CDAC NETWORK

communicating with disaster-affected communities

GROUND TRUTH SOLUTIONS

The humanitarian–development interface of communication and community engagement in Fiji

A working paper

Australian Aid

Note to readers: This working paper is shared to open a discussion on the topic of the humanitarian–development interface of communication and community engagement (CCE) in Fiji. It is anticipated that the contents of this paper and possible future pathways for more systematic CCE will be the centre of a workshop discussion in Suva in 2022/2023. Three expected outcomes of the workshop are:

i) Exploration of the paper's recommendations with members of the Communications Cluster and validation of recommendations to carry forward.
ii) Key actions to ensure more predictable and deliberate two-way CCE in disaster management in Fiji.
iii) Practical avenues for diverse individuals and communities to verify and triangulate the effectiveness of CCE.

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Preface

This study of the humanitarian–development interface of communication and community engagement (CCE) in Fiji was commissioned by the CDAC Network and forms part of a jointly facilitated CDAC–Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) systems-level innovation project on CCE in Fiji and Vanuatu, funded by Australian Aid.[1] The overarching aim of the project is to provide technical support to government and civil society organisations (CSOs) in Fiji to ensure more effective CCE for disaster preparedness and response, enabling greater inclusion and participation of and accountability towards people affected by disasters.

A central area of action is the National Preparedness and Response Platform for CCE led by the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) – the CCE working group – which was established under the Fiji Communications Cluster to enable a more systematic approach to CCE in preparedness, response and recovery. The Cluster is convened by the Ministry of Communications. It has been designed to provide national capability to support the full lifecycle of engagement between communities and those who support them during a crisis: a nationally based effort to enable communities to influence decisions; to listen to communities; and to use those insights to guide and adapt response strategies to effectively address people's needs.

The project seeks to draw links between the humanitarian relief and longer-term development spaces and will provide evidence to the wider humanitarian community of the merits of investment in systematic two-way CCE for locally led responses.

This working paper provides a snapshot of various humanitarian and development CCE/participation frameworks and systems in the Fiji context. It aims to discuss entry points for effective CCE in crises and inform scale-up and use of findings to better link humanitarian and development planning, implementation and impact. It builds on the Scoping Mission Report for Fiji, which informed the design phase of the project. There is also a deeper dive on the current state of two-way communication in Fiji, which summarises the extent to which civil society is effectively communicating with, and hearing from, communities. The report, titled 'Status of Two-Way Communication in Fiji' includes a series of recommendations, which are broadly aligned to those summarised below, including the need to invest in and adequately resource CCE capacity. [2]

The initiating of the research for this paper coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented direct engagement with communities. The project will continue to undertake a deeper examination of systems-level and participatory processes, especially at the divisional and community levels, seeking to identify interconnections and recommend improvements to better leverage each strand of work across the so-called humanitarian–development divide.

[1] The multi-year project is titled: 'Operationalising Localisation and the Participation Revolution: Communications Preparedness and Accountability for Disaster Response'.
[2] GTS and CDAC Network (2021) *Status of Two-Way Communication in Fiji*.

Summary of possible future pathways for more sustainable CCE

1. Support the embedding of commitments on CCE in legal and policy frameworks and implementation plans.

2. Put measures in place to elevate the Communications Cluster's prevention and preparedness role between disasters.

3. Review existing poverty and spatial mapping and analyse the links to CCE to better target and address the CCE needs of the most vulnerable.

4. Develop an overarching CCE implementation plan and advocacy package for the cluster system to enable more systematic CCE.

5. Elaborate an accountability framework for the Communications Cluster to keep meaningful CCE progress on track to meet locally agreed minimum benchmarks.

6. Mobilise action on CCE across national and divisional institutional structures and identify CCE champions.

7. Find and innovate ways of bridging community capacity gaps for two-way communication in disaster management.

8. Establish a common feedback mechanism for emergency response with effective information management systems anchored in the national response architecture.

9. Mobilise international partner support for national CCE leadership.

1. Introduction

Fiji is regularly affected by disasters, in particular tropical cyclones. In the 2021 World Risk Index, Fiji was ranked 14th highest worldwide in terms of disaster risk. As the World Bank noted in 2021, the dual shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and Category 5 Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold inflicted on Fiji 'an economic crisis of unprecedented scale', with the national economy contracting by more than one-fifth in 2020. This was one of the sharpest economic contractions in the world and the steepest in Fiji's history. Climate change will also increase the impact and frequency of certain hazards in the future: the proportion of Category 4 and 5 cyclones may rise and flooding is expected to increase, while landslides could become more frequent due to heavy rainfall. The impact of geophysical events such as earthquakes and tsunamis, though not affected by climate change, may be worsened by sea-level rise.[5]

Reliable information is key to saving lives and livelihoods. But this is not a one-way, top-down process. Two-way CCE defines a commitment to ensure that communities are able to provide information on their disaster risks and disaster impacts to governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations, so that their opinions and concerns can be clearly understood by relevant decision-makers. Thus, local, accountable leadership and governance mechanisms must be strengthened from the bottom up if CCE efforts are to be sustainable and to function for small- to large-scale disasters.

In Fiji, citizen participation and community engagement are already entrenched in daily life. CCE is contextually linked to social and institutional settings, from public policymaking, to climate change action, to efforts at intentional inclusion. Each is happening in evolving contexts and under different participatory frameworks, including civic and citizen engagement, social accountability, political accountability and, in a disaster context, humanitarian accountability.

In times of crisis, assessments of people's experiences with Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016 have shown that information availability and accessibility can be challenging, particularly in isolated and disaster-prone areas.[6] More effective coordination and capacity would promote greater exchange of information between local communities and agencies responsible for disaster awareness and responses. During TC Winston, disaster awareness information was sometimes communicated in a way that was difficult for community members to interpret or act upon, hindering their ability to access life-saving information or make risk-informed decisions. Learning from TC Winston, concerted efforts have been made in subsequent Cyclone responses (e.g. in 2020's TC Harold and TC Yasa) under the leadership of the NDMO to ensure information is shared via multiple communications channels and digital platforms to enable wider access, and in Fiji's three main languages, iTaukei, Fiji Hindi and English, together with sign language interpretation.

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[3] Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft (2021) *World Risk Report 2021*, p. 7.
[4] The World Bank (2021) *Fiji First Recovery and Resilience Development Policy Operation with a Catastrophe-Deferred Drawdown Option*.
[5] Fijian Government, World Bank and Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (2017) 'Fiji 2017: Climate Vulnerability Assessment – Making Fiji Climate Resilient' pp. 50–55.
[6] World Bank, Social Protection and Humanitarian Assistance Nexus for Disaster Response (2017); IFRC Cyclone Yasa Emergency Plan of Action (2020); IFRC (2021) Final Report: Tropical Cyclone Harold.
[7] Australian Red Cross (2020) 'Local response in a global pandemic: a case study of the Red Cross response to Tropical Cyclone Harold during COVID-19 in Vanuatu and Fiji'.

In complementary processes, CSOs, such as the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation, have a hub where they provide information to visually and hearing-impaired people using mobile phones. Equally, in the TC Harold response, 'given the heightened importance of communication and community engagement owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was strong participation and leadership at local levels facilitated through local Red Cross networks during this dual response'. The Australian Red Cross further found that, 'strong personal relationships and the use of social media platforms for communication with remote support changed the way national and international responders worked together. This encouraged less formal and more open communication at strategic moments that were chosen by local responders.' [8]

On the sectoral interface between social protection and humanitarian assistance, the findings of a World Bank report on lessons learnt from the 2016 TC Winston 'suggest the need for strengthening communication outreach in times of disaster and sharing important messages on the initiative for achieving greater impact'.[9] The report recommended that the government develop a post-disaster communication plan to ensure disaster-affected communities are kept informed of developments, and to allay misconceptions that may arise as a result of lack of information. This recommendation could be addressed as a commitment, for example, in any future revision of Fiji's humanitarian policy.

