



Beyond Barriers: Integrating climate and disaster risk in the Pacific

Reflection and learning forum: Workshop report

December 2021

HUMANITARIAN
ADVISORY GROUP



AHP

Australian Humanitarian Partnership

World Vision



INTRODUCTION

This workshop report presents outcomes from a Learning Forum recently convened by Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and World Vision Australia to further explore opportunities to advance the integration of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) in the Pacific.

The workshop was held on 25 November 2021, online via Zoom. It brought together practitioners, technical experts and researchers to share lessons from initiatives and programs developed to facilitate the integration of DRR and CCA and to strengthen community resilience in the Pacific. The event was part of a research initiative being undertaken by Humanitarian Advisory Group and World Vision Australia (see Box 1).

Box 1: Beyond Barriers research overview

This project is exploring opportunities for integration of CCA and DRR programming, focusing on local practice and implications at the community level. It seeks to capture local evidence of best practice and identify ways to strengthen and build on these models. The research has been conducted by national researchers who have led case studies across the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) Disaster READY program in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. It will also include case studies in Tonga and Kiribati in 2022. The research is being undertaken by Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and supported by World Vision Australia through the AHP Disaster READY funding from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Objectives

The workshop was held to bring together key actors and leverage the many complementary initiatives working towards a similar goal – a more resilient Pacific community. It had four key objectives:

- i. **Identify** key themes and linkages between different initiatives and regional priorities
- ii. **Brainstorm** catalysts for change to advance the agenda in new ways
- iii. **Propose** opportunities for collective impact
- iv. **Build** a community of practice for ongoing dialogue and collaboration

Structure

The workshop was structured in two sessions. In session 1, we heard from several speakers working in the integration and resilience space, followed by an active Q&A from participants. This included the presentation of emerging findings from the Beyond Barriers research, a panel of 5 speakers representing their research and initiatives, and a presentation of regional priorities and opportunities.

In session 2, participants split into breakout rooms to:

- i. Discuss emerging themes and opportunities across initiatives
- ii. Identify the opportunities with the greatest potential for collective impact
- iii. Brainstorm catalysts for change in each of these areas

SPEAKERS



Linda Vaike

Senior researcher, Beyond Barriers Project; PhD scholar, University of the South Pacific

Linda Vaike presented emerging findings and key themes from the Beyond Barriers research, drawing on data collection across the 5 AHP Disaster READY countries: Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, PNG and Timor-Leste.



Teea Tira

Project Coordinator, Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change and Resilience Building, Pacific Island Forum Secretariat

Teea Tira presented on Pacific regional priorities and the current regional architecture and frameworks to support integrated approaches. This presentation also highlighted key opportunities and enablers to build resilience.

Panellists



Josh Hallwright

Humanitarian Lead and Blockchain Advisor, Oxfam Australia; PhD scholar, RMIT

Josh Hallwright presented on the formal integration of CCA and DRR in Vanuatu under their approach to resilient development, touching on regulatory, institutional, and policy perspectives.



Sivendra Michael

Program Specialist Gov4Res, UNDP Pacific

Sivendra Michael presented learnings from the UNDP Gov4Res project in the Pacific. The Gov4Res Project works with Pacific Island countries to ensure that they adapt their decision making and governance systems towards risk-informed development.



Fernanda Del Lama Soares

PhD scholar, RMIT

Fernanda Del Lama Soares presented on the policy trajectories for risk governance and implications across Pacific Island Countries.



Anna Gero

Research Principal, Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney

Anna Gero presented recent scoping research exploring how Australian NGOs work with partners in the Pacific, as they aim to better support risk informed development through climate change and disaster resilience integration in humanitarian and development programming.

