



REGIONAL CONSULTATION PACIFIC

AUCKLAND, 30 JUNE – 2 JULY 2015

CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY

The WHS regional consultation for the Pacific was held in Auckland, New Zealand, from 30 June to 2 July 2015. It was hosted by the Government of New Zealand and co-chaired by the Government of Australia, the Government of New Zealand and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In the spirit of the summit's multi-stakeholder approach, the meeting brought together nearly 170 participants from the three sub-regions of the Pacific representing Member States of the United Nations including three Heads of States, regional organizations, civil society, affected communities, national and international non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the private sector and academia, as well as observers from three countries involved in hosting WHS consultations.

The discussions in Auckland reflected the culture, strength and diversity of the Pacific. The participants were honoured by the pōwhiri, a formal welcome from the local Ngāti Whātua tribe. Several leaders from across the region, the UN and the Red Cross Movement demonstrated their commitment to work together as regional partners and learn from the people of the Pacific about their capacities, needs and where support should be provided. All participants focused particularly on the lessons learned from recent crises, most prominently the response to

Tropical Cyclone Pam, the largest weather event to occur in the Pacific in recorded history. Particular emphasis was given to the lessons from the cyclone demonstrating that investing in preparedness and disaster risk reduction (DRR) pays dividends.

Participants in the regional consultation noted that communities in the Pacific have grown resilient by having lived with tropical cyclones, tsunamis, earthquakes and other disasters for hundreds of years. The region is highly exposed to severe natural disasters. Four of the top 10 countries listed on the 2014 World Risk Index are Pacific island nations. Eight are among the top 20 countries in the world experiencing the greatest average economic losses from disasters as a proportion of GDP. Disasters are exacerbated by the effects of climate change. Climate change is a severe concern for the region, most urgently for the low-lying atoll countries.

In this context, investing in disaster risk reduction, preparedness and strengthening resilience are paramount: an investment which eventually saves lives and money. This became evident through focused discussions on the recent response to Tropical Cyclone Pam. The discussions also revealed lessons about how the structures of local communities and governments could be overwhelmed by an international system that, despite best efforts, does not adapt itself to effectively support local contexts. There was also recognition that there are ongoing capacity development needs in local national disaster management offices (NDMOs) that need sustained support from international and regional organisations. In that context, long-term relationships of trust and cooperation between partners were highlighted as critical for effective response.

The meeting in Auckland was preceded by 92 preparatory stakeholder consultations involving 1,428 individuals in 17 countries representing their wider constituencies. The consultation findings were captured in a stakeholder analysis report¹ which formed the basis for the discussions in Auckland. The report captured a wide array of issues and constitutes a part of the Pacific contribution to the WHS preparations.

The discussions in Auckland focused on six key issues that had emerged from the preparatory stakeholder consultations. An additional cross-cutting issue that emerged was the need for better data, including scientific and economic models to support Pacific humanitarian action and decision making. The main conclusions and recommendations are summarized below. A full consultation report, which will be released in the coming weeks, will capture the complete array of discussions and outcomes. The co-chairs of the regional consultation encourage all stakeholders to start turning these recommendations into action.

1. Placing affected people at the centre of humanitarian action

There is widespread recognition that humanitarian response needs to be **tailored to people's specific needs and to local contexts**. However, participants cited many examples in the region where responses had failed to account for the **specific requirements** and build on the strengths of women and youth, or to recognize the **unique needs of communities and individuals, including children, older people and people with disabilities**. While participants emphasized the need for disaster responders to **work through traditional and existing community networks**, they also cautioned that those networks could exclude women and vulnerable people and sometimes exacerbate existing inequalities. Information on specific needs at the community level was often either unavailable or not incorporated into response planning, which meant that too **often responses ended up being "one-size fits all."** To address these issues, participants focused on ways to make local communities more resilient and to provide them with the skills and opportunities to tell national and international responders what assistance was required. They also identified the need for better data, better understanding of how communities organize themselves and more investment in education and training around disaster risk reduction and first response. It was recommended that:

¹ For the full stakeholder analysis, see www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/whs_pacific/stakeholderconsultationreport

- Governments, working jointly with communities and humanitarian partners, seek to better understand traditional structures and community networks in both urban and rural communities.
- Governments and partners organize regular, community-level simulation exercises to better understand informal response structures, clarify responsibilities in the event that national or international support is required and address critical gaps.
- Humanitarian partners work to strengthen community groups that amplify the voices of women, children, youth, older people and people with disabilities and systematically involve them in decision-making. Community groups have a formal role within national and sub-national planning structures.
- Governments and humanitarian partners invest in better analysis of social, economic and human vulnerability to natural hazards. This can draw from more regular and robust census data, economic modelling, or information from local businesses or community groups. Improved data on vulnerability is used to make both risk management and disaster response planning more targeted to local needs.
- Governments and partners work to raise awareness about DRR and preparedness in communities, building on traditional approaches. This is done by including DRR in education curricula at all levels, as well as by working with faith-based groups, private businesses and other parts of the community.
- Governments and humanitarian partners strengthen two-way communication with communities so they can provide feedback and communicate their own humanitarian needs to responders.
- Humanitarian partners actively seek women's leadership in disaster management. All actors work to prevent the perpetuation of existing gender inequalities.
- Humanitarian partners place protection at the centre of all activities with particular attention to women's safety, dignity and security, before, during and in the wake of crises. All actors act to prevent, address and end impunity for violence against women, including sexual and gender based violence.