Similarly, the government's TC Winston Post-Disaster Needs Assessment highlighted the need for resources to support the development and regular dissemination of risk reduction messages, regular disaster risk management (DRM) training for journalists, an information management system and an upgraded information and communications platform to better facilitate information flows prior to and after events. It also drew attention to the need to recruit and retain specialist skills including in information management and risk management, as well as the need for improved networking and coordination among stakeholders involved in DRM. This should include a stronger relationship with the private sector and links with local NGOs and their umbrella coordination body, the Fiji Council of Social Services, so that local actors can more easily interface with the government.[10]

Lessons learned following TC Winston also included:

'SOPs [standard operating procedures] and templates should be developed for use in early warning messages sent via SMS, and a framework for cooperation in emergencies for telecommunication should be developed. In addition, the NDMO should convene regular drills with a range of stakeholders representing different social groups. These simulations should take place at the district, divisional, and national levels. Combining drills with simplified early warning messaging and raised community awareness will help inform people about how to protect themselves and vulnerable groups within the community.' [11]

The NDMO is the coordinating centre of the Fiji Government in times of national disasters. It operates under the National Disaster Management Act and coordinates the national management of disaster activities under the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management structures. With the support of national and international partners, and working in tandem with a number of networks across the country, community-based groups and CSOs are brought together to support disaster preparedness and response. On the wider development front, responsibility for climate change sits under the Ministry of Economy's Climate Change and International Cooperation Division (CCICD).

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[10] Fijian Government (2016) *Fiji Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, Tropical Cyclone Winston, February 20, 2016*, pp. 112–116.
[11] Government of Fiji, World Bank and Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (2017) 'Fiji 2017: Climate Vulnerability Assessment – Making Fiji Climate Resilient', p. 118.

This working paper both describes the frameworks that exist, identifying the essential interconnections, and also recommends improvements with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of each strand of work. In this regard, the humanitarian–development interface is a particular focus of interest. While the project's support to the NDMO on CCE cuts across the various CCE frameworks, it has not, as yet, sufficiently connected with ongoing development processes.

1.1 Research Methodology

Using the local and national experiences and knowledge inherent in the National Programme Team and considering the body of literature already available on CCE, secondary sources were the main basis for the research. This was largely because the review was carried out during the COVID-19 crisis that has gripped Fiji, which resulted in many limitations to normal life.

The study was supported by a number of individual and group consultations, virtual stakeholder interviews and a limited number of face-to-face consultations, the latter being the preferred mode for interviews had it not been for COVID-19.

2. The humanitarian–development interface

Global efforts to more effectively align the humanitarian and development sectors have escalated in the past decade. A strong consensus emerged at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 among Member States[12] for humanitarian and development actors to work collaboratively, based on their comparative advantages, towards 'collective outcomes' that reduce need, risk and vulnerability.[13] These serve as instalments towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[14] The Grand Bargain, a unique agreement launched at the WHS between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations, further calls for 'localisation', a 'participation revolution' and an increased focus on the humanitarian–development nexus. To achieve a participation revolution, it points to the need for the inclusion of communities affected by humanitarian crises in decisions 'to be certain that the humanitarian response is relevant, timely, effective and efficient'. [15]

Fiji's National Humanitarian Policy for Disaster Risk Management further aligns with WHS outcomes and the Grand Bargain commitments and 'highlights the importance of establishing National Information management and communications with emphasis on building community networks and promoting localization'.[16] As part of the 'New Way of Working' agreed at the WHS, efforts are increasing 'to bring the worlds of humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction closer together, aiming to lay the foundation for sustainable development',[17] echoing the commitments in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) to reduce risk and increase resilience.[18]

There were renewed calls to better synchronise humanitarian–development efforts in 2020, with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) noting that: 'Humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and peacebuilding are not serial processes: they are all needed at the same time in order to reduce needs, risk and vulnerability. Collaboration can be achieved by working towards collective outcomes, over multiple years, based on the comparative advantage of a diverse range of actors.' [19] Past experiences have shown us, however, that there is always a risk that humanitarian action leaps to creating new mechanisms while development activity can appear to be inflexible from an emergency perspective, unable to respond swiftly to a disaster. Indeed, going more deeply into process issues, in humanitarian response it is well recognised that 'what is needed is for organizations and decision makers as a whole to make listening and responding to people their real priority'. But incentive to improve in this regard is often lacking.[20]

[12] UNDP in Geneva (n.d.) 'Humanitarian and Development Nexus in Protracted Emergencies'.
[13] UN Economic and Social Council (n.d.) 'Enhancing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus'.
[14] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (n.d.) 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.
[15] IASC (n.d.) 'The Grand Bargain (Official website)'.
[16] Fijian Government (2019) 'Disaster Preparedness "A Daily Thing"', 19 November.
[17] UNDRR (2020) 'Scaling up DRR in Humanitarian/Development Contexts'. Opening Remarks by SRSG Mami Mizutori, 'Global Consultative Workshop – Scaling up DRR in Humanitarian/Development Contexts', 27 February, Geneva, Switzerland.
[18] UNDRR (2015) Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.
[19] IASC (2020) 'Issue Paper: Exploring Peace within the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus (HDPN)'. The paper notes: 'Peace is not only about the absence of violence but also about sustaining peaceful societies' (p. 1).
[20] OCHA (2021) 'What's wrong with the humanitarian aid system and how to fix it'. Remarks by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mark Lowcock, at the Center for Global Development on Proposal for an Independent Commission for Voices in Crisis, 22 April, online.

Similarly, in efforts to achieve the SDGs and eradicate poverty, the UN Secretary-General commits the UN to 'Building Forward Better' using a global recovery approach where 'we need to listen far more to the views and guidance of people living in poverty, address indignities and dismantle barriers to inclusion in every society.' [21] The importance of better dialogue and the involvement of citizens in decision-making about actions that affect their lives is greater than ever before.

In Fiji, humanitarian and development agencies have been working to devise new ways to align the humanitarian response and development systems as a continuum, rather than as separate fields of work. As the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific notes, 'knowledge brokering, communication and access to meteorological, climate, geological and other relevant information and tools are essential to effectively address key risks across the humanitarian–development continuum'.[22]

Within the country, many of the key frameworks for a stronger nexus are already in place. The Government of Fiji's 2017–2036 National Development Plan (NDP), with the vision of 'transforming Fiji', maps out 'the way forward for Fiji and all Fijians to realise our full potential as a nation'.[23] Reflecting the sustainable development principles underpinning the SDGs, the NDP points to an integrated approach to climate change and disaster resilience. It takes a people-centred approach to development and commits to a 'socially inclusive Fiji and empowered Fijians'. It is strong on participation and in particular gender equality and the empowerment of women, 'allowing them opportunities for greater participation in leadership and decision making' (p. 5). It recognises 'the abilities of those from diverse groups' in labour markets (p. 14) and makes numerous references to people with disabilities and older people, as well as climate risk and marginalised communities.

The NDP further commits to a whole-of-government approach in partnership with civil society to support reforms to implement the recommendations agreed to under Fiji's second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2014. This includes ratification of all human rights treaties and conventions by 2024. While the NDP largely focuses on basic services such as health, education, housing, water and sanitation, the connection can be made between the long-term, core development goals and the centrality of disaster risk reduction (DRR). The 2017 National Humanitarian Policy for Disaster Risk Management sets responsibility for both national and local response coordination within the mandate of the NDMO. This includes responsibility for developing disaster plans at different levels, which can be aligned with development plans to deepen the humanitarian–development nexus in Fiji.

In further efforts to bridge gaps, and building on the 2018 National Adaptation Plan for climate resilience, the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management (MRMDDM) in 2020 embarked on the development of a 10-Year Resilient Strategic Development Plan (SDP) to 'ensure that rural and maritime communities in Fiji are productive, progressive, safe and resilient', noting that: 'Development without climate change and disaster risk management can be costly and even disastrous. Risk-informing development across sectors is crucial to the resilience of rural communities in Fiji'. The SDP will be framed by the goals and targets outlined in the 2017–2036

[21] UNSDG (2021) 'UN Secretary-General António Guterres' message for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty', 17 October.
[22] Pacific Resilience Partnership (2017) Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific. An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (FRDP): 2017–2030.
[23] Fijian Government (2017) Fiji National Development Plan 2017–2036.
[24] The Fiji Times (2020) 'Government drives an integrated approach to rural and maritime development', 28 August, quoting Permanent Secretary for MRMDDM, David Kolitagane, after the signing of a letter of agreement between the MRMDDM and the UN Development Programme Pacific Office in Fiji.

NDP, as well as aggregating the ambitions of the four (draft) Divisional Development Plans. Fiji's existing Integrated Rural Development Framework proposes an effective institutional framework for community consultation, cooperation and community participation in development. It further promotes the stimulation of rural communities to seek their own improvement through their own effort and resources.