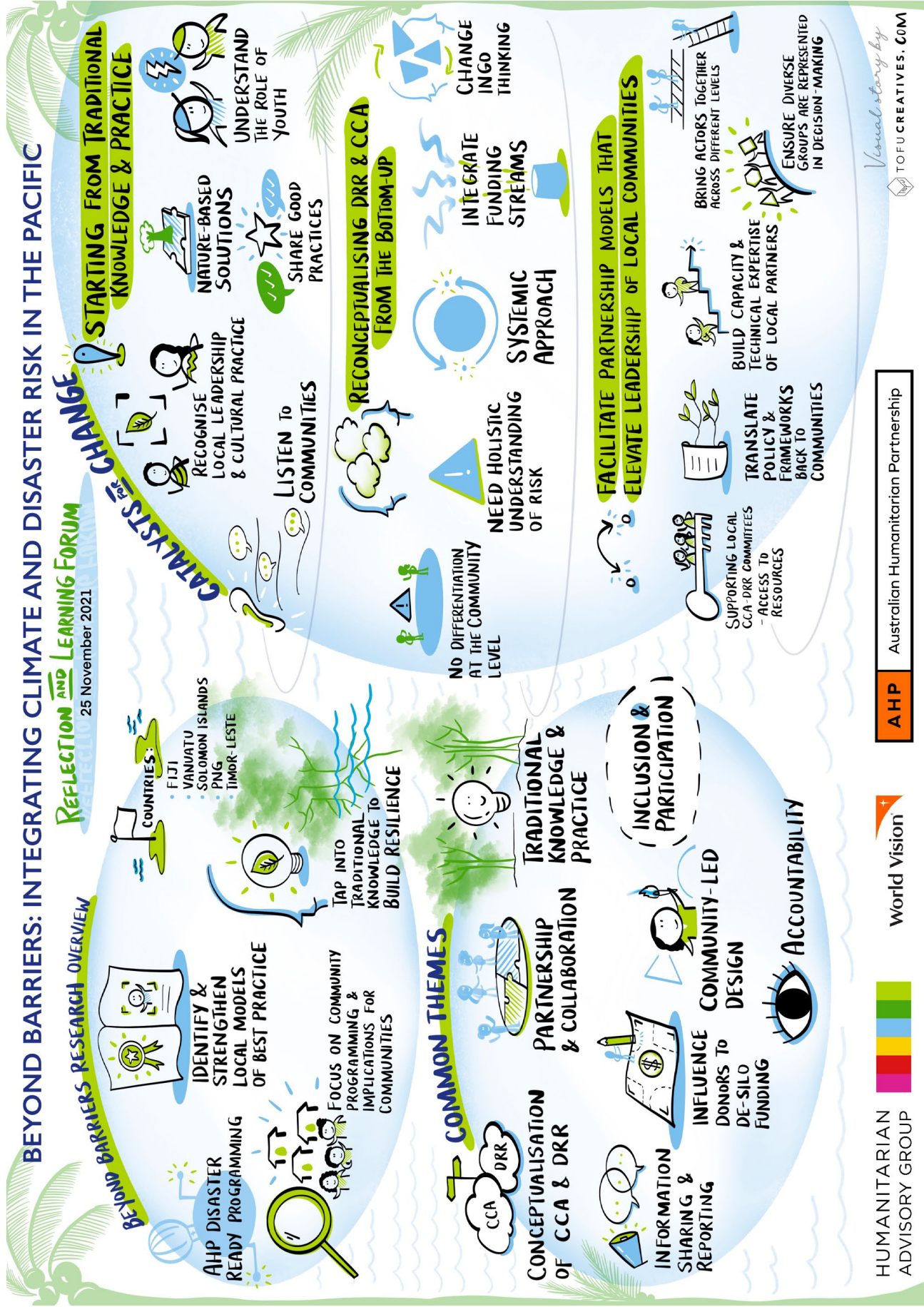


Sevuloni Rokomatu Ratu

Senior Youth and Volunteering Officer, IFRC Pacific Delegation; Chair of the Pacific Resilience Partnership Youth Working Group

Sevuloni Rokomatu Ratu shared examples of best practice and lessons learned through the youth movement and engagement in the resilience space in the Pacific.

Figure A: Visual representation of the event



AHP Australian Humanitarian Partnership

World Vision



HUMANITARIAN ADVISORY GROUP

EMERGING THEMES

In the first breakout room session, participants discussed what stood out most to them across the morning presentations and which emerging themes presented both the largest barriers and largest opportunities for change. The most commonly identified themes are presented below.



Partnership and collaboration

The presentations in session 1 showcased only a small fraction of the many stakeholders working on similar issues around the integration of DRR and CCA and building resilience in the Pacific. This highlighted the importance of partnership and collaboration to ensure we are all working together and learning from each other to advance the agenda in new ways. Partnership with local actors was emphasised as particularly important to ensure stakeholders are working across all levels and effectively reaching communities.



Conceptualisation of DRR and CCA

It was raised that this is not a new conversation, rather challenges around the lack of integrated DRR and CCA programming have persisted for years. It was suggested that humanitarian and development practitioners need to look inward to change the siloed perception of DRR and CCA. We need to stop speaking in divisive language and build a more holistic understanding of risk across all stakeholders.



Information sharing and reporting

Participants highlighted the gap in reporting and sharing information between implementing agencies and donors, government and communities as a consistent barrier. Some argued that issues with reporting stem from a lack of understanding of DRR and CCA, resulting in confusion around the kind of information being collected and to whom it is reported. Communities' lack of access to consistent information and accessible messaging was also identified as a key barrier to effective programming.



Traditional knowledge and practice

The importance of recognising and elevating traditional knowledge and practice was raised across numerous presentations and prioritised across all breakout groups. This was highlighted as a way to develop and support solutions that would be better understood and owned by communities. There is opportunity to build on existing structures and practices rather than designing programs based on international solutions.



Community-led design

In addition to utilising traditional knowledge, the inclusion of community representatives in design and decision making was also highlighted as a key opportunity to ensure programming is effectively meeting needs. This includes using participatory approaches for program design, ensuring diverse groups are represented and partnering with local organisations for implementation.



