OUTCOME REPORT:
PACIFIC BUSINESS CONSULTATION
3 June 2015, Nadi, Fiji

Introduction

OCHA's Regional Office for the Pacific, together with the Private Sector Section (PSS) and the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization (PIPSO) hosted a Pacific business consultation on 3 June 2015 in Nadi, Fiji. 36 representatives from the private sector (multi-national and national), the local district government and the international humanitarian community, as well as the governments of New Zealand and Australia attended the consultation. The consultation focused on identifying issues, providing recommendations and making commitments from the perspective of micro, small and medium-sized businesses community in emergency preparedness and response.

Issues

The following key themes and issues emerged from the discussions:
1. Businesses in disaster-prone areas are operating at risk. There are often very few possibilities to relocate as they need to be where the clients are. Insurance premiums are often too high for micro and small businesses. Sometimes insurance companies even refuse to insure businesses in high risk zones.
2. People and business on the ground are often the first to respond to emergencies, and the local private sector has a crucial role in emergency preparedness and response efforts, through its capacity to deliver substantial relief.
3. The impact of disasters on businesses is often very high. The impact is compounded by the knock-on effect on the population as employees are often without income until the business can resume operations and business in turn have trouble resuming as demand is low or inexistent.

Challenges

The following key challenges emerged from the discussions:
1. There is a pressing need to increase the resilience of small and medium enterprises in high risk areas. Businesses in disaster prone areas are vulnerable and therefore need access to early warning systems. They also need access to business continuity tools and services.
2. There is a challenge in receiving and redistribution information. This needs to be coordinated between national, local authorities, NGO's, other organizations and the private sector.
3. Micro and small business are not necessarily part of "official" response systems and as such their engagement and potential may not be optimally leveraged.
4. Local disaster management offices are not necessarily equipped with the resources to engage with the private sector.

Solutions & Recommendations

The following solutions were recommended:
1. There is agreement and recognition that all stakeholders need to engage in a common process. Individual businesses are already preparing responding to emergencies but this would be even more efficient if coordinated and integrated. Constant communication between all stakeholders is vital.
2. A local emergency committee concept was raised by all groups.
3. Early warning systems need to ensure that the private sector is integrated and is receiving the information. All mobile phone holders need to receive information without differentiating between pre- and post-paid users.
4. Need to look at access to insurance, potentially linking insurance discounts to business continuity planning.

Commitments

The following commitments were made:
1. Participants committed to taking the initiative of the local emergency committee forward. The committee would be made up of local business (potentially through the local chamber of commerce), the local district office and the international humanitarian community (through OCHA RO).