But how will this work in practice? Success of development projects was traditionally assessed on the economic or human development returns derived from them, fitting within internal project goals. How projects were able to mitigate losses from disasters was always, at best, secondary to other outcomes. But there has been progress on this front lately, with development projects being commended for their positive impact in reducing losses during a disaster situation. The following are examples:

a) **The Vuma (Ovalau) Village Youth Housing Scheme** was funded as a livelihood development project. It started in 2011 as a solution the village elders came up with to enable young couples to have their own homes. This community-led project saw village youth plant yaqona as their contribution to the scheme while government provided two-thirds of the funds to cover the project costs. In 2015, three houses were constructed to cyclone-proof standard by an experienced carpenter funded by the government. When TC Winston struck in February 2016, the village of Vuma was severely affected, but the three houses constructed under the scheme were unharmed, reducing the costs of recovery and reconstruction. This illustrates the value of implementing projects that are grounded in the goals set by the community, with the community assuming leadership.

b) **The Vunidogoloa Village Relocation Project** was part of the government's response to climate change. In 2012, village leaders asked the government for relocation to safer ground. An agreement was subsequently made between government and villagers to relocate the whole village from its existing site to a new location about two kilometres inland, to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of the villagers. While the decision was not easily accepted by the villagers, it was necessary due to the severe impacts of rising sea level on the village. This was essentially a partnership project, with the government providing funding for the relocation and the villagers contributing their natural resources to rebuild their houses. The village was relocated in 2014.

c) **The Koroboya Village Crossing Project**. For years, the 117 villagers of flood-prone Koroboya had to wait two to three days for floodwaters to recede, in order to access their homes across a creek. The government, through the MRMDDM, recently completed the construction of the Koroboya Village crossing and access project, commissioned in August 2020. The completion of the crossing will also allow villagers access to bus services, opening more doors to development.

In Fiji, there are clearly important links between development, DRR and disaster management, and it was notable that several of the respondents to this review described development in terms of measures taken to mitigate the impacts of crisis and disasters and increase the level of communities' resilience. Further exploration in a national or subnational humanitarian–development symposium on CCE with community representatives at its heart could help to map existing activities; analyse gaps in the current interface; and agree on a way forward, in particular by promoting CCE systems that bridge the gap.

3. Participatory frameworks and systems for inclusion

Participatory processes that involve two-way communication and engagement with communities are not new to Fiji; they are commonly recognised in developmental and government accountability processes, though are perhaps newer in the humanitarian and disaster response sectors where speed of action takes priority. Forms of community engagement have included consultation, monitoring and evaluation, information-sharing, community capacity-building, community training, and – very recently – Talanoa sessions (see section 3.2.1).

This section outlines various government and non-governmental participatory frameworks and systems that seek to promote inclusion and that cut across the humanitarian and development sectors in Fiji.[25]

3.1 Government-led approaches

3.1.1 Constitution building and maintenance

The extent of public participation in constitution-building processes since the 1990s is described in the 2020 *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, which compares the 1993–1997 and 2012–2013 constitution-building processes and pointed to the need to go beyond symbolism.[26] The new 20-year NDP reaffirms the commitment to 'democratic and accountable governance set out under the Constitution' and 'allowing active participation in political, economic and social affairs, ensuring safe and secure communities and protecting the basic freedoms and human rights of all Fijians'.[27] The 2018 Information Act sets out the rights of access to information held by the Fijian Government and public agencies.[28]

3.1.2 National and subnational planning

Most large-scale initiatives by the government and the private sector require wide public consultations as part of the development process. The NDP was the outcome of a nationwide consultation process that involved the private sector, civil society, community groups, government and the general public, reflecting the aspirations of the Fijian people and the government's commitment to a transformed Fiji.[29] Participation has been prioritised in a number of areas, including, for example, a 2001–2020 Development Plan 'For the Enhancement of Participation of Indigenous Fijians and Rotumans in the Socio Economic Development of Fiji'.

The design, implementation and evaluation of issue-specific policies and plans also involve civil society representatives at various levels.[30] In February 2021, for example, the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) launched a national consultation process for the development of the Fiji National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against All Women and Girls.[31] At the launch, Fiji's Prime Minister highlighted the fact that 'Fiji will be the first Pacific Island country

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[25] This paper does not address the extent to which the opinions or submissions of the diverse communities and stakeholders consulted were addressed in the final drafts of legal frameworks, national budgets or plans, public policies or subsequent service provision. It also does not examine how diverse individuals and communities verify and triangulate effectiveness.

[26] A. Saati (2020) 'Participatory constitution-building in Fiji: A comparison of the 1993–1997 and the 2012–2013 processes', *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 18(1): 260–276.

[27] Fijian Government (2017) Fiji National Development Plan 2017–2036, p. 7.

[28] Information Act 2018 (Act No. 9 of 2018).

[29] UN SDGs Knowledge Platform (n.d.) 'Fiji'.

[30] UNDESA (2006) *Fiji National Assessment Report: A Background Document for the Formulation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy*.

[31] Fijian Government (2020) 'Fiji starts National Consultations on Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls', 25 November.

and one of the only two countries globally – alongside Australia – to have a whole-of-government, whole-of-population, inclusive and fully funded evidence-based approach to developing a national action plan to prevent violence against all women and girls before it starts'.[32] The contribution of CSOs, especially women's rights organisations, was highlighted at the launch.

Women's participation in socioeconomic development is also reflected in the National Gender Policy,[33] which was developed to ensure that Fijians no longer face any forms of gender-based discrimination and that both men and women participate fully in and enjoy equitable development processes and outcomes. It further promotes the rights of women in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. However, the review for this paper found that more is required to ensure the participation of marginalised groups in the development of a strong and clear disaster communications plan and structure as well as staff capacity to manage under the pressure of a sudden-onset disaster and its aftermath.

A number of sectoral policies have also been developed following stakeholder consultation, including the integrated national strategic plan for climate change and DRR led by the Ministry of Economy and the overarching rural-based industry policy facilitated by the MRMDDM. Fiji's 2018 National Adaptation Plan towards climate resilience highlights the 'vital opportunity to enhance participation and inclusivity of decision-making and development planning processes to ensure they meet the needs of all social groups. In this regard, supporting and linking community-based adaptation efforts to development planning can provide for a more effective, empowering, and holistic strategy for tackling environmental and climate risk' (quoting Dodman and Mitlin, 2011). It further notes that 'attention must be given to ensure such efforts do not underplay local inequalities and power relationships between community-level stakeholders' (quoting Mohan and Stokke, 2000; Kothari and Cooke, 2001).[34]

At subnational level, the 20-year NDP notes that 'divisional development plans will be developed in consultation with the relevant communities and other stakeholders across all sectors' (p. 102). On primary health care, one of its strategies is to establish a 'customer feedback centre' (p. 40) to enable continuous monitoring and enable adaptation.

3.1.3 Participatory budgeting

Fiji has established budgeting procedures as part of its NDP and has tested participatory budgeting processes for a number of years.[35]

The Citizen's Budget Guide for Fiji 2020–2021 outlines the budget cycle and citizen engagement in the budget process.[36] In June 2021, the Ministry for Economy held virtual budget consultations with the private sector and civil society in the lead-up to the delivery of the national budget in July. The national NGO network, the Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS), mobilised actors in the civil society space for the consultation with the ministerial team. A total of 24 organisations and 34 individuals attended the event and were able to raise their concerns or comment on the budget.[37] The Citizen's Budget Guide points to recommendations on citizen engagement in Fiji's budget process from the 2019 Open Budget Survey, including the need to 'ensure that any member of the public or civil society can engage with the government when monitoring budget implementation; and, actively engage with vulnerable and underrepresented communities, directly or through civil society organizations representing them'.

[32] Ibid.
[33] Fijian Government (2014) Fiji National Gender Policy.
[34] Fijian Government (2018) Fiji National Adaptation Plan 2018, p. 50.
[35] See for example: Asian Development Bank (2007) Making Resource Allocation Pro-Poor and Participatory in the Pacific.
[36] UNDP in the Pacific (2021) Citizens Budget Guide Fiji.
[37] Fijian Government (2021) 'A-G Holds Virtual Budget Consultation With Some Key Private Stakeholders', Fiji Sun, 11 May.

