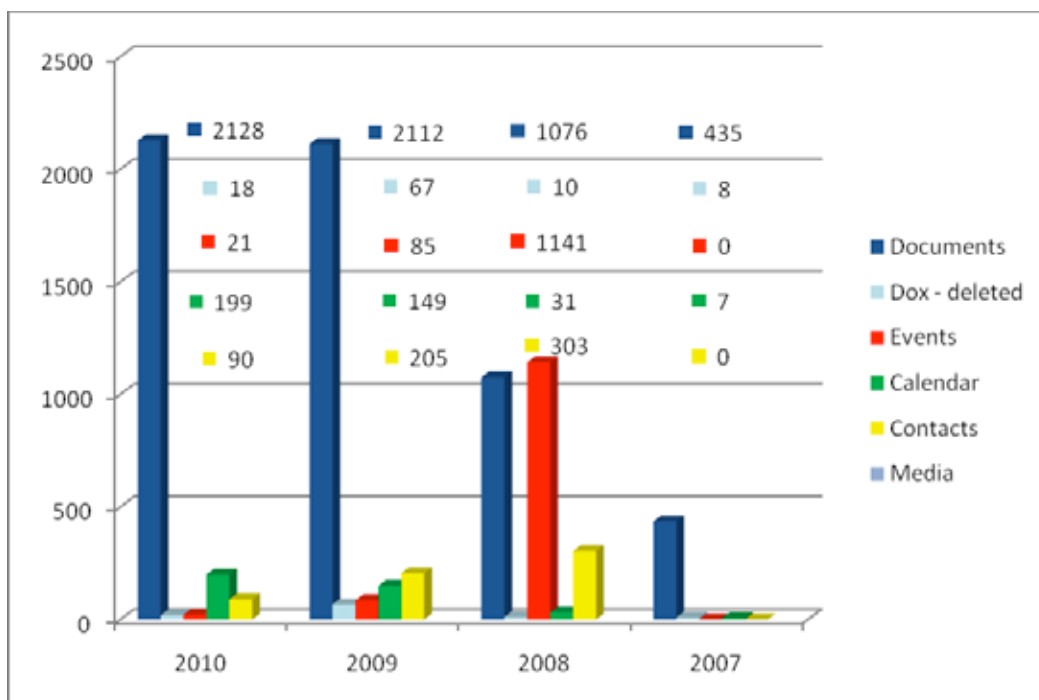
A new version of Pacific Disaster Net

Pacific Disaster Net (PDN - <http://www.pacificdisaster.net>) is developed and maintained by the Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (SOPAC) and the following partners - the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).

It took two years of preparations and tests before the Pacific Disaster Net was finally launched in September 2008 and it became an additional information resource for all Disaster Risk Management (DRM) practitioners working in the Pacific region including government agencies, regional bodies, non-government organisations and international agencies. It supports DRM and development decision making and provides in-country information for distribution within the region in a range of formats and including contacts, alerts, documents, calendar, audio / visual files etc.

Since its launch PDN content and information volume has grown very fast – especially with the PDN Team of 3 dedicated staff (1 Researcher and 2 Assistant Researcher / Cataloger) working full time on content population and researching more than 300 websites and other sources.

PDN – new records



Cataloged	Total	2011/01	2010	2009	2008	2007
Documents	5952	185	2128	2112	1076	435
Doc's - deleted	104	1	18	67	10	8
Events	1256	8	21	85	1141	0
Calendar	427	2	199	149	31	7
Contacts	620	21	90	205	303	0
Media	27					

Some of the challenges faced during this time are:

- Raising awareness and establish Information Management for DRM
- Information 'sharing' and content collection / update
- Internet access and internet literacy
- Usability - or What is user friendly ?
- Quality assurance - Prepare received information according to requirements and standards
- Dealing with Asia and Pacific as one region which involves different challenges for DRM and Information and Communication Technology

One of the objectives of the project "Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction in Pacific Overseas Countries/ Territories (OCTs)" managed by SOPAC is to make PDN accessible to the French territories - New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis & Futuna. It is planned to develop a French user interface for selection, to include DRM information and content from the OCTs in French as well as to adapt all PDN functionalities to the currently English user interface.

