



Online Consultation Summary Report Pacific Region

11 May – 3 June 2015

This report summarizes the online comments and contributions received as part of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) global online consultation for the Pacific Region. The report will inform the regional consultation meeting in Auckland, New Zealand on 30 June – 2 July 2015, and be integrated into the formation of priorities for the first WHS in 2016.

About the online consultation

The moderated¹ discussion forum provided an open, public forum² to provoke debate and stimulate thinking about how to keep humanitarian action fit for the future, in order to inform the regional consultation meeting. Participation in the forum was open to anyone who registered, from any origin or location. **More than 3,767 individuals viewed the discussions and 326 comments were received from 90 individuals from more than 35 countries** in the region and beyond, representing a broad range of countries and organizations.³

A total of ten questions were discussed, sparking lively debate around the four themes of the WHS, as well as cross-cutting issues and other topics of regional interest. The discussion questions were developed by the Discussion Chair and Moderators in consultation with the OCHA Regional Office and WHS Secretariat.

Discussion Questions

Part 1 of the discussion consisted of five initial questions focused on how to make humanitarian action fit for future challenges. In part two, five follow-up questions were posted by the Chair and Moderators.

Table 1: Number of comments received to each question⁴

Questions	Comments
PART 1:	
1. INCLUSIVENESS & LOCALISATION: How can we ensure a more inclusive, localized approach to humanitarian action?	24
2. CLIMATE CHANGE & RECOVERY: What approaches enable a better transition from disaster response towards recovery?	27
3. TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE: How can traditional knowledge and coping strategies be integrated into humanitarian action?	27
4. DIVERSE HUMANITARIAN ACTORS: How can involving more diverse humanitarian actors, particularly the private sector and military assets, be used more effectively to support humanitarian action in the Pacific?	56
5. DISPLACEMENT: How can we best protect people displaced by disasters and the impacts of climate change in the	28

¹ The discussion took place at: www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/whs_pacific, chaired by Aurélie Balpe, Head, IFRC Pacific Regional Office and moderated by Emele Duituturaga, Executive Director, PIANGO, Moortaza Jiwanji, Pacific Risk Resilience Programme Manager, UNDP Pacific Regional Centre, Walter Kälin, Envoy of the Chairmanship, Nansen Initiative, Dr. Simon Lambert, Researcher, Lincoln University, New Zealand and Dr. Alan Ryan, Executive Director, Australian Civil-Military Centre.

² The discussion was publicized through a number of channels including humanitarian and development media and networks such as ReliefWeb, IRIN, United Nations (UN) agencies and NGOs, through UN Member States, social media and via emails to various humanitarian groups.

³ Comments were received from individuals, national governments, international NGOs, regional institutions, community-based organizations, research organizations, donor organizations and independent consultants, based at headquarters, regional and national offices and in the field.

⁴ Many participants posted more than once and responded to more than one discussion question.

Pacific?	
PART 2:	
1. INCLUSIVENESS & LOCALISATION: How can national leadership in humanitarian response be better supported in the Pacific?	44
2. CLIMATE CHANGE & RECOVERY: What are the key criteria for effective governance of disaster recovery?	37
3. TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE: How can we devolve power and resources to enable stronger local-level response?	25
4. PRIVATE SECTOR & RESILIENCE: How can the private sector better participate in building preparedness, self-sufficiency & community resilience to disasters/climate change impacts?	34
5. URBANIZATION: How can urban communities be supported to prepare for & respond to climate/disaster-induced displacement in the Pacific?	24
TOTAL:	326

Discussion Summary

Detailed summaries of the contributions to the discussion are annexed below in the interim summary and available online here: [Part 1: Weeks 1-2](#) | [Part 2: Weeks 3-4](#). The discussion engaged a diversity of humanitarian actors inclusive of intergovernmental organizations, private sector, students, activists, international NGOs and community level people.

1. Inclusiveness and Localisation

PART 1: Q. 1. INCLUSIVITY AND LOCALISATION: How can we ensure a more inclusive, localized approach to humanitarian action?