3.1.4 Community education, awareness and risk communication

Community education programmes are increasingly recognised as an essential prerequisite to prepare citizens for participation. The NDMO conducts Annual National Disaster Awareness Weeks across the country, as well as ongoing targeted awareness and training programmes centred around different thematic areas and based on the different types of vulnerabilities and hazards to which Fiji is exposed. The campaigns are primarily aimed at providing people and communities, including women, children and those living with disabilities, with life-saving messages and with the information they need before, during and after disasters to improve community resilience. The work of the National Disaster Awareness Week could be extended to run throughout the year and better linked with testing communications programmes, as well as targeted at locations and vulnerable groups where disaster response and/or communications resources are needed most. The links between different elements of the week and various development programmes (education; health; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)) could be further strengthened to illustrate the connections across the nexus. The NDMO could work with donor-funded programmes and with the Fiji Red Cross Society to increase communication resources.

The Sendai Framework calls for 'media to take an active and inclusive role at the local, national, regional and global levels in contributing to the raising of public awareness and understanding and in disseminating accurate and non-sensitive disaster risk, hazard and disaster information, including on small-scale disasters, in a simple, transparent, easy-to-understand and accessible manner, in close cooperation with national authorities'. Fiji's National Adaption Plan for climate resilience includes using 'the capacities of private and public media organisations (including the community radio) in advocacy and awareness campaigns to improve understanding and dissemination of climate change, disaster risks, hazard and disaster information and stimulating a culture of prevention and strong community involvement in sustained public education campaigns and public consultations at all levels of society'. These different forms of communication require more than improved information and education programmes; they also require investment in various community-based feedback systems.

Further strengthening links with the Ministry of Health's risk communication and community engagement work will also support more consistent and systematic CCE and risk reduction with regard to managing disease outbreaks and contributing to future health security and resilience.
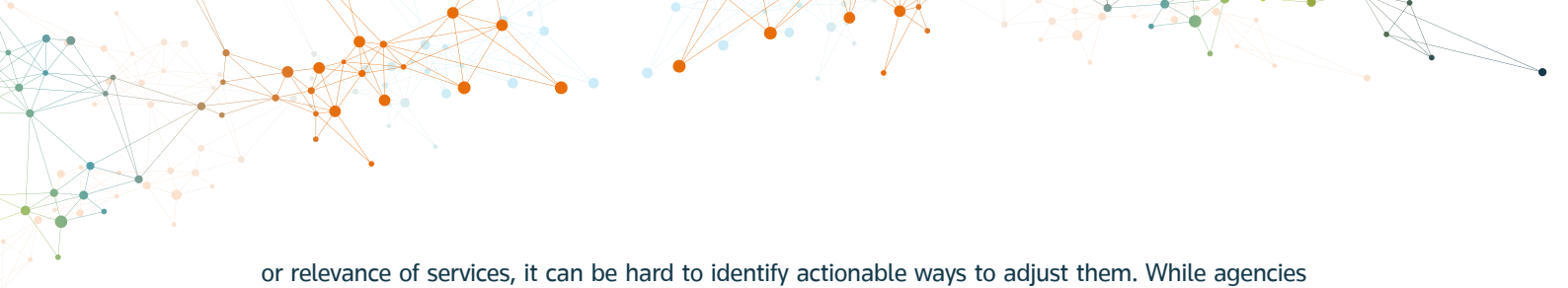
3.1.5 Community feedback mechanisms and helplines

Both the humanitarian and development sectors gather vast quantities of community data in alignment with global trends largely linked to 'new types of digital data for more targeted, effective and efficient development interventions'. Community feedback mechanisms equally require real-time data. The aim of such mechanisms is to help ensure that emergency responders are able to factor community views into their humanitarian operations. However, in many countries, including Fiji, much of the feedback tends to be based mainly on traditional needs assessments and mostly demographic information aimed at better understanding the needs of people affected by disasters in order to know what services are needed and where. The purpose of this data is slightly different to feedback but nonetheless provides useful insight into how best to support communities. Feedback, on the other hand, points to the opinions, perspectives or experience of those affected in relation to the quality and relevance of the humanitarian services provided. Without direct data on the perceived quality

[38] International Budget Partnership (2019) 'Open Budget Survey 2019: Fiji'.
[39] Fijian Government (2018) *Fiji National Adaptation Plan 2018*, p. 56.
[40] See for example: GIZ, IDS and World Wide Web Foundation (2017) *Data for development: What's next? Concepts, trends and recommendations for German development cooperation*.

or relevance of services, it can be hard to identify actionable ways to adjust them. While agencies may be good at gathering data, there is often a disconnect between the content being collected and its purpose, and perhaps more efforts should be made to understand feedback on the quality and relevance of specific services, not just information on broader community needs.

In Fiji, a number of government call centres and helplines enabling more systematic two-way communication with crisis-affected people of any gender have successfully paved the way for policy change and action. The Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, in partnership with the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), has operated a toll-free national domestic violence helpline called 1560 since 2017. Reporting on gender-based violence in Fiji during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA), the Hon. Vuniwaqa, confirmed that the helpline data for April 2020 showed 'a significant increase in calls to the domestic violence national helpline. 1560 recorded total of 87 calls in February and 187 calls in March. In April we had 527 genuine calls to the national helpline. 66% of the callers were women and 44% men. 54% of calls were domestic violence related and 30% related to COVID-19. Close to 50% of women are "reporting" a correlation between COVID-19 and an increase of violence, linked directly to the restrictions of movement and economic strains on families.' During the pandemic, divisions with movement restrictions in place had their own helplines, though they were not publicised as broadly as the national toll-free numbers. The helplines were run by the NDMO and the MRMDDM. These have the scope to provide some analysis of changing needs based on the feedback coming in and could potentially be expanded for more systematic community feedback post-COVID-19.

The MWCPA also has a toll-free child abuse helpline, which Medical Services Pacific (a local NGO) administers on its behalf. As with the domestic violence helpline, it is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is staffed by trained counsellors. In July 2021, the Hon. Vuniwaqa confirmed that both helplines had been allocated their own budgets to continue operations.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services also established a toll-free helpline for COVID-19-related queries and concerns when the first wave of the pandemic hit Fiji in early 2020.

3.1.6 Monitoring and evaluation

Participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are increasingly recognised as the norm in Fiji, with most programmes managed by the government and the private sector required to build an M&E component into their lifecycle. Equally, the targets set in the new NDP were the outcome of a nationwide consultation process. Furthermore, Fiji has expressed its 'genuine actionable commitment' to the meaningful engagement and dialogue required as part of the SDGs monitoring processes.[46] It is interesting to note, therefore, that many respondents to the study understood M&E and public consultations to mean CCE. While it can be argued that they are not exactly the same, by the same token it can be argued that CCE is in some ways an extension of M&E and public consultation.

[41] CDAC Network & Ground Truth Solutions (2021), 'Status of Two-Way Communication in Fiji' Report: Status-of-two-way-communication-in-Fiji.pdf (groundtruthsolutions.org). For more on the organisational, practical and systemic barriers to implementing meaningful feedback mechanisms, see: V.L. Fluck and D. Barter (2019) 'Jumping hurdles: key barriers to community feedback mechanisms', *Humanitarian Exchange* 74.

[42] Fijian Government (2020) 'Media Release by the Ministry for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation – Gendered Response To Covid-19', 3 May.

[43] Fijian Government (2015) 'Make use of the helpline – Akbar', 12 September.

[44] Fijian Government (2021) 'Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Hon. Mereseini Vuniwaqa's Ministerial Statement – 2021–2022 Budget Debate', 28 July.

[45] Ministry of Health and Medical Services (2020) 'Toll-free helpline 158 for Covid-19 response', 30 March

[46] Fijian Government (2019) 'Fiji's SDG Implementation and Monitoring VNRs'. 9th IAEG SDG Indicator Meeting, 26 March, Beirut, Lebanon.

It is evident that a number of participatory approaches to M&E are deployed in Fiji, including, for example, community-based M&E whereby the community itself is involved in measuring changes at the local level and takes ownership of any outcomes. Some examples of this approach to M&E follow.

