

Snapshots

DISASTER REDUCTION PROGRAMME

Snapshot 75

March 2012



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 Readers,

I am writing this (1st April) while stranded in Sydney since all flights into Fiji have been cancelled due to the floods that are wreaking havoc in many parts of Viti Levu. The reports that have come through are painting a bleak picture but SOPAC/SPC and other partner organisations like UNOCHA are already moving to provide assistance to the Fiji Government. Over the coming days we will get a better appreciation of what the needs are and be able to collaborate better to provide focussed support. In the coming months we will be able to relate to you our activities that supported Fiji's response and recovery from the flood disaster.

DRM capacity building moves forward and there have been some interesting activities that we have been able to support over the last month or so. I hope you enjoy reading about them.

Please contact us if you have any suggestions to help us improve how we present updates to you or if you have stories of your own that you wish to share.

Mosese Sikivou

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NDMOs visit the State Control Centre in Melbourne

As part of capacity building for strengthening emergency response coordination, representatives of National Disaster Management Offices from Nauru, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu visited the State Control Centre (SSC) in Melbourne, Victoria from 20th – 24th February 2012. The visit was organised jointly by SOPAC/SPC and the Office of the Fire Services Commissioner and Country Fire Authority of Victoria (CFA). It was also supported by the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC)

The representatives were:

- Loti Yates, NDMO Director, Solomon Islands
- George Baragamu, NDMO Operations Manager, Solomon Islands
- Shadrack Welegtabit, NDMO Director, Vanuatu
- Gideons Mael, NDMO Operations Manager, Vanuatu
- Roy Harris, NDRMO Deputy National Controller, Nauru

They were accompanied by Mosese Sikivou, SOPAC Disaster Reduction Programme. The visit was coordinated locally in Victoria by Mark Reid, Gippsland Regional Manager for the CFA. Mark Reid has a history of support to the Pacific in DRM and served as the Chief Fire Officer for Fiji's National Fire Authority from 2007 – 2009.

The visit provided the NDMOs with a first-hand appreciation of how emergency response coordination, command and control functions in Victoria at State, Regional and Local levels. The NDMOs received briefings from a range of CFA and State Emergency Service (SES) personnel. The group also toured the SSC and a Regional and Local centre to get a better understanding of the interlinkages between the three levels of emergency response.

The visit had positive outcomes for the NDMOs. Each gained some invaluable insight into how they may strengthen their respective coordination centres and also a stronger appreciation of the critical importance of agency interoperability in relation to emergency response. Each demonstrated a keen anxiousness following the visit to apply the learning within their countries. Shadrack Welegatabit and Gideons Mael of Vanuatu found the visit useful as they are currently remodelling the Vanuatu National Emergency Operations Centre to ensure that it adequately covers all the necessary functional responsibilities within an emergency operation.

During the visit SOPAC held discussions with AFAC and CFA regarding the possibility of a 'twinning arrangement' for all NDMOs with state-level fire and emergency services in Australia. A twinning arrangement would facilitate an ongoing exchange of skills and experience between 'twinned' NDMOs and their counterparts in Australia and New Zealand. AFAC is the umbrella body for state level fire and emergency services for Australia and New Zealand. A concept note for the establishment of a twinning arrangement has been developed and is to be submitted for the consideration of NDMO Directors at the 2012 Pacific Platform for DRM which will be held in Noumea, New Caledonia from 17th – 21st September 2012.



Vanuatu establishes National Emergency Operations Centre

The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) in Vanuatu, with funding from SPC-SOPAC through the AusAID National Action Plan Facility, began work on a National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) in February 2012. The existing office has been partitioned to create a dedicated area for the NDMO to coordinate post event response. The partition work was completed at the end of February 2012 and work will now begin on the shutters to protect the dedicated NEOC. Following this the office will be equipped with necessary computers and monitoring equipment. Completion of the NEOC is scheduled for the end of April 2012. To help inform processes and procedures the Director Shadrack Welegtabit and Deputy Director Gideons Mael took part in a sub-regional exchange mission to the Victorian State Control Centre (see article on page 3). Following completion of the NEOC facility, personnel from the NDMO and supporting agencies will participate in Emergency Operations Centre training provided by the Disaster Reduction Programme at SPC (SOPAC) on the 14th – 18th May 2012.



GIS for Disaster Risk Management training completed for Fiji DRM practitioners

The SOPAC Division of SPC in collaboration with the Ministry of Provincial Development and Disaster Management and the Fiji Lands Information System Office successfully conducted a basic training workshop on Geographical Information System (GIS) for Disaster Risk Management from the 12th to the 23rd of March 2012.

The main objective of the training was to provide an overview of how GIS could be used as a tool for Disaster Risk applications, to support disaster preparedness and response work and also other potential applications.

Participants of the training included personnel from the National Disaster Management Office, the Development and Planning Units of the Commissioners' Offices, the Ministry of Health and the Department of Public Health at the Fiji National University.



The training was important as it contributes to capacity building activities progressing to the Fiji Joint National Disaster Management and Climate National Action Plan supported by AusAID and managed by the SOPAC Division.

The workshop was closed by Mrs Unaisi Bera, the National Adviser on Environmental Health from the Ministry of Health who thanked the NDMO for soliciting support in such capacity building initiatives that will add value to efforts to prevent epidemics after a disaster. She further added that her team in the district and division closely collaborate with disaster coordinators to ensure secondary hazards like epidemics are controlled. The capability to use GIS will enable her team to map areas that lack basic sanitation facilities and provide direct support to prevent epidemics if the same area is affected by a disaster.