A number of recommendations emerged from the discussion on how to include vulnerable and marginalised groups and ensure local-level ownership of humanitarian actions. Participants were in agreement on the importance of inclusion in planning and decision making processes and highlighted that the development of local-level processes can help ensure that humanitarian action is appropriately tailored to the local context. The discussion included consideration of how to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable groups including children, female-headed households due to economic migration; ‘fa’afifine’ or third gender communities who do not fit into male or female categorisations; people with disabilities, the elderly and others.

One participant noted that in order to include the most vulnerable it is crucial to consider the impact of gender roles on how a crisis is experienced, recommending increased training and education on emergency preparedness and response, for example in school curricular, involving civil society organizations (CSOs) and strengthening the tolerance, non-violence and peace agenda as the foundation for other national action plans. Participants also emphasized the need to provide education and training to vulnerable groups in order to enable their inclusion in humanitarian preparedness and response and recommended providing information to the public more broadly, for example via traditional media and online portals.

Inclusiveness and Localisation

Key recommendations:

- Provide education and training on emergencies, including in schools, to enable vulnerable groups to participate.
- Review national action plans to ensure linkages with vulnerable groups and local communities.
- Work through and with existing networks of vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- Provide information and training on emergency preparedness and response to vulnerable groups.
- Establish venues to ensure open and transparent communication and coordination between national actors at all levels.
- Support and enable national leadership in humanitarian response.

The moderator recommended a review of national action plans to establish linkages with CSOs as key actors in humanitarian action, in order to ensure that the particular vulnerabilities of vulnerable groups are addressed and they are included in planning and decision-making processes. The moderator also suggested that, given that 80% of Pacific islanders live in rural or outer islands, local community action plans should also consider vulnerable groups.

“It is well recognized that communities, local governments, civil society organizations, and local NGOs are often the first responders and are quicker in reaching the affected and more informed of the local context as well as their needs” – Disaster Risk Management Professional, Asia-Pacific

Several contributors recommended building relationships and working with existing networks of vulnerable groups at all stages of emergency preparedness, response and recovery in order to tap into their capacities and benefit from the trust they have established within the community. A model shared was the example of networks which serve as platforms for ongoing development discussions and shift to emergency response when required. To facilitate this, work is already ongoing to map existing networks and develop standard operating procedures. Other participants highlighted the role of faith-based communities and organisations as a base for community mobilisation, first response and sharing early warning messages, while others raised the importance of inclusion of local government actors.

Agreeing that national actors are at the forefront of response, participants highlighted the importance of open, transparent communication between government and civil society actors in order to meet both micro- and macro-level needs and short- and long-term requirements. One example shared was from the Philippines where communication and coordination issues delayed service implementation. To facilitate communication one contributor proposed establishing a venue for state and civil society networks and organisations to discuss roles, tasks and develop inclusive systems, while the moderator suggested focusing on the most localised level of response to ensure that neighbours and household members have their own emergency preparedness plans, giving the example of Fiji where one key public message that was disseminated down to the household level advised people to plan to survive on their own for at least 72 hours before help arrives.

“Once a disaster hits a Pacific Islander and his or her life is being threatened, the very first reaction is to seek help within the family unit, if the help is unavailable or is beyond the family coping capacity, the next line of assistance is to seek help from extended family. If for some reasons no help is forthcoming from extended family the next level of assistance comes from people within the community. Volunteers are normally provided by strong and loving members of the wider community. The next line of help comes from NGOs and Red Cross within the countries. Beyond that Government may provide the next level of assistance. Once a state of public emergence is declared, we now know that even Government cannot cope with the disaster. This is why International community’s help is sought” - Luke Paeniu, Research Officer, Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development, University of the South Pacific (Fiji)

Part 2. Question 1: How can national leadership in humanitarian response be better supported in the Pacific?

In order to support national leadership in humanitarian response participants in the consultation focused on increased capacity and resilience building; leveraging and linking national actors at different levels; strengthening relationships between international and national actors; supporting national instruments, structures and mechanisms and supporting regional response and cooperation. In particular, participants highlighted the need to balance humanitarian technical expertise with local indigenous knowledge and culturally appropriate responses, with

the aim of ensuring that response is locally led and resources are requested rather than imposed.