Recent meetings in Noumea, New Caledonia with colleagues from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC – www.spc.int) identified areas of future collaboration and support for the above mentioned initiative.

Other issues in PDN, such as improving the user friendliness and usability, search and navigation for the fast growing content and usage will be addressed in the upcoming re-design as well. Finally the new functionality 'My PDN' will provide many user controlled features such as frequent updates about new information, saved searches, content download etc.

Automated information and data exchange and linkages with other systems are planned including PreventionWeb (www.preventionweb.net), ReliefWeb (www.reliefweb.int), the Asia-Pacific DRR Project Portal (www.drrprojects.net) and regional systems such as the future Pacific DRM Partnership Network Portal and the Pacific DRR & DM Framework for Action Online monitor.

A Pacific response to the Japan Tsunami

On March 11 at 07:30 UTC the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center/NOAA/NWS issued a Widespread Tsunami Warning after an 8.8. Magnitude earthquake occurred near the east coast of Honshu, Japan at 05:46 UTC.

A Tsunami Warning was in effect for all Pacific Island Countries and Territories as sea Level Readings confirmed that a tsunami was generated and could cause widespread damage. PTWC's warning included an advice to authorities to take appropriate action in response to the threat.

Shortly after the tsunami warning was issued, it was shared via email with the heads of the NDMOs and an email chain of updates on the situation started to take flow. Charles Carlson, Director Emergency Management Cook Islands in response to the circulation of the bulletin wrote: *"Greetings all, any effect of this Japan Tsunami on your island?"* This triggered an email chain between Regional Disaster Managers in the Pacific updating each other on the situation in their respective countries. An Interesting observation during the night was the fact that whilst most DM's reported no damage, the impact of the Tsunami in the Pacific was felt way after the estimated initial Tsunami arrival time.

Charles Carlson informed on the following day:

"Kia Orana all,

The expected time to the Cooks was around 1530hrs for our northern group islands and 1630hrs for our Southern group islands and nothing happened. We made a decision to stand down the operation at 0700hrs as we were confident it would have passed all of the Cooks by then but still be on alert for the next hour or two. I went home to catch up with some sleep and was woken up a couple of hours later that our two harbours are being affected with water rushing in and out with many of the boats trying to get out. It reacted after 4 hours when it was suppose to hit us but fortunately no damage! Hope all is well with you guys!"

The time differences between Japan and the Pacific meant that most Pacific Island countries and territories were settling in for an evening meal when the first news of the earthquake and tsunami was televised. The tsunami travel time also allowed most NDMOs and other national agencies to prepare their teams in case an evacuation was necessary. The email string setup for the NDMOs allowed them to share preparations and observations through the night. It was encouraging to see Regional Disaster Managers sharing updates and experiences in such a threatening situation.

TSUNAMIS OPERATION IN VANUATU

By Salesa Kaniaha (Acting Director, Vanuatu Meteorological and Geo-hazard Department)

The Geo-hazard division of the Ministry of Lands amalgamated with the Vanuatu Meteorological Service in May of 2010 particularly to address the issue of DRR in Vanuatu. One issue in particular was Tsunamis. The department is now called the Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-hazard Department (VMGD).

After the event in Japan and the Warning issued by the PTWC through SMS, an assessment of the situation was done and a Warning was prepared using the templates from the 'Tsunamis Operations Procedures' and issued

at 1900 local time. Staffs were called back for the operations and Journalists were made aware of the situation so they can monitor and inform the public. SMS messages were activated via the Digicel Mobile Service to all users from 1900hours with the message “Tsunamis Advisory in Effect. Move to Higher Ground .Listen to Radio Outlets.” The cancellation of the tsunamis warning was issued later in the morning and it reads “Tsunamis Advisory Cancelled. All Safe & Clear”. There are only 2 tsunamis messages that are issued by the VMGD for SMS which is outlines by its procedures. Based on the bulletins received from PTWC, the VMGD issued 13 Tsunami advisory bulletins from 7:07 pm until its cancellation the following morning at 5:36AM.