- In an effort to improve school attendance and literacy and numeracy results, **Access to Quality Education Program (AQEP)** supported school teachers, parents and women's groups to report on educational results and mobilise school communities to support change at the local level.[47]

- In the health sector, the 2015 **National Wellness Policy for Fiji** was a national-level, multisectoral policy to ensure that groups outside the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MOHMS) could advocate for and protect Fijian health and wellness.[48] Groups included, but were not limited to businesses, civil society organisations, settlements, clubs, Government ministries, local governments and congregations. They could be public or private, formal or informal communities.[49] A strong M&E framework sought to ensure the policy was given credibility and adequate resources. The policy gave responsibility to each group and government department/ministry for monitoring wellbeing behaviours and promoting the health of its members through established monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In informal settings, such as villages and settlements, where the established reports did not exist, reporting of wellness profiles and activities was sought by government ministries through existing informal pathways. For example, a remote village had the option of reporting to the National Wellness Centre through the Turaga ni Koro and Roko to the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, or to Zone nurses through the MOHMS.[50] While the policy may no longer be implemented during COVID-19, the World Health Organization Fiji 2018–2022 Strategy notes that there 'is a drive towards "wellness", which entails a more holistic approach to health than the mere reduction of disease or infirmity'. [51]

- **Fiji Women's Weather Watch, FemLINKpacific's women-led community media platform**, is coordinated from their regional hub at its Suva community media centre and can be accessed from a desktop or mobile device. Community radio is at the heart of the platform, linking a network of women leaders and correspondents to real-time information via SMS alerts as well as Viber and Facebook groups. Weather updates and DRR messages as well as the NDMO's response and recovery plans are shared through the network. It is a two-way information system, enabling network members to provide real-time situation updates and share their priorities during the early warning preparedness stage. Media partners can then amplify the key messages and recommendations from women-led assessments. FemLINKpacific further advocates for the need to appoint women to disaster management committees and ensure evacuation centres and responses are safe and inclusive.

3.2   Non-governmental and community-led participatory approaches

There are numerous non-governmental and community-led approaches to participation in Fiji. This section provides a few representative examples.

[47] Australian High Commission, Suva (2017) 'Handover of Access To Quality Education Program to Fijian Government'. Press release, 21 June.
[48] Ministry of Health and Medical Services (2015) National Wellness Policy for Fiji.
[49] The National Wellness Policy for Fiji, pg. 1
[50] Ibid.
[51] World Health Organization (2017) WHO Country Cooperation Strategy 2018–2022: Fiji.

3.2.1 Talanoa dialogue

Talanoa, as the Prime Minister of Fiji explained, is 'a Pacific concept of decision-making based on an inclusive, respectful exchange of ideas that we use to reach a consensus in our own societies about the best way forward'. [52] Used in Fiji as a practice of inclusive, participatory dialogue and storytelling, it can be an opportunity for community-led engagement on issues that affect people's everyday lives and livelihoods. One observer noted that, 'in the local context of the village, the people gather in Talanoa sessions to elect their own village headman (or woman, though this is far less common), and typically a village meets monthly to review the workings of the village, make decisions, and organize and employ resources'. [53]

The concept became more widely known in 2017 when Fiji held the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Presidency and introduced a Talanoa dialogue approach for Conference of the Parties (COP) 22 and COP 23. The UNFCCC expands on the local definition, noting that: 'The process of Talanoa involves the sharing of ideas, skills and experience through storytelling. During the process, participants build trust and advance knowledge through empathy and understanding. Blaming others and making critical observations are inconsistent with building mutual trust and respect, and therefore inconsistent with the Talanoa concept. Talanoa fosters stability and inclusiveness in dialogue, by creating a safe space that embraces mutual respect for a platform for decision making for a greater good.' [54]

This local concept of consensus decision-making serves as a useful basis for bridging CCE across the humanitarian–development divide in a crisis – be it a natural hazard-related disaster or a socioeconomic shock. However, some caution is required, since it 'can have elements of hierarchy within it, as with privileging elders over youth, or men over women'. [55]

3.2.2 Community-based development

Community-based development (CBD) in Fiji broadly supports risk-informed practice. It involves projects generated predominantly from communities that are aimed at mitigating social and economic hardship, with a particular focus on assisting the poorest and most vulnerable. Of course, CCE programmes also highlight the importance of local ownership and local knowledge, and are based on the recognition that involving communities is central both to overall community engagement and specifically to the effectiveness of two-way communications systems. [56]

CBD cuts across all development sectors. To take one example, the Kumi Village Seawall Project, which was informed by climate change risks and the immediate food security needs of the community, was originally initiated and funded by the government as part of its commitment to the UNFCCC Paris Agreement. But in June 2020, the community of 200 villagers, led by the Turaga ni Yavusa (village chief) and the Turaga ni Koro (village headman), decided to help mitigate the impacts of climate change and saltwater inundation by collectively planting more than 1,500 mangrove seedlings on the shores of the village. The mangrove plantation is intended to provide a buffer to the seawall and extend its longevity, as saltwater flows over the seawall into the village area during extreme weather conditions. The project was led by the community in consultation with government and is a good example of a community taking ownership of climate change issues.

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[52] Fijian Government (2018) 'Hon. PM Bainimarama at the Talanoa Talks in London', 30 November.

[53] G. Hall (2019) 'Dual-Power and Direct Democracy in Fiji: An Analysis of the iTaukei Administration', Capstone Collection 3190, p. 32.

[54] UNFCCC (2018) '2018 Talanoa Dialogue Platform'. See also: 'Informal note by the Presidencies of COP 22 and COP 23, 17 November 2017, Talanoa dialogue: Approach'.

[55] G. Hall (2019) 'Dual-Power and Direct Democracy in Fiji: An Analysis of the iTaukei Administration', Capstone Collection 3190, p. 32.

[56] For examples of project profiles, see: UNDP in Fiji (2021) 'The Fiji Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management Community-based Development Project Profiles'.

3.2.3 Community-based disaster risk management

Community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) training has been conducted in a number of communities in Fiji. This initiative by government, in collaboration with several NGOs, has been a valuable step forward for CCE. The trainings promoted the formation of local CBDRM committees that are led from within the community and are responsible for coordinating the lifecycle of disaster management, from preparedness to response and rehabilitation, in communities. They also serve as a conduit for communication and information-sharing both within the community and between the community and the area emergency operations centre and other emergency responders, pre- and post-disasters. Examples of important actions include advising people not to build homes in flood-prone areas or close to steep hills that are at risk of landslides. Farmers are also advised not to farm close to riverbanks, as the associated clearing of trees increases the risk of landslides.

Among the key outcomes of the CBDRM training are the development of a village disaster preparedness plan, a village response plan for selected villages, linking DRM and village development programmes and projects, and ensuring that CBDRM is mainstreamed into village development plans. After TC Harold passed in April 2020, a district chief in Tailevu – an area that had been badly ravaged by TC Winston four years earlier – noted the critical importance of the training and the committees.[57] On receiving the cyclone warning, committee members acted to move the vulnerable within the at-risk communities to safety; ensured there was sufficient food; secured properties; and transported those in flood-prone areas to higher ground, along with livestock. This intervention helped ensure that losses to the communities – in terms of lives, property and food security – were significantly reduced.

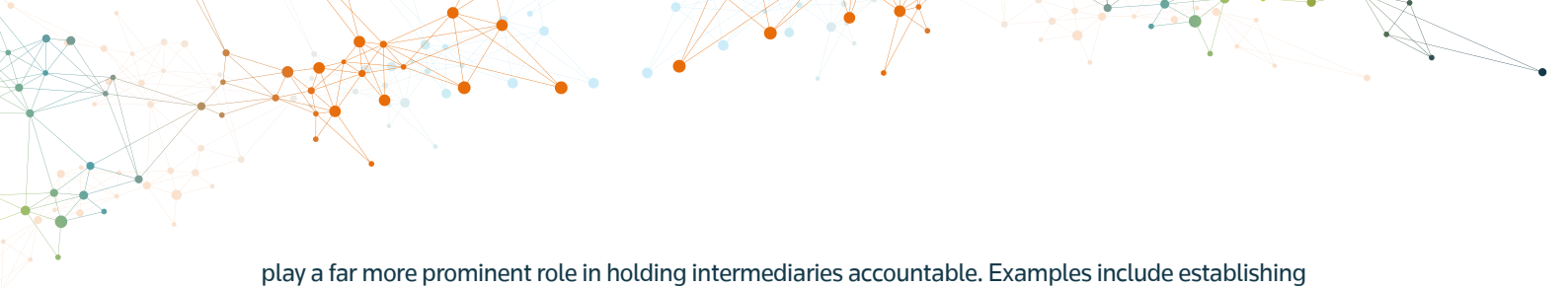### 3.2.4 Civil society collaboration in disaster management

Fiji has a vibrant civil society mainly made up of national and local entities such as human rights and women's affairs groups, environmental organisations, trade unions and NGO networks. These include: Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS), Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation, Rainbow Pride Foundation, Citizens Constitutional Forum, Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding and District Councils of Social Services. While the Pacific Island Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) acts as a platform for other NGOs in the region, FCOSS serves as the national NGO network for more than 500 organisations, many of which are engaged in disaster management-related programming. FCOSS, as co-lead of the Communication Cluster CCE Working Group, has made significant efforts to support the systematisation of CCE in its area of work, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, giving voice to diverse community perspectives.