'we must provide the communities with the skills to identify and solve the local issues that they face' - **Diana, Senior Research Fellow, National Defence University (USA)**

In terms of strengthening national capacity, contributors recommended training national volunteer disaster response teams and/or dedicated government disaster risk management staff located within ministries, to be deployed within the region during crises. **Aurelia Balpe, Discussion Chair and Head of Regional Delegation, IFRC (Fiji)** also advised strengthening the capacity of local institutions such as the national disaster management offices.

Contributors recommended a particular focus on building leadership capacity to enable national actors to effectively lead response efforts and mobilize their communities. Participants agreed that it is the role of the community to identify and request the resources required, with response led nationally and international assistance taking a partnership role that carefully avoids “taking over”. Local involvement, it was emphasised, is imperative as it is at the local level that the real situational, contextual and culturally aware knowledge is held. It was also suggested that to meet immediate needs community funding could be encouraged and synergies and collaboration with national CSOs enhanced, making use of local level networks to deliver assistance.

A number of participants advised that greater national leadership requires increased recognition of and relationships between national actors at different levels, recommending enhancing coordination and communication between them and outlining roles and responsibilities, thereby building their public profiles and reputation and enabling greater proximity to the government and decision-making processes that until now predominantly international and UN agencies held. Others highlighted the role of other national actors, including the private sector, in building national leadership and response capacity.

Another means to enable greater national leadership highlighted by participants was international and national support to national disaster management bodies and instruments such as national management centres and provincial disaster coordinators, establishing national disaster committees and supporting the formation of Comprehensive Disaster Plans. Examples were shared of the [Pacific Endeavour exercise](#) as a means to enable greater collaboration on communication systems for assistance and relief and the [ASEAN Regional Forum](#)

[Disaster Relief exercise](#), designed to test civilian and military coordination mechanisms for disaster response. Participants recommended developing a framework to support national leadership through mutual support and exchange of expertise.

“Given that many of the governments in the Pacific region are relatively small and that countries in the region share many common humanitarian risks, South-South cooperation can serve as an effective instrument for mutual support and exchange of expertise.

Pacific solidarity was exemplified when Tonga, Solomon Islands and Fiji lent support to Vanuatu in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Pam, facilitating transport of supplies and deploying engineering or medical teams” - **Osnat Lubrani, United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Representative, Fiji Multi-Country Office (Fiji)**

With regards to information and communication technologies (ICTs), participants highlighted the need for national leaders to openly admit and discuss the risks faced at national and regional levels, in order to take a proactive, preventative approach to disaster risk management. The moderator highlighted that this kind of public discussion by national leaders could help ensure that funding is prioritised and publically endorsed, particularly if given greater media coverage.

On access to funding and resources, participants recommended ensuring access to funding mechanisms by both local and international actors and increasing national access to resources, thereby building popular support for national response, and suggested addressing the challenge of the affordability of access, limiting access to resources.

2. Climate Change and Recovery

a. What approaches enable a better transition from disaster response towards recovery?

Many key recommendations emerged of which four are shared in this summary. Dr. Melchoir Mataki, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology in Solomon Islands, together with several other participants agree on the need to **embed risk governance into existing institutional arrangements** within the government machinery stating that *“this is the basis of the ‘from within’ approach to risk governance whereby we utilise existing institutional arrangements such as the activation of the Recovery Coordination Committee of our current National Disaster Risk Management Plan and incubation of government positions with risk management roles in selected line ministries”*.

Participants also recognize that when there is an insistence that emergency response interventions should address only the immediate impacts of the disaster, as opposed to pre-existing protection threats or the root causes of vulnerability, an opportunity is lost and resources are used with less impact than could have been the case. Robyn Kerrison, Regional Protection Officer Coordinator, Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster from Fiji, states that **funding mechanisms** need to reflect the realities of emergency management and not dictate them. From Uganda, Minani Leodegard shares his experience to the Pacific on the need to formulate **standards to test the legality and legitimacy** of humanitarian intervention to guide conduct during any intervention for better transition from disaster response towards recovery. Completely bearing legal restraints on the use of humanitarian intervention is a dangerous policy that can lead to devastating consequences.