There were around 20 staffs that were involved for the whole night, 6 from Geo-hazards division, 6 Weather Forecasters, 1 IT personnel,3 Administration personnel, 1 from NDMO, 1 from World Bank, and 2 Climate Officers. There were several telephones hand-sets; set up to take calls from the public and 8 operators took turns in warning these. Normal weather forecasting operations continued the whole night. Information were disseminated through telephone, uploaded to the website (www.meteo.gov.vu) and disseminated through the radio and television. 6 senior officers were tasked with the role of going to the media outlets informing TV, FM stations and the National AM (short wave) radio.

The local Media played a tremendous role during the night informing everyone and answering questions on radio about the tsunamis. They called in several discussion groups and received phone calls from the public. A brochure developed by the VMGD assisted in guiding the population on what to do. Every hour, officers from the Meteorology and Geo-hazard Department would visit the media outlets to update them and the public on the situation. Dedicated phone lines installed at the National Met Service (Tsunamis Operation Desk) ensured that all necessary information that the media needs are disseminate in time.

The National Disaster Management Office and the Police also played a major role in evacuating people. It is estimated that over 100,000 people across the country were evacuated to higher ground that night.

There are still gaps in the system and will need improvement. The event has created an awareness of how tsunamis should be treated and procedures are set up to reflect the lessons learned from the operations. A meeting has also been convened with the Media to highlight lessons learned from the cooperation and recommendations for improvement.



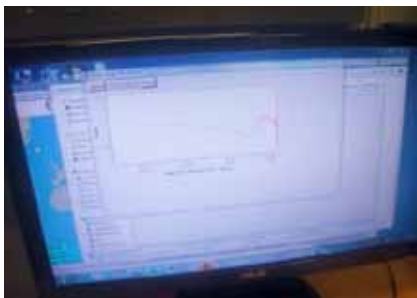
Telephone set-up and staff called in to answer a flood of incoming calls



David developing warnings in the tsunamis operational desk (dedicate computer)



Michael, of the World Bank present during the operation



Detection of the first wave that hit Port Vila at 3AM using the Tide Tool



David and Sylvain analysing information from the Tide Tool, PTWC and USGS



Moirah providing Marine and Aviation services from the Marine and Aviation operation desk & uploading Tsunamis warnings to the website and e-mail



Tom Natick providing public weather services from the Public Weather Operation Desk (normal operation)



Esline, attending to queries from the public turning up during the night to get information for the Tsunamis



Staff on the Office Deck overlooking the harbour (tide cage) at 3AM



A "Tide-like" Tsunamis Wave rushing into the harbour at 6AM



The "Tide-like" Tsunamis wave moving a drowned boat house around the Port Vila Harbor



Some families after spending the night on higher ground and returning to their homes early in the morning after an all clear has been given

Task Force for the Morobe Joint DRM and CC Action Plan (MAP) holds its first meeting

The Morobe Joint Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Climate Change (CC) Action Plan Task Force held its first meeting to oversee the development and implementation of the Provincial Joint Action Plan on Friday 18th March Lae City, the capital of Morobe Province.

The MAP Task Force meeting was chaired by the Deputy Provincial Administrator, Mr. Patlias Gomata. In his Opening speech Mr. Gomata, on behalf of the Morobe Provincial Administration, thanked SPC-SOPAC and UNDP for their support and involvement in the development of the Morobe Joint Action Plan and noted that technical expertise in DRM and CC are much needed in Morobe Province. The Morobe Deputy PA also stressed the important role that each of the Task Force Members are to play in the Provincial Action Plan and urged the members to be proactive noting that “the Morobe Provincial Government is unable to implement the Plan alone” and support and coordination was needed with Civil Society, Technical Agencies and NGO’s already active in DRM and Climate Change Adaptation.



