

Unless development planning in Pacific island countries focuses on the need to assess hazard risks, these countries will remain among the most vulnerable in the world.

A “business as usual” approach to managing risks—one that focuses more on disaster relief than on long-term disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation—will result in increased economic and human losses from extreme events.

Acting Today For Tomorrow

A POLICY AND PRACTICE NOTE FOR CLIMATE- AND DISASTER-RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

Policy Brief

Guidance for Countries

Pacific island countries and territories are among the most vulnerable in the world. They combine high exposure to frequent and damaging natural hazards with low capacity to manage the resulting risks. Since 1950 extreme events have affected approximately 9.2 million people in the Pacific region: they have caused 9,811 reported deaths and damage of around US\$3.2 billion. Vulnerability is exacerbated by poor socioeconomic development planning, which has increased exposure and disaster losses, and by climate change, which has increased the magnitude of cyclones, droughts, and flooding. The total value of infrastructure, buildings, and cash crops considered at some level of risk in the Pacific is estimated at over **US\$112 billion**. Inaction could therefore prove extremely expensive and will only grow more expensive in the future. (See table 1 for asset replacement costs and economic losses due to extreme events.)

Table 1. Asset replacement costs and economic losses due to tropical cyclone, earthquake, and tsunami

Country	Assets replacement cost US\$ million	Annual average economic losses		Losses from 100-Year event	
		US\$ million	% GDP	US\$ million	% GDP
Cook Islands	1,422	4.9	2.0	103.0	42.2
Fiji	22,175	79.1	2.6	844.8	28.1
Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	2,048	8.3	2.9	150.7	52.4
Kiribati	1,182	0.3	0.2	4.0	2.6
Marshall Islands	1,696	3.1	2.0	67.4	43.3
Nauru	453	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Niue	249	0.9	5.8	22.7	143.4
Palau	1,501	2.7	1.6	46.7	27.5
Papua New Guinea	49,209	85.0	0.9	794.9	8.4
Samoa	2,611	9.9	1.7	152.9	27.0
Solomon Islands	3,491	20.5	3.0	280.6	41.4
Timor-Leste	20,145	5.9	0.8	143.7	20.5
Tonga	2,817	15.5	4.3	225.3	63.0
Tuvalu	270	0.2	0.8	4.8	15.1
Vanuatu	3,334	47.9	6.6	370.1	50.8
TOTAL	112,602	284.2		3211.6	

Source: World Bank, *Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative, Country Risk Profiles* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011).

▲ Photo: Abraham Simpson, FSM Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change Project. Construction of a climate proofed road, Kosrae, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

Development that integrates risk considerations is the best solution to the problem of vulnerability in the Pacific. If this solution is not achieved, economic and human losses from extreme events will increase, slow-onset and low-intensity climate and weather events will continue to create hardships for the poor and other marginalized groups, economic growth will be slow, and progress toward Millennium Development Goals will be delayed.

Evidence shows that disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) programs can be cost-effective. The cost of collecting weather and climate data, for example, is outweighed by the benefits for agriculture (better scheduling of planting and harvest), the tourism industry (scheduling of activities), and electric utilities (anticipation of demand fluctuations).

But in spite of being cost-effective, and in spite of the various policy and planning instruments that have appeared in recent years (such as Joint National Action Plans for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction), the goal of climate- and disaster- resilient development has eluded Pacific island countries and territories. Although disaster- and climate-related investment has grown in the last 10 years, projects and programs tend to be short term, poorly coordinated, and poorly integrated. The institutions responsible for supporting DRR and CCA (governments, regional organizations, and donor and development institutions) have weak partnerships, tend to be structurally rigid, and often work in isolation from the actors involved in socioeconomic development planning and implementation. Direct economic losses are often