2. Realigning the humanitarian system and building on local capacities

Participants noted that communities, civil society groups and governments are **the first responders** in disasters, and remain when any surge of additional assistance wanes. The discussion focused largely on the interaction between local, national and international actors, highlighting some of the tensions when **international actors “parachute in” during and after disasters** without paying sufficient attention to local dynamics and coordination arrangements. Governments and local communities need **to take the lead** in defining what they need and providing information about what is available. New technology has provided the opportunity to enhance the involvement of remote communities in this process more effectively and quickly.

Participants focused their discussions on the role of governments in disaster management, the role of civil society actors, coordination and the role of regional organizations. It was recommended that:

- Governments invest in and strengthen coordination between relevant line ministries and central agencies, such as Treasury, Ministry of Finance, Office of Prime Minister and the national disaster management authority, or equivalent, to ensure a whole-of-government approach to disaster management.
- Governments establish the necessary laws, policies and institutions for disaster management with clear triggers for requesting international assistance, including deployable capacities.

- Building on the International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL) guidelines, governments expedite entry and transit visa issue for humanitarian workers to improve timely and effective regional response.
- Governments ensure that national and local coordination systems are well equipped and resourced. Governments build systems for assessments, logistics and communications.
- National governments clearly articulate their need for international assistance in a timely way, based on strengthened vulnerability analysis. International organizations respect the nature and timing of those requests.
- Civil society works to complement government efforts in community-based disaster preparedness and response, by strengthening national networks and sharing information on capacities with humanitarian partners.
- International partners make their approaches fit for context and scale of disasters. They work together in advance of a crisis, to ensure assistance is harmonised and delivered with appropriate restraint and in support of national and local coordination mechanisms and does not add to their burden during crisis.
- Governments ensure adherence to existing international guidelines on civil-military as well as police coordination, and Government and partners implement adequate preparedness, coordination planning and regular joint exercises with military partners for appropriate and principled support in disaster response.

3. Responding to displacement

Participants recognized that forced **displacement** and voluntary and planned **relocation** were **already taking** place in the region. This was the case particularly in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change, but also related to inter-community conflicts and violence. **Climate change is expected to worsen** these challenges, with the result that people will continue to move inside their countries and across borders. This creates challenges for both displaced and host communities. The importance of customary and ancestral land rights was identified as key in helping people move to new locations peacefully and sustainably.

The discussions focused on finding ways to achieve three key objectives related to people's movement in the Pacific. First, **avoiding forced displacement** through better mitigation measures. Second, **ensuring that displaced persons are protected** with respect for their rights and according to their needs and vulnerabilities. Third, **integrating displaced and host communities into humanitarian responses**. It was recommended that:

- Governments ensure that people are educated about risks so they can make informed decisions about whether to remain where they live or relocate to safer areas.
- When people cannot or choose not to stay where they live, governments, community leaders and faith groups support voluntary and dignified migration or relocation. This is done in a planned, organized and participatory manner.
- Governments develop and implement national and regional toolkits and policies on the protection of internally displaced persons, including in urban contexts. Durable solutions are needed. This includes addressing customary and ancestral land issues.
- All humanitarian partners mainstream displaced persons' special protection needs, including those related to gender, age and disability, into humanitarian programming.
- Governments and international partners strengthen national, provincial and local capacities and support communities to be better prepared for displacement, including mitigation measures against adverse effects in host communities.

- All humanitarian actors ensure that traditional leadership structures and traditional ways of mediating conflict are drawn upon to support displaced and host communities. This does not undermine the importance of considering gender, age and disability considerations.
- All humanitarian actors offer culturally appropriate psychosocial support to displaced people.