Task Force Members

Back Row Left to Right: Collin Loko (Division of Lands & Physical Planning - Lands Manager); Amos Buieba (Division of Agriculture & Livestock – Manager Food Stock); Elick Guapa (National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI) – Programme Head); Collin Otto (Division of Community Development – Project Officer); Alevi Michael (Morobe Provincial Women’s Council – President); Elias Ulengit (Red Cross Lae – Acting Director); Asigau Tau (Lae City Authority – GIS Officer).

Front Row L-R: Tera Gauba (Morobe Provincial Disaster Centre - Coordinator); Francis Gumembi (Church Partnership Programme – Programme Head); Arenao Sesinguoc (Division of Policy & Planning – Provincial Programme Advisor); Patlias Gamato - Chair (Deputy Provincial Administrator – Morobe Provincial Administrator); Charlie Masnage (Project Officer – Provincial Disaster Centre).

The Task Force meeting discussions were centred on endorsing the MAP Task Force Terms of Reference, establishing Technical Committees to oversee and coordinate the implementation of specific actions of the MAP and identifying lead agencies responsible for implementing each of the MAP activities.

As part of the MAP Terms of Reference, seven Technical Committees (TC) were named to oversee the implementation of MAP actions with a Committee Head selected and Committee members identified. These Technical Committees will report to the MAP Task Force and provide updates on implementation progress at the Task Force Quarterly Meetings. The Technical Committees are following:

1. Vulnerable Groups – led by the Morobe Women’s Council President, Mrs. Alevi Michael
2. Awareness Raising – led by the Department of Agriculture & Livestock
3. Capacity Building – led by
4. Technical Assessment – led by the National Agriculture Institute
5. Governance – led by the Office of the Provincial Administrator
6. Conflict Management – led by the Wama Commission (Member TBD)
7. Resettlement – led by the Lae City Authority

The Morobe Joint Provincial DRM and CC Action Plan is supported by SPC-SOPAC, UNDP and the PNG National Disaster Centre.

Review of Kiribati's Disaster Risk Management Arrangements

The review of Kiribati's Disaster Risk Management Arrangements has made significant progress as confirmed by a SOPAC team that recently completed a follow up mission to Kiribati, March 8th – 17th, 2011.

During the mission, representatives from 10 Ministries and Departments (Office of the President, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Ministry of Communication, Transport and Tourism Development, Ministry of Public Works and Utilities, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agriculture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Kiribati Police Service) and three NGOs (KANGO, AMAK, and Red Cross) were consulted and agreed to the roles and responsibilities stated in the draft DRM arrangements.

The team also observed the tsunami warning arrangements on Friday 11th March when a tsunami warning was issued for the Pacific including Kiribati. Whilst it seems that there is improvement in the dissemination of public advisories compared to the last Tsunami warning issued in 2009, there is great need to formulate tsunami response plan that can be shared with all relevant stakeholders.

The draft DRM arrangements and the list of priorities for the implementation will soon be considered by the National Disaster Risk Management Council (NDRMC) before being tabled in Cabinet.



Meeting with Government officials.

Promoting Visibility of Water Issues

One of the main objectives of the Disaster Risk Reduction Project (B-Envelope Project) is to improve access to safe drinking water in Marshall Islands, Tonga, Nauru and Tuvalu. The project is implemented by the Applied Geoscience & Technology Division (SOPAC) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community with a total of €3.4 million provided by the European Union to improve water security in all four countries.

Implementation of water activities is nearing its completion stage with rainwater catchments provided to households in all participating countries, upgrade of the Mataki'eua well field in Nuku'alofa including support to water supply in villages on Tongatapu, improving storage capacity in Nauru and strengthening capacities of counties in water quality monitoring are some of the notable achievements of the project.

In promoting awareness of water issues the project is working with the SPC Media Center to produce a twenty minute documentary to highlight the importance of water and the impact of interventions in the participating countries. The SPC media team led by the Project Engineer, John Tagilima, visited Tonga in March 2011 to capture footage that also included a visit to Ha'apai. The SPC media team will also visit Majuro and Ebeye in mid-April.