Integrated funding

The lack of integrated funding streams was identified as a key barrier to integrated programming across numerous initiatives. It was suggested that stakeholders collectively attempt to influence donors and national governments to form integrated mechanisms to fund disaster and climate resilience. While this challenge stems from siloed international structures and funding streams, there is opportunity to support the development of integrated national structures and mechanisms. It will be important to work together with donors to achieve this.



Accountability

Participants discussed issues surrounding to whom agencies were accountable. Operational actors are accountable to their donors who often do not reflect nationally determined priorities. Accountability mechanisms should ensure not only that communities are central but that national government stakeholders and their integrated frameworks are part of the accountability loop. This will be critical in shifting away from entrenched practices.

CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

Following the report back to plenary, participants identified 3 key themes that they felt had the greatest potential to catalyse change. New breakout groups were formed according to participants' expertise and interest and each group was assigned one theme to explore in more detail and propose opportunities for collective efforts.

Starting from traditional knowledge and practice

This group focused on the need to prioritise and act on traditional knowledge and practice. They proposed that the sector needs to collectively shift its mindset to one that *starts* from traditional and contextual knowledge rather than attempting to adapt international ideals to contextual factors as programs progress.

This will require practitioners to first and foremost *listen* to community members to understand the process of traditional engagement and conversations. This will help to understand local leadership, structures and the roles of diverse groups in the community. Organisations must reflect on their decision-making processes and their accountability to work in contextually and culturally appropriate ways. Communities must be involved in program design.



Key questions to explore

- ▶ How can we systematically approach the collection and sharing of information on traditional knowledge and best practice across contexts? What examples work well that can be leveraged and scaled?
- ▶ How can youth be more involved in accessing, leveraging and perpetuating traditional knowledge and practice?
- ▶ How can we determine if/when traditional knowledge and practice is no longer good practice?

- ▶ How can we centralise the role of traditional knowledge and science in practice? What processes need to be in place?
- ▶ How can we restore conditions for the application of traditional knowledge? How can we support communities when traditional practice cannot keep pace with the changing climate and conditions?

Reconceptualising DRR and CCA from the bottom-up

This group prioritised the reconceptualisation of DRR and CCA. They proposed that this should be approached from the bottom-up, by building a holistic understanding of risk in communities and among implementing agencies rather than focusing exclusively on policy trajectories. While policy and practice are intrinsically linked, this group suggested that those working on the ground to implement programs hold significant influence to break the siloes.

This will require bringing together all stakeholders – community members, implementing agencies, government, donors, etc. – to deconstruct the terms, change the language, change the thinking and eventually, change the funding. At the community level, there is no differentiation between DRR and CCA, this holistic understanding must be brought through other levels.



Key questions to explore

- ▶ How can we move conversation to action? What is the entry point with the greatest potential for a ripple effect across the system?
- ▶ What political and systemic barriers exist in integrating DRR and CCA governance and funding? How can these be overcome?

- ▶ What accountability mechanisms can be put in place to ensure programming is integrated?
- ▶ What behavioural change is necessary to facilitate this shift? What are the barriers to shifting behaviours?
- ▶ Who can lead these changes? Who can increase accountability for action?

Facilitate partnerships models that elevate leadership of local communities

The group discussed ways to collectively facilitate a partnership and collaboration model that empowers the engagement, participation and leadership of local communities. Effective and inclusive partnerships will be essential to ensure we are reaching the most vulnerable, working across all levels (local, provincial, national and international), and continually learning from and building on previous models and approaches.

This group proposed that stakeholders request additional funding from donors to support local partners and facilitate their direct engagement and leadership in disaster and climate change

issues. This would include funding opportunities to build capacity and technical expertise in local partners and additional support for diverse groups to be engaged. Additional funding could also be used to support collaboration and information sharing across all levels.



Key questions to explore

- ▶ What partnership models have been successful in delivering integrated approaches? How can these be leveraged and scaled?
- ▶ What training or support do local partners need? How can this be delivered sustainably? What do international actors need to learn?
- ▶ How can we collectively advocate for additional funding from donors to support this shift? What are the incentives?
- ▶ What behavioural change is needed to facilitate this shift? What are the barriers to shifting behaviours?
- ▶ How can we ensure ongoing forums and collaborations such as this are shared widely and continually built upon rather than duplicated by other actors?

WHAT NEXT?

We hope that the outcomes of this workshop can serve as a launchpad for future efforts to boost resilience in Pacific communities, and to continue this ongoing dialogue with key actors in this space. Proposed key questions have been presented for further exploration in ongoing forums or future research. If you are interested to discuss anything in more detail or to learn more about any of the research presented at the workshop, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the research team.

For more information, please contact:

Jesse McCommon at jmcccommon@hag.org.au

Saadia Majeed at smajeed@hag.org.au

Jess Lees at jlees@hag.org.au

Cedric Hoebreck at Cedric.Hoebreck@worldvision.com.au