4. Collaborating for resilience

Participants recognized the opportunities presented by existing agreements including the Strategy for Climate for Disaster Resilient Development in the Pacific (SRDP) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, although further work is needed at the national level **to implement these agreements**. It is critical that communities, and **particularly women**, are empowered to support resilience building. Pacific countries have made progress in identifying and managing their risks, but more needs to be done to **safeguard vulnerable groups**, especially given that climate change is **driving sea-level rise** and changes in weather patterns with unpredictable effects. It was recommended that:

- Governments and their partners invest in the implementation of SRDP and Sendai Framework. Communities, in particular women, are involved from the start in the design and implementation of initiatives to achieve SRDP and Sendai commitments.
- Governments clearly determine the roles and responsibilities of line ministries and sub-national government in preparedness and response, including through legal frameworks. They appoint a focal point for disaster risk management and climate change adaptation for better coordination.
- Governments and development partners find durable solutions to address climate change, disaster and conflict-induced displacement. They involve communities and to help alleviate climate change impacts.
- Donors and governments make their funding more flexible to support DRR, resilience and crisis response to allow communities to access funds for building their community resilience.
- The Pacific Humanitarian Team members, including regional organizations, international NGOs and UN agencies, recognize the growing role of disaster management offices and national clusters and support them.

5. Financing for preparedness, response and early recovery

The discussions revealed a strong desire to mitigate climate change, to reflect the work done over the past several years to develop the Pacific Strategy for Climate Resilient Development, and the strong push for local responders to be **empowered to lead response**. There was a strong feeling that funding was skewed towards disaster response, rather than preparedness and risk reduction, despite a recognition that **investing in preparedness and risk reduction paid dividends**, as demonstrated by the experience of Vanuatu in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Pam. There was also recognition of diverse sources of funding – not simply aid from donors. It was recommended that:

- Banks, remittance organizations and telecommunications companies consider waiving fees in an emergency, for a defined time in the wake of disaster (determined by the scale of the disaster). More investment in disaster resilient infrastructure, including mobile technology, will help to ensure remote communities can access their services when needed.
- All relevant stakeholders support systems that mean women are direct recipients of money transfers, as well as men. Systems to improve financial inclusion involve women and people living with disabilities in their design.

- Governments and donors develop better national maps of vulnerability reflecting social, economic and structural exposure to natural hazards. Funding is conditional upon meaningful consideration of human, social and physical infrastructure vulnerability indicators.
- Ministries of Finance work with banks, remittance agencies and telecommunications companies to develop a widely and publicly accessible format for reporting all sources and destinations of financing for disaster preparedness and response, including remittances, private flows and international aid, as a means to increase accountability to affected people and assist aid providers target their funds better.
- All stakeholders to capitalize on the presence of new avenues for digital communication, data capture and data management technologies that have the capacity to boost outcomes in communicating need, allocating resources, and improving the assessment of the impact of assistance provided in crisis, leading to strengthened financing for resilience.
- Governments, with the support of technical experts, address the barriers to immediate liquidity for governments to lead disaster response and recovery. This includes exploring the comparative merits of various approaches, such as catastrophe risk insurance mechanisms, credit, budget support and increasing the size of domestically funded national contingency funds. Participants noted that regional pooled funds are not necessarily the best approach to address response and recovery.
- Insurance companies consider how they can develop low cost premiums for families to encourage greater take-up of individual and family insurance in the Pacific. Within this, incentives are built to encourage better building standards, for example for lower premiums.
- All domestic and international development actors establish and adopt national benchmarks for investment in all phase of the disaster risk cycle. Donors initiate multi-year predictable funding for NDMOs and local organisations – particularly women's organisations – to build greater capacity to plan for and respond to disasters.
- The business sector and communities be involved in the development of local and national early recovery plans. NDMOs or other relevant ministries are empowered, including through legislation, to enact early recovery plans quickly. This will also help donor funding to flow more quickly.

6. Partnering with the private sector

Participants recognized that the private sector is part of the community, including as part of the disaster affected community and as **an actor in disaster response**. It should therefore not be treated as an external or 'new' actor. Preparedness through **business continuity planning**, particularly for those businesses that provided essential services, was critical to the effectiveness of a disaster response. Participants recognized the overwhelming importance of **small and medium-sized enterprises** in the Pacific and emphasized the need to develop protocols for engagement between government, civil society and the private sector. It was recommended that:

- Government policies for engaging private sector clearly differentiate between suppliers of the essential services the community needs to function – such as power, water, finance, telecommunications and waste – the rest of the local private sector and private sector responders.
- Governments and essential services integrate business continuity planning and disaster risk reduction as combined disaster preparedness plans and conduct regular joint testing and simulation exercises.
- Governments facilitate business and community networks to record and share online information regarding local business services and community and volunteer capabilities that are available during disaster preparedness or response and how to engage with them.

- Governments formalize the representation of the private sector – both essential services and local businesses – during disaster planning, training and simulation, response and recovery.
- Governments, civil society organizations and businesses establish a joint post-disaster procurement strategy that prioritizes local private sector capabilities in reconstruction, focusing on innovation and opportunities to build back better.
- Government and the financial sector establish pre-existing support mechanisms that will trigger in the instance of a disaster, including insurance, bridging finance, debt restructuring, tax relief and deferred payments of fees.
- Private sector representatives develop a certification backed by a code of conduct for behaviour in humanitarian response appropriate to different industries. Governments consider incentivizing membership and adherence to this code, for example through tax breaks.