Also at the closing was the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Provincial Development and Disaster Management, Mr Inia Seruiratu, who thanked SOPAC for the timely support and pledged to fully support the initiative by providing dedicated staff to lead the GIS development in the Ministry. He further reminded the participants to apply the new skills acquired in their respective offices to increase their capability in managing disasters effectively.

An Advance GIS Training workshop is scheduled for August 2012 to follow up on skills learned during this training session. SOPAC will also provide ongoing technical support to participants in their respective projects in the lead up to the next training session.

New Pacific Disaster Net (PDN) – redesign in preparation

The Pacific Disaster Net (PDN) continues to be the largest information resource for Disaster Risk Management information in the Pacific region.

Since its launch in September 2008, more than 8000 documents, 1280 disaster records, contacts, a DRM calendar with training and meeting information and video files have been uploaded.

With feedback from users and partners it is time for a review and redesign to improve the user friendliness and to update the technology. Some lessons learnt will also be addressed in the redesign.

In consultations with our development partners UNISDR, UNOCHA, IFRC, UNDP and the SPC SOPAC Division - as user representatives - we discussed the requirements and future functionalities of the PDN redesign.

Suggestions for the redesign include:

- Improving the Navigation with Search and Access to information
- Adding 'My PDN' as new functionality for personalized content and services
- Establishing a regional disaster loss database using the DesInventar methodology with support from UNISDR
- Providing a French user interface and include content from the Overseas Territories with support from the EDF 9C Project 'Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction in the Pacific OCTS'

The PDN will remain accessible in the current form until its relaunch and we will update you again on the progress. Stay tuned ...



Automatic Weather Stations installed in Highlands and Siassi Islands, Papua New Guinea

The Papua New Guinea National Weather Service (NWS) has just completed installation of automatic weather stations at Tambul (Western Highland Province), Aiyura (Eastern Highland Province) and at Porr Island (Siassi Island Group). This was made possible through funding from the B-Envelope project under the European Union.

A team of five representatives from the PNG NWS embarked on an eleven hour journey by road from Lae to Mt. Hagen passing through Eastern Highlands and Chimbu Provinces installing the AWS. The team also installed Data Logging Rain Gauges at Mt. Hagen Secondary School, Kundiawa Lutheran Dei Secondary School (Chimbu Province) and spent some time training teachers how to download the data from the rain gauges. The team then returned to Lae and travelled by boat to Porr Island in the Siassi Islands to install an automatic weather station at the Catholic Mission Station. It was quite a challenge particularly the distance travelled by vehicle and outboard motor canoe but the mission was accomplished after a period of three weeks with all weather stations now transmitting data.

The team leader, Robert Thompson, from the PNG NWS stated that the weather stations provide valuable data on rainfall, temperature, wind etc. which is very important for agricultural activities in the Highlands Provinces. The AWS installed at Porr Island relays the same information and important for coastal communities and maritime information due to the strong winds coming through Vitiaz straight.

The B-Envelope Project Manager, George Beck, stated that this is all part of strengthening early warning systems in PNG which is the overall aim of the project. "We still have one more AWS to install in Bouganville which we hope to install in second quarter of 2012 including a few more rain gauges".



Disaster Management Training – Yap State, Federated States of Micronesia

FSM’s National Office of Environment & Emergency Management (OEEM) and the Yap State Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) coordinated Initial Damage Assessment (IDA) and Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) training for key department and agency personnel in Colonia, March 5th to 9th. Support was provided by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community’s Applied Geoscience and Technology Division (SOPAC) for this first time EOC/IDA training, which was conducted at the recently renovated, State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). The training brought together personnel from the departments of Health, Public Works, Public Safety, Environment, Airport, Fire Rescue as well as staff of the State Disaster Coordinating Office, the Yap Branch of the Micronesia Red Cross Society and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Instructors from SOPAC’s Disaster Reduction Program and The Asia Foundation facilitated the weeklong training along with national instructors from OEEM and IOM. The Director for the Office of Planning and Budget, Mr Kensley Ikosia, expressed appreciation to SOPAC, the Foundation and OEEM for the support to their request for this training to be carried out for emergency and disaster personnel. “This training is timely with us having just completed the renovations to our EOC facility and looking to train and exercise within the facility, enabling us to practice the functions and test our arrangements for future emergency operations,” said Mr Ikosia.

Participants were fully engaged in the training and exercises conducted throughout the week and the facilitators were impressed by the interest and dedication shown for the subject areas presented. Contributions to discussions enabled the Instructors to better relate to local scenarios, enhancing the learning from the practical exercises, and ensuring a significant level of learning across the various sectors represented. Ms Kathryn Hawley, Director of The Asia Foundation, highlighted the aim of the training was to increase knowledge, understanding and capacity of personnel and agencies who have roles and responsibilities during emergencies and disasters, ensuring correct processes and procedures are followed when EOC activation is necessary.

The USAID Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) through The Asia Foundation and the SOPAC Division of SPC provided the funding for the training.



Director of Office of Planning & Budget – Mr Kensley Ikosia addresses participants at opening of the EOC/IDA training in Colonia, Yap.



Participants in the EOC/IDA training recently conducted in Colonia, Yap State, FSM.

Upcoming Events

- 2 – 5 April: Introduction to Disaster Management and Initial Damage Assessment Training, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, Honiara, Solomon Islands
- 15 – 21 April: Follow-up on B-envelope activities, Republic of Marshall Island
- 16 – 19 April: Follow up visit for the preparation of the 2012 Pacific Platform for DRM, New Caledonia
- 19 – 26 April: Water Management Workshop, Funafuti, Tuvalu
- 26 April – 2 May: Emergency Operations Centre Training, Nauru



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