More needs to be done, however. Research undertaken in Fiji in 2019 on 'localisation' pointed to 'limited evidence that increased community engagement is shaping humanitarian programming; 64% of international actors compared to 100% of national actors said they take opinions of communities into account in program design and implementation all the time [and there was] limited existence of formal mechanisms within local and national actors and international organisations to provide information to, and ensure the participation of affected populations (including feedback mechanisms).'[58] The report further noted 'a strong perception by all agencies that there is a need for recognition and greater linking with nationally led humanitarian action of resilience systems at the community level'.[59] The same report noted that international response actors need to better understand 'the existing mechanisms that worked as a community, the participatory instruments: the Talanoa session, the church communal meetings, the clan structure within the villages' (p. 12). A 2021 report goes further on holding 'intermediaries' to account, recommending that: 'Accountability driven and informed by local and national actors could create transformational change. Local and national actors should

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[57] Fiji Times (2021) 'Training to boost disaster readiness', 20 October. Also discussed in an interview between the lead consultant and the Hon. Minister responsible for National Disaster Management on 10 June 2021.
[58] FCOSS, PIANGO and HAG (2019) Localisation in Fiji: Demonstrating Change.
[59] Ibid.

play a far more prominent role in holding intermediaries accountable. Examples include establishing processes for local actors to provide direct feedback and assessments of international partners, and to inform funding decisions; supporting and encouraging initiatives that promote accountability to national and local partners; and supporting the creation of local actor consortiums to strengthen their choices and decision-making power.' [60]

3.2.5 International supporting partners

The international community continues to work in partnership with the government of Fiji and Fijian CSOs, with donor governments, UN agencies and international and regional NGOs supporting ongoing humanitarian and development efforts in the country. For a comprehensive look at international actors linked to CCE efforts, see Annex 1 (national and regional coordination mechanisms, consortiums and collective initiatives) of the 2018 CDAC/Ground Truth Solutions scoping mission report.[61] One such initiative, Disaster Ready – a programme supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) – is an example of an existing NGO-facilitated system that provides disaster preparedness and resilience support for local communities through the work of intermediary organisations. It has been observed that Disaster Ready 'has also led to longer term more strategic partnerships on disaster risk-reduction for local and national actors'. [62]

One potential CCE systems link with the Disaster Ready partners could be through use of Fiji's spatial poverty and disaster mapping[63] to determine priority local communities and then to identify which local partners of Disaster Ready work with those communities, or, if there are none, whether local Fiji Red Cross Society offices serve those communities. This matching of existing disaster networks with priority communities could guide both funding and capacity-building efforts for risk-informed programming.

3.3 Convergence of approaches

While CCE is clearly not new in Fiji, the concept of how it applies to emergencies as part of a 'systems' approach is a relatively new concept for the country. The CCE concept therefore needs to be defined in the Fiji context and advocated for at all levels of government and civil society. It should be promoted as an element of existing ways of working that brings added value for more effective and efficient disaster response. The values and benefits that CCE brings must be sold vigorously to ensure buy-in.

To leverage CCE, relationships within and between humanitarian and development actors' efforts must be better coordinated. Uncoordinated and disconnected approaches to humanitarian and development actions breed 'information overload' and 'development fatigue', which in turn often result in mistrust by communities. This happens when different organisations bombard communities with information in different forms using complex, often opaque language. The result is often an explosion of rumours leading to an escalation of misinformation.

In terms of development, it has been well recognised for some decades that participation fatigue occurs when different organisations, including government agencies, visit communities at different times on different developmental initiatives, some at very short notice, thus burdening communities as they need to commit time and resources to be able to receive these visiting 'officials'.

[60] HAG, GLOW Consultants, CoLAB, inSights and Ziad Antonios (2021) *Bridging the Intention to Action Gap: The Future Role of Intermediaries in Supporting Locally Led Humanitarian Action*.
[61] CDAC Network and Ground Truth Solutions (2018) *Scoping Mission Report for Fiji*.
[62] FCOSS, PIANGO and HAG (2019) Localisation in Fiji: Demonstrating Change, p.8.
[63] See for example: World Bank (n.d.) 'Republic of Fiji – Poverty Trends, Profiles and Small Area Estimation (Poverty Maps) in Republic of Fiji (2003-2009)'.

4. People, place and related administrative structures

As noted in the 2018 scoping mission report for the project, good CCE requires in-depth understanding of the national and local communication and engagement landscape – social, cultural, economic, political and infrastructure aspects, local power dynamics, relationships and CCE barriers.

The 2021 population projection for Fiji was 893,468 with a near 50/50 female/male split. The diversity and diffuse nature of Fijian communities are of critical consideration. Older persons aged 60 and over comprise 9% of Fiji's total population, a figure that has increased sequentially over the past decade, with women tending to live longer than men. A total of 13.7% of Fiji's population aged three years and over live with some form of disability.[64] The Constitution bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.[65]

What makes CCE and related participatory approaches complicated from both a humanitarian and development perspective is the fact that the nation of Fiji spans more than 300 islands, and the population is spread over some 100 islands. While an estimated 87% live on the two major islands – Vita Levu (capital: Suva) and Vanua Leva – a total of 44.1% of Fiji's population live in rural and maritime communities, a reduction from 49.3% in 2007, reflecting Fiji's rural-to-urban drift.

4.1   Administrative structures

While considerable participatory frameworks are in place in Fiji at the national level, the role of the Fijian public in the process of administrative decision-making and their relationship with divisional administration are important issues to consider as part of the humanitarian–development CCE interface.

Figure 1 - Fiji's administrative boundaries
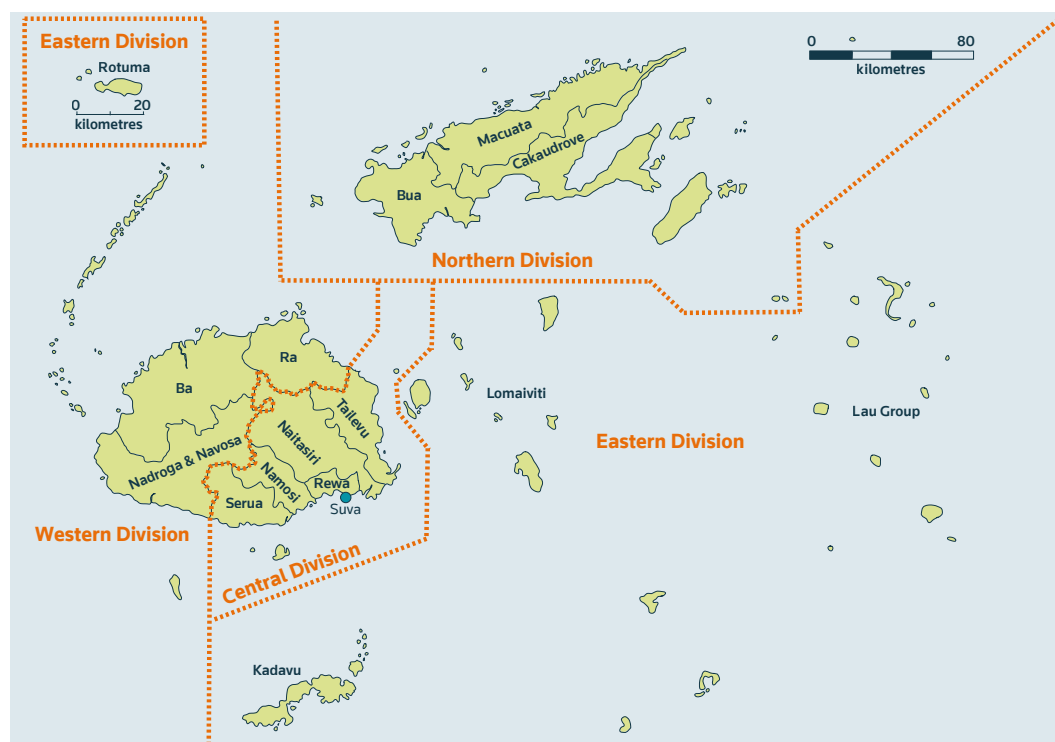
Map source: information from www.health.gov.fj

[64] Fiji Bureau of Statistics (n.d.) 'Fiji Statistics at a Glance'.
[65] Fijian Government (2013) *Constitution of the Republic of Fiji*.