Climate Change and Recovery

Key recommendations:

1. **Embed risk governance into existing institutional arrangements.**
2. Ensure **funding mechanisms** reflect the realities of emergency management rather than dictate them.
3. Formulate **standards to test the legality and legitimacy** of humanitarian intervention to guide conduct during any intervention for better transition from disaster response towards recovery.
4. Ensure public accountability of disaster response and recovery agencies.

Key criteria for effective governance of disaster recovery:

1. Based on good governance principles.
2. Efforts driven by the community.
3. Integrate existing governance mechanisms dealing with protection and social inclusion.
4. Incorporate partnerships with private sector and civil society.
5. Include preparedness for recovery.

Participants also agree on the tendency for disaster response and recovery agencies to become entities themselves and therefore the growing need for **public accountability** of these entities. Owen Podger, Public Management Consultant from Indonesia said that through this *“we can build ways of working together, get planning and consolidated accounts working, recognize the political dimension of working together, help government define its appropriate leadership role, find appropriate roles for politicians, develop concepts of the appropriate roles of business and professions.”*

b. What are the key criteria for effective governance of disaster recovery?

The follow up question to the discussion included a [draft discussion paper titled *Disaster Recovery in the Pacific: Supporting the transition from response to development with good governance*](#) attached for further comments. Participants provided useful feedback on some of the key criteria highlighted in the discussion paper as well as

some additional dimensions that added value to the discussion. A number of contributions pointed to the importance of **good governance principles** for effective response and recovery such as legitimacy, public accountability and appropriate financing of recovery efforts. Several contributions underlined the importance of recovery efforts being **driven by the community**, but also the need to communicate clearly and transparently to communities the plans for recovery by government and partners. Disasters can in some cases exacerbate existing **protection and social inclusion** issues. Therefore, governance mechanisms that deal with these issues on a day-to-day basis need to connect more purposefully in disaster situations.

Effective recovery cannot be conducted by government alone. Whilst they need to be in the driving seat as some participants pointed out, **partnerships** from private sector and civil society is integral to the success of recovery efforts. Preparedness for immediate response is rapidly emerging in the region, particularly through the cluster system. Experience has shown, however, that **preparedness for recovery** is still rather limited albeit critical – there is an opportunity therefore that lies within the existing governance structures at national and local levels to be better prepared for recovery i.e. what assessment and planning approach should take place, how should resources be mobilized, where is there a need for capacity to manage processes?

3. Traditional Knowledge and Coping Strategies

a. Traditional Knowledge in a Modern Context for Humanitarian Action

The Pacific region contains many diverse communities whose resilience is enabled through local coping strategies built on their traditional knowledge. While these traditional coping mechanisms may have to be **adapted to changing risk contexts**, they will be fundamental in addressing future disasters, including climate change impacts, as well as framing humanitarian action. Traditional knowledge often correlates to local knowledge and may be held within a community for its own locally and culturally determined purposes. For Pacific communities to facilitate their own responses – whether to natural hazards, major disasters or local emergencies – they need to be **empowered through being involved from the outset** of any external support and **at the core of all stages** of humanitarian response, from needs assessment to design, deployment, implementation, review and monitoring. To achieve this, the inclusion of civil societies which are in a *“terminal prepared state”* is critical with communities participating and fully supported in disaster risk reduction strategies.