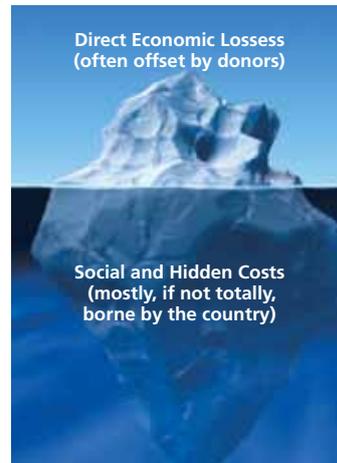


Figure 1. Countries tend to focus on direct economic losses, many of which are offset by donors; social and hidden costs are often larger if their impact on the national economy is taken into account. These costs are seldom offset by donors.

offset by donors and other development partners, but countries still bear the social and hidden costs, such as increased illness, lost work days, lost subsistence crops, and reduced transport links (figure 1).

This arrangement is inefficient and expensive and does little to address the underlying causes of vulnerability. **But barriers to achieving climate- and disaster-resilient development can be overcome if three critical requirements are met** (figure 2):

1. Risk considerations must be integrated in the formulation and implementation of social and economic development policies and plans.
2. Political authority, leadership, and accountability must be robust and effective.
3. Coordination and cooperation among actors must be increased.

Figure 2. Key requirements for climate- and disaster-resilient development



Practical steps for grounding risk considerations in development:

1. Strengthen support to relevant national and subnational institutions to ensure coordination of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation at all levels.
2. Focus on outcomes rather than inputs to clarify and rationally assign the roles and responsibilities of institutions.
3. Make mainstreaming of climate and disaster risk considerations in development planning and budgetary processes a priority.
4. Increase commitment to monitoring and evaluation in order to improve outcomes and impacts, and use existing frameworks for monitoring development in the absence of dedicated resilient-development frameworks.
5. Give precedence to development initiatives that reduce vulnerability and adapt existing tools (such as land use plans, building codes, and environmental regulations) to achieve higher resilience to hazards.
6. Insist that data and information produced by partners be accessible, serve the needs of end-users, and inform the selection of priority investments and development programs.



Practical steps for achieving strong political authority, leadership, and accountability:

1. Anchor coordination of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in a high-level central ministry/body with a high level of political authority.
2. Ensure that leaders are knowledgeable about disaster and climate risk management.
3. Build on existing mechanisms such as strategic and corporate planning and budgetary processes.
4. Ensure that DRR and CCA are reflected in national and subnational budgets.
5. Proactively include communities, local/provincial governments, and central governments in the design and implementation of disaster- and climate-resilient investments.

< Photo: Cyril Jazbec. North Tarawa, Kiribati.

Practical steps for promoting strong coordination and partnerships:

1. Encourage mutual trust, respect, and flexibility among actors at national and regional levels to foster good working relationships and ensure adequate resourcing and efficient sharing of knowledge and implementation capacity.
2. Optimize the comparative advantages of regional institutions by appropriately dividing labor (for instance, coordination responsibility could be anchored in the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, which oversees regional development, cooperation, and integration; and DRR and CCA services could be handled by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, which have the technical mandate and capacity to deliver them).
3. Improve alignment between national institutions and increase involvement of relevant ministries (in particular Finance and Economic Planning) to make climate change and disaster risk into economy-wide and development-wide issues and facilitate effective whole-of-government approaches.
4. Use strong and transparent consultation and coordination mechanisms to facilitate sharing of data, good practices, and lessons learned.
5. Promote joint planning, programming, and implementation of DRR and CCA interventions with development partners in ways that make optimum use of their comparative advantages.

Acting Today For Tomorrow

This policy brief is based on a longer World Bank document, "Acting Today for Tomorrow: A Policy and Practice Note for Climate- and Disaster-Resilient Development in the Pacific Islands Region" (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2012). All relevant documentation for the brief can be found in the policy and practice note.

▲ Photo: World Bank. New roads help villagers reach schools, hospitals and markets in Samoa.

The writing team benefitted greatly from the feedback and guidance of peer reviewers and advisors from the Pacific region and from the World Bank. Special acknowledgment is due to the organizations that supported the World Bank in the dissemination of the policy and practice note, particularly the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme. We also acknowledge the financial support of the partners of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery.



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