For a country with a relatively small population, Fiji has a complex administrative structure that may pose challenges to achieving clarity and certainty in any communication effort.

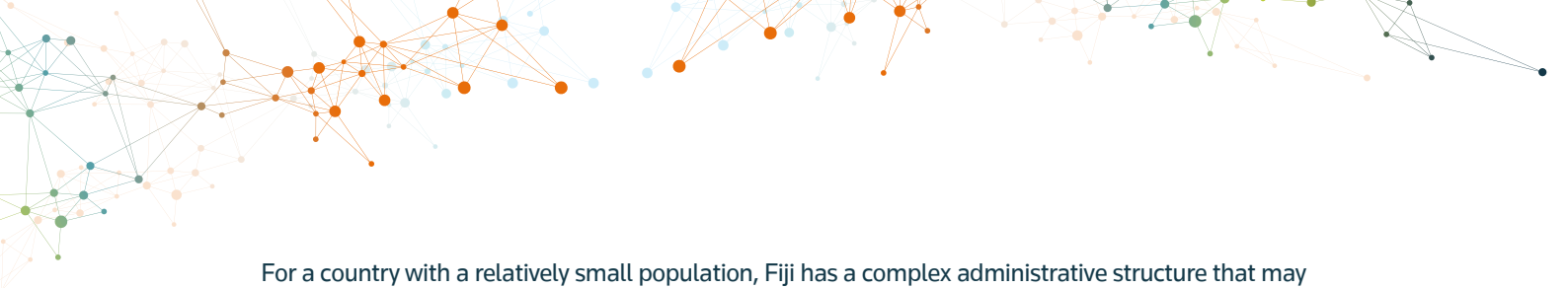Divided into four divisions, it is further subdivided into 14 provinces. Each division – namely the Central, Eastern, Northern and Western Divisions (see Figure 1) – is headed by a Divisional Commissioner. The Divisional Commissioners directly oversee the 14 Provincial Administrators. The Provincial Administrators work in concert with the 14 Roko Tuis (executive heads), who are appointed by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and who are responsible primarily for the administration of the iTaukei communities within the 14 provinces.[66]

As the administrative head within the division, the Divisional Commissioner works closely with heads of government departments and humanitarian and development partners in the division to deliver services to communities.

During an emergency response, the Commissioner and Provincial Administrator/District Officer are responsible for the response in their areas of operation at division and district levels, in close cooperation with the respective Disaster Management Councils. At the national level, coordination and control are provided by the Emergency Committee of the National Disaster Management Council, which includes the Permanent Secretaries and leaders of key departments and agencies.

4.2   Communities and iTaukei social organisation

Participatory processes and community engagement call for recognition of the diversity of communities (rural, urban, informal settlements, level of vulnerability) across a country. The definition of 'community' has been much debated over the decades,[67] but can be broadly defined as a 'spatial or territorial unit of social organisation in which people have a sense of identity and a feeling of belonging'. [68] Within a larger community there may also be social groupings that identify themselves as communities within a community. These may include young people, women and girls, people with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) people. These may be prevalent in different community settings. For example, LGBTQI persons may be recognised as a community in towns and cities but not in rural areas where community acceptance may be lower.[69] Understanding the differences and distinctions within and between communities, as well as the formal and informal sets of relationships, provides a sound basis for engaging different communities in CCE programmes.

Writing on individual and communal iTaukei dynamics in Fiji, Tuimavana (2020) notes that iTaukei 'tend to identify more with the vanua which loosely translated to land'. Quoting Ravuvu (1983: p. 70), they note that 'the Fijian term of vanua, has physical, social and cultural dimensions which are interrelated. It does not mean only the land area one is identified with, and the vegetation, animal life, and other objects on it, but also includes the social and cultural system – the people, their traditions and customs, beliefs and values, and the various other institutions established for the sake of achieving harmony, solidarity and prosperity within a particular social context. Its social and cultural dimensions are a source of security and confidence. It provides a sense of identity and belonging.'[70]

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[66] Fijians, officially known since 2010 as iTaukei, are the major indigenous people of the Fiji Islands. See University of Fiji (n.d.) 'iTaukei Corner'.
[67] See for example more recent debates in: T. Cannon (2018) 'The myth of "community": fake concepts and distracted knowledge in humanitarian and development action'. IDS Members Seminar, May.
[68] Dotson (1991), in 'Community: Definitions, Bases and Changing Concept of Community'.
[69] Rainbow Pride Fiji, Edge Effect, Oxfam (2018), Down By the River: Addressing the Rights, Needs and Strengths of Fijian Sexual and Gender Minorities in Disaster Risk Reduction and Humanitarian Response, Down-By-The-River-May2018.pdf (edgeeffect.org)
[70] R.W.R. Tuimavana (2020) 'The concept of self and success from an iTaukei perspective in Fiji: Before and after education and development', *Journal of Arts & Humanities* 9(4): 98–113.

Another avenue for understanding what constitutes a community in Fiji is local administrative boundaries. Within the 14 provinces there are 189 districts, 1,172 villages, 13 municipalities, 302 district council constituencies and a number of settlements, made up of leaseholds, tenancy at will and informal settlements (Fiji Bureau of Statistics).

Figure 2: Relationship with National Management of Disaster Activities, coordinated by the NDMO[71]
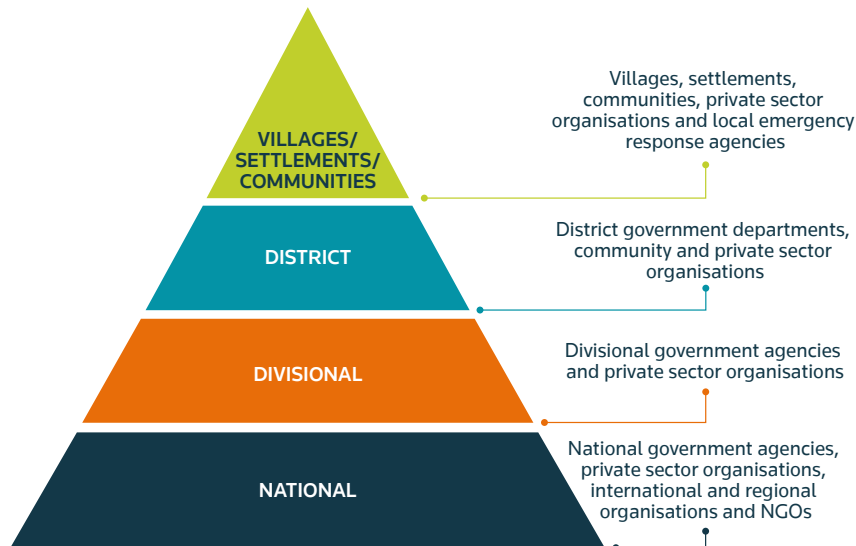
Within this government administration system, communities operate at different levels, including municipal, district (non-iTaukei communities) and provincial administration (for iTaukei communities), and under distinct administrative processes.

An iTaukei village is headed by a chief and is administered by a Turaga ni Koro (village headman), who is the conduit between the village and government through the Mata ni Tikina (district representative) and provides monthly reports, including baseline information, to the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs. The Mata-ni-Tikina also tables these reports at the Provincial Council Meeting.

Within a village there are many potential trusted sources of information for the community. These include:
- Village healthcare workers (known as village nurses) appointed from within the village, who also collect baseline information and provide monthly reports on health issues within the village to the medical officer or district nurse posted to the district.
- Church ministers and parish priests assigned to village or district churches, who work with the locally appointed deacons who provide reports on social justice issues, social welfare and ecumenical matters to the church head offices.
- Government officials, including nurses, nurse practitioners, doctors, teachers, agriculture and fisheries officers, who provide services for villages in the district (Tikina).
- Youth and women's groups, fisheries wardens and, more recently, village CBDRM committees that also provide reports to their line ministries.

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[71] NDMO coordinates the National Management of Disaster Activities through the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management organisation structures at national, divisional, local and community level. Source: adapted from NDMO (n.d.) 'About us'.

Communities in rural and peri-urban areas are administered by government-appointed District Advisory Councillors, who provide monthly reports to the District Officer and/or the Provincial Administrator within the MRMDDM. As with iTaukei villages, social groupings such as sports, youth and women's groups operate within these communities and provide reports to their line ministries.