The **cultural skill sets needed to properly collaborate** with Pacific communities need to be acknowledged, with energy and intelligence invested into the nexus of relations and transactions which permeate any society. Online participants (re)asserted the fundamental values articulated at the heart of Pacific cultures. Losing sight of, or diluting, these values is seen to undermine efforts at humanitarian action. In the words of one commentator, *“any knowledge system embedded with values like caring, sharing, hard work and honesty generates and creates humanitarian action”*.

b. Devolving Power and Building Social Capital

Part two of the discussions focused on devolving power to those local actors best positioned to focus aid and support. As one contributor noted, **devolving power means moving away from an individual project model to a holistic long-term partnership model**. Several participants noted that the prevailing funding model deployed by international donors turns the recipient civil society organisations into agents of assistance rather than independent civil society actors. **Empowering local authorities and agencies to ‘own the problem AND the solution’** was seen to make a difference in the Cook Islands. Yet it was also acknowledged that more is needed,

such as **better dissemination of information** and **more training and capacity building at the local level** so that those most directly impacted are able to cope with the change in roles and capacity.

Underpinning these activities is a broader challenge of **building social capital**, a strategy that would have multiple benefits across the Pacific region. The common call from contributors was for a **bottom-up approach to be accepted and resourced**. Of course the top-down organisational approach will still exist. It is where these external forces **contact** the impacted community – with their longstanding local histories, approaches to and expectations from outsiders, intimate understanding of the local environment framed by dreams for a better future – that true empowerment will be enabled.

4. Enhancing the participation of diverse humanitarian actors

This issue was addressed through two questions attracting 84 exchanges. There was early agreement that in the Pacific the concept of the ‘Humanitarian Space’ was relatively well understood. It was agreed that military and private sector actors had significant roles to play. It was understood that in the Pacific, foreign military transport, engineering and logistic response might be required as a part of a first response. It was also understood that military contributions needed to be civilian led and coordinated and should transition to a civilian response as soon as feasible.

Early in the discussion, contributors made a clear distinction between military roles and private sector roles. Within the private sector discussion thread there was analysis of both external philanthropic corporate contributions and the role of local businesses in disaster preparation and post disaster response. There were too many contributors to credit, so with apologies and thanks to them all, the following summarises the recommendations made.

a. How can involving more diverse humanitarian actors, particularly the private sector and military assets, be used more effectively to support humanitarian action in the Pacific?

There was strong agreement that in the Pacific foreign military forces was often the first responder in an emergency, but their role as the ‘wholesale’ deliverer of assistance needed to fit into ‘retail’ distribution of aid by the host state, international organisations and NGOs. Suggestions to maximise the involvement of foreign government assets and corporate philanthropic contributions included:

Recommendations:

1. Regional states commit to embedding an appreciation of the guidelines for the use of military assets in Defence and National Emergency Colleges and training institutions and within their respective military planning processes.
2. Participants agree to produce a Pacific register of country-specific emergency response contexts and guidelines to help shape crisis response by all responders. (A state or International Organization may commit to facilitate this process).
3. Host states coordinating joint civil-military planning efforts to focus on what each responder contributes; this can be achieved by emphasis on enhancing the ‘Cluster’ system.
4. Participants commit to regional civil-military-police training of emergency response planners and responders, including civil servants engaged in crisis response coordination.
5. Governments recognise that national emergency response policy should support, defend and where possible expand the environment for the conduct of crisis response efforts by non-government actors - including the private sector.
6. All parties commit to developing an understood ‘comprehensive approach’ to humanitarian assistance/disaster recovery that recognises the need to reinforce dynamic and adaptive partnerships to deliver response capability efficiently, effectively and ethically.

b. How can the private sector better participate in building preparedness, self-sufficiency & community resilience to disasters/climate change impacts?

The main focus of this thread was on the role of **local businesses** in promoting resilience. Comments focused on ‘the value of partnership between the public, private, and philanthropic sectors with clear demarcations of responsibilities to build community resilience and self-sufficiency’.

