

Pacific Resilience Programme launched

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Pacific Harbour, 21 June 2016

Pacific-ResilienceDelegates from the Pacific region came together today to officially launch the Pacific Resilience Program (PREP) – a series of projects to strengthen Pacific Island countries' resilience to natural disasters and climate change.

The project was launched as part of a three-day workshop where participants from Pacific Island governments, regional bodies and project staff will receive training to support the implementation of the programme, which will include initiatives and activities related to early warning tools, risk reduction investments and financial planning for disasters.

“PREP allows us to work together with our Pacific neighbors, to take a pro-active approach to managing natural disasters in the region,” said Siaosi Sovaleni, Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga. “We are committed to strengthening Tonga against future natural disasters and being a partner in this initiative is an important part of that strategy.”

A partnership between Tonga, Samoa, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the World Bank, PREP uses a regional approach to disaster risk management to share expertise and increase economies of scale.

“History has unfortunately shown just how devastating disasters can be for Pacific Island countries and territories,” the Director-General of the Pacific Community, Dr Colin Tukuitonga, said. “As the region’s principal scientific organisation, we understand how valuable it is to share knowledge and tools to better manage disasters and reduce their impact. We’re proud to be a part of this initiative with the World Bank and others, and to further support our region to withstand disasters.”

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PREP has now begun work on improved disaster early warning systems in Tonga and Samoa; is preparing tools to help Pacific Island economies become more financially resilient; and has rolled the PCRAFI disaster risk insurance initiative for the Pacific under its umbrella in order to deliver quick injections of cash to governments immediately after eligible disasters.

Studies across Tonga and Samoa are also under way to identify how best to prioritize the retro-fitting of schools, making them more climate and disaster resilient and using them as evacuation centres to protect lives during emergencies.

“All countries at today’s launch have felt the impact of natural disasters in recent years, highlighting the regional need for action,” said Denis Jordy, Senior Environmental Specialist at the World Bank. “PREP is part of that action, ensuring that the proper mechanisms are in place to forecast and prepare for disasters and climate change, insuring assets, and most importantly, protecting the lives and livelihoods of people.”

The Pacific Resilience Program is funded through US\$32.29 million in grants and credits from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank’s fund for the world’s poorest countries. The Global Environment Facility Special Climate Change Fund to Tonga and PIFS have provided US\$5.48 million; the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience to the Pacific Community (SPC) has provided US\$5.79 million in grant funding; and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery to Tonga has provided \$US1.5 million in grant funding.

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About the Pacific Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative (PCRAFI)

The Pacific Disaster Risk Financing Initiative (DRFI) was piloted under the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative (PCRAFI), a joint initiative of the World Bank, SPC, and the Asian Development Bank with financial support from the Government of Japan, the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) and the European Union. PCRAFI, launched in 2007, aims to provide the PICs with disaster risk assessment and financing tools for enhanced disaster risk management and climate change adaptation, including the development of the PCRAFI insurance pool. The Pacific DRFI pilot came to an end in October 2015, and has been continued under the PREP.

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About the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery

The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) helps high-risk, low-income developing countries better understand and reduce their vulnerabilities to natural hazards, and adapt to climate change. Working with over 400 partners—mostly local government agencies, civil society, and technical organizations—GFDRR provides grant financing, on-the-ground technical assistance to mainstream disaster mitigation policies into country-level strategies, and a range of training and knowledge sharing activities. GFDRR is managed by the World Bank and funded by 25 donor partners.

About the World Bank Group

The World Bank Group plays a key role in the global effort to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity. It consists of five institutions: the World Bank, including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA); the International Finance Corporation (IFC); the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA); and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). Working together in more than 100 countries, these institutions provide financing, advice, and other solutions that enable countries to address the most urgent challenges of development. For more information, please visit www.worldbank.org, www.miga.org, and www.ifc.org.