The Project Manager, stated that while the main aim of the documentary is to promote visibility of the EU, SOPAC and importance of water, it will also record the impact of project interventions and how it has improved the lives of people. He further stated that "people in the small island states are vulnerable to drought or long periods of dry weather where there is dependency on rain water.

While the project has increased rain water storage capacity there still remains a lot of work to do in improving water security. The documentary can be very useful in promoting awareness and draw attention to the priority areas where more resources are required."



The feedback from the beneficiaries to date has been quite positive with the final product to be distributed widely to media outlets and relevant stakeholders in the region.



Economic Valuation of Disasters

During March a regional workshop was held in Port Vila, Vanuatu to share information on how to evaluate losses caused by disasters. This is the first workshop of its kind in the Pacific. The workshop provided a chance for representatives from the Ministry of Finance/Planning and the National Disaster Management Offices from a number of Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to hear more about the Damage and Loss Assessment (DALA) framework supported by many global partners. The DALA framework was originally developed in the Caribbean some 40 years ago and has undergone extensive refinement and use over the years. It was trialed in the Pacific for the first time in 2009 following the tsunami in Samoa to help give an accurate reflection of the cost of the damage and losses.



Participants at the March 2011 disaster assessment workshop in Vanuatu.

The workshop involved a wide variety of agencies including SOPAC/SPC, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Financial assistance for the workshop came from the World Bank/ GFDRR.

There was some interest expressed in learning more about the use of DALA in the Pacific. A workshop report is currently being prepared and following this consultations will be held with PICs and also with national, regional and international agencies to establish how to assist interested countries to access hands-on training and guidance to use DALA.

Initial Damage Assessment Training for Senior Provincial Council Officials

The SOPAC-based Pacific Disaster Risk Management (Training) Program (PDRMP) in collaboration with the Fiji NDMO delivered for the first time training for officials from Fiji's Provincial Council offices. The training is to support the move by the Fiji NDMO to actively involve village leaders (*Turaga ni Koro*) in post disaster assessments.

This phase of post disaster assessment is usually expected to be completed within the first forty-eight (48) hours after a disaster strikes. However, in the past this has been challenging as assessors were recruited and deployed from District and Divisional operation levels and had to travel to the affected areas. The involvement of the village leaders will greatly improve this type of response mechanism.



Participants at the IDA Training in Nadave

This will also ensure that timely initial assessment reports can be obtained to assist in the prioritisation of immediate humanitarian needs thus achieving more timely and effective response.

Out of the 37 participants, twenty eight were from the 14 provincial council offices and 9 from the Ministry of ITaukei Affairs which is the ministry responsible for indigenous affairs. Participants were pleased with the initiative and provided valuable contributions to further improve the assessment tools, which include the field reference guide and the forms for recording initial assessment data.

The outcomes of the 2 days training were;

- confirmation of roles and responsibilities in disaster risk management;
- identification of the hazards that respective provinces are vulnerable to; and
- confirmation of the field reference guide and the Initial Damage Assessment (IDA) assessment forms

The Fiji NDMO has plans to continue the IDA training for all the *Turaga ni Koro* throughout Fiji this year.

Upcoming Events

- 11th – 15th April: Solomon Islands NDMO Disaster Management (IDM) and Damage Assessment (IDA) training for Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE).
- 12th – 14th April: Introduction to Disaster Management (IDM) Course for Western Division Municipalities – Sigatoka, Nadi and Lautoka.
- 25th – 29th April: Fiji NDMO Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) training.
- 12th – 13th April: SOPAC participation in the kick-off meeting of the New Caledonia Joint Country Strategy (a SPC-NC Government initiative).
- 21st April: Opening of Chuuk State Disaster Coordination Office.
- 25th – 29th April: SOPAC and IOC mission to progress NAP and Tsunami early warning, Tonga.
- 25th – 29th April: Visit to Wallis and Futuna to finalize interventions supported by the SOPAC-based project "Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction in Pacific Overseas Countries and Territories" (dates still tentative).



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