A number of participants suggested national and regional strategies to enhance local business participation in crisis response. These included:

Recommendations:

1. States and regional organisations assist relevant private sector and business associations and chambers of commerce develop **guidelines for self-regulation** in post-disaster situations.
2. Establishing more strategic humanitarian hubs for relief goods with private sector support, to **minimise the cost of transportation of relief** to the beneficiaries.
3. Humanitarian actors needed to respect and facilitate the continued operation of private sector distribution of goods and services and not inadvertently disrupt them.
4. Governments and aid agencies should promote programmes to ensure that Small and Medium-sized enterprises are viable in remote communities. These include initiatives such as twinning ‘Village to Business’ endeavours, or combining engineering, technology and design business’s to form charitable trusts.
5. Encourage businesses to partner with Government and non-government actors in risk management analysis to promote the viability of local infrastructure in case of disaster and identify gaps between the current provision of resources and the potential requirement.

5. Disasters, Climate Change and Displacement

Participants in this discussion shared a wide range of thoughts, reflections and examples of good practices on the specific challenges facing disaster displaced persons in the Pacific region, including the potential implications of urbanization, including urban poverty, on disaster displacement. The following summarizes the main, concrete recommendations which emerged from the discussion.

a. How can we best protect people displaced by disasters and the impacts of climate change in the Pacific?

While Pacific Islanders want to stay in their homes as long as possible, some people will have to move in the context of disaster and climate change. States need to prepare accordingly in close collaboration with other relevant actors, including the affected populations themselves, to **address the protection needs of disaster displaced persons**, which include **upholding their safety, well-being and dignity** by providing assistance in ways that respect cultural practices and knowledge, and guard against neglect, separation, exploitation and abuse, particularly for displaced children and indigenous people. Recommendations made by participants for a “tool box” of possible responses to disaster displacement included:

Recommendations:

1. Supporting national capacity to **better integrate and coordinate protection considerations for disaster displaced persons** based upon improved evidence throughout all stages of the humanitarian response, including the recovery

phase, by applying community-based protection approaches that engage wider traditional social structures and networks.

2. Using **temporary protection and humanitarian evacuation** measures for disaster displaced persons, when necessary.
3. **Facilitating voluntary “migration with dignity”** for those living in vulnerable areas, such as through improved education and skills training, and expanded use of regional seasonal workers schemes.
4. Using national and regional **disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation plans** as tools for avoiding disaster displacement, ensuring access to climate change funding mechanisms, and **strengthening relevant legal frameworks to guarantee such action is taken**.
5. Ensuring **careful use of planned relocation**, such as through proactive communication and counselling with relocated and host communities, the use of cultural and traditional rituals, and livelihood support programmes.

b. How can urban communities be supported to better prepare for and respond to displacement in the context of disasters and climate change in the Pacific?

Participants recognized a number of key challenges that have implications for how urban areas could prepare and respond to potential displacement, including: 1) over population and rapid urbanization which lead to informal urban settlements in areas exposed to hazards; 2) convincing those at risk of displacement to relocate to urban areas before a disaster occurs; 3) inadequate or missing land use policies, building codes, and planning tools. Key recommendations included:

Recommendations:

1. Strengthening the capacity of local authorities, NGOs, faith-based groups and traditional community leaders in urban areas regarding disaster displacement, particularly in the areas of data collection, contingency planning, safety measures, and early warning mechanisms.
2. Developing disaster risk reduction and management strategies for urban areas that specifically address informal settlements and disaster displacement, including resolving land and property issues linked to traditional landownership.
3. Informing and closely consulting communities at risk of displacement about disaster risk management plans and tools, such as evacuation plans or potential relocation. Sensitizing and preparing potential host communities, including municipal authorities, about possible displacement from outlying islands to urban areas in disaster situations.

Comments on this report are welcomed. Please post online at: www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/whs_pacific or send to: pacific@whsummit.org.

Detailed summaries of the contributions to the discussion can be found in the interim summaries annexed below and available online here: [Part 1: Weeks 1-2](#) | [Part 2: Weeks 3-4](#).

This report was drafted by the Discussion Chair and Moderators with support from the WHS secretariat, OCHA Regional Office and UN Online Volunteers: Christelle Cazabat (France), Lyndall King (UK), Jennifer Lyndall (USA) and Tina Mason (UK).

Disclaimer: the findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this discussion summary report are those of the participants and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of the World Humanitarian Summit secretariat, UNOCHA, the United Nations or the participants' organizations.