In Fiji, the label community is applied to any grouping of people who live outside iTaukei villages either in settlements (usually but not limited to other ethnic groups) in a district, province or in municipal areas. An iTaukei village is one that is recognised by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and inhabited by iTaukei people who belong to landowning units in that village.

One of the challenges with existing community administrative and reporting structures is that reports produced at community level, whether by the Turaga ni Koro (Village Headman) or groupings with the village community, and including reports produced by District Advisory Councillors, which includes baseline information, could very well inform development and humanitarian action. They are, however, only submitted to their line ministries and are seldom shared with other agencies.

Then there are the communities within the urban areas that fall within the boundaries of municipal councils. These are rather challenging to define administratively. In past years, municipal areas were divided into wards with defined boundaries. These wards, whose membership only included ratepayers, were administered by a Municipal Councillor, who was responsible for development and for attending to the needs of the ward's communities. With the abolition of wards, a municipality is classed as one large community administered by a Special Administrator. This makes engaging within these communities and attending to their needs a major challenge.

Within these municipal areas are informal settlements, which are not considered part of the municipalities. It is necessary at this juncture to distinguish between formal and informal settlements. A formal settlement is one where the residents have a legal right to live, whether it be a village, a leasehold or a privately owned property. An informal settlement, on the other hand, is one where residents do not have a legal right to that land, meaning they are living on someone else's property. But as part of the government's social obligation to its citizens, informal settlements are provided basic resources such as water and electricity. Due to their vulnerable living conditions, and the fact that they are often living below the poverty line, residents of informal settlements are among the first to be provided support and humanitarian assistance in times of distress.

The closest to any form of governance in informal settlement areas are the religious groups or other social groupings, such as sports, youth and women's groups, initiated within these communities. Through these structures, people are able to solicit support from government. For example, the government might provide sporting equipment to youth in the area through the youth group. Church groups are also critical support mechanisms in such communities, as they have very strong local and international networks.

5. Leverage points for sustainable, community-appropriate CCE systems

There is strong potential for more synchronous humanitarian and development actions to enable more effective, efficient, timely and relevant two-way CCE in Fiji. Particularly in an era of complex and overlapping disasters that are expanding in size and scope, a CCE system needs to be flexible and agile to address the peaks and troughs of these varied crisis challenges. This section explores key CCE synergies and opportunities for more sustainable, community-appropriate systems across the humanitarian–development continuum that have the potential to drive coherent and complementary information flow structures, active participation and inclusion, positive feedback loops and effective information management.

5.1 The poverty–disaster risk CCE interface

It is well recognised that effective community participation can be a key driver of poverty reduction and 'may lead to social and personal empowerment, economic development, and socio-political transformation'. Its potential to reverse power relations and provide poor people 'with agency and voice' is well noted in development literature.[72]
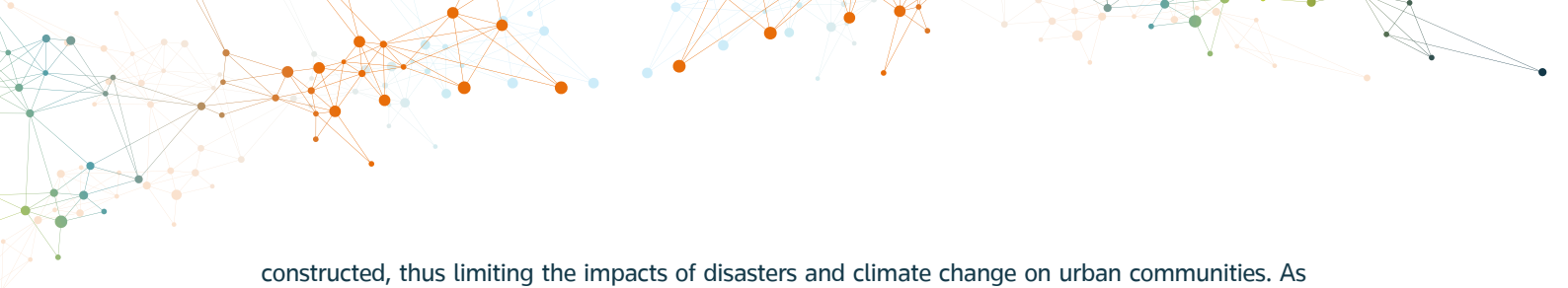
An estimated 29.9% of Fiji's households live below the poverty line, with poverty higher in rural than urban areas (41.5% compared to 20.4%).[73] While this assessment is based purely on the income and expenditures levels of households, it could be used to assess the levels of development and vulnerability of communities in Fiji, with the conclusion that rural areas need the most development support, since they are also about twice as susceptible as urban areas to climate change and the effects of natural hazard-related disasters.

The link between poverty, vulnerability and disaster risk cannot be overstated. The World Bank's Household Income Expenditure Survey for 2002/03 and 2008/09 showed that the divisions with highest incidences of poverty in Fiji were the Northern Division (at 54%) and the Western Division (40%), with the Central Division being the least poor (23%). At provincial level, Ra, Cakaudrove and Macuata recorded the highest incidences of poverty at over 50%, followed by Bua and Nadroga/Navosa at 40–50%. However, these are generalised figures and cannot be used to gauge poverty incidence at Tikina and community level; even in provinces with the lower overall poverty, there may be pockets with high incidences of poverty. The opposite is also just as true. It should be noted that the highest rates of poverty recorded were from those living in the remotest rural areas of Fiji, which is another reason for carefully using spatial poverty and vulnerability maps to design CCE programmes linked to disaster risk, preparedness, response and recovery.

The types of risks and hazards also differ between rural and urban areas, and in some cases are linked to awareness of rules and regulations. For example, while those in urban areas require engineers and occupation certificates in order to occupy their dwellings, those in rural areas and informal settlements do not. This means that the risk of damage to houses during disasters is much higher in rural communities and informal settlements than in urban areas. In addition, villages in rural areas tend to be built on flat land close to rivers or the sea, since water is not only a major source of livelihood but also a preferred means of travel. However, this makes communities vulnerable to flooding. In urban areas, water levels and ground stability are among the matters considered before houses are

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[72] P. Osei-Kufuor and F. Koomson (2014) 'Reducing poverty through community participation: The case of the National Poverty Reduction Program in the Dangme-West district of Ghana', *International Journal of Development and Sustainability* 3(8): 1611–1628.
[73] World Bank (2021) 'Poverty & Equity Brief: East Asia & Pacific – Fiji. April 2021'.

constructed, thus limiting the impacts of disasters and climate change on urban communities. As mentioned, TC Winston destroyed 9,000 homes in Fiji, substantially damaged 17,000 and partially damaged 29,000, leaving 15% of the population homeless.[74] The majority of those houses damaged were in rural communities.

These statistics reflect the development needs and vulnerability levels of the different regions of Fiji. Where poverty is low, it could be rightly assumed that people are better able to build robust dwellings. Their ability to prepare for and respond to disasters is also likely at a higher level. Where poverty is rife, development and humanitarian assistance are needed to enable people in these communities to move out of poverty and improve their standards of living, thus reducing vulnerability at community level.

The above assessments suggest that more effort will be required to mitigate against the risks of disasters and the effects of climate change in rural areas. This is made more challenging by the fact that the most vulnerable areas are also isolated and hard to reach, with very limited or no access to the internet. A whole-of-nation approach to CCE will be key to supporting rural communities and informal settlements to advance development and reduce their level of vulnerability to the risks of natural hazard-related disasters and climate change. Reflecting the fact that rural communities are disproportionately affected, CCE and participatory activities – as well as the related communications infrastructure – should be stepped up in rural areas as a priority.

Fiji's 20-year NDP has sought to address these disparities. It has also committed to improving information and communications technology (ICT) in order to bridge the digital divide between rural and urban areas while enhancing the delivery of services.

While it is well recognised that effective communication and community participation can deliver positive outcomes for poor people – as was demonstrated in Section 3 of this paper – mechanisms and systems must be put in place to support more consistent community engagement. As part of this, each community's capacity to participate must be strengthened through effective training.[75]

5.2   Legislative and policy frameworks

This review found significant gaps in the legislative framework in many Pacific Island countries relating to CCE and accountability in the humanitarian sector. While NDMOs and the MET Offices are typically mandated to disseminate warnings to the public via radio, faxes and internet, the lack of a legislative framework means that there can be a communication gap between the information provider and the recipient with coordination and translation of accessible information tending to be limited, creating fresh ground for rumours and misinformation.

Ensuring that state institutions are more appreciative of the scale and scope of CCE needed in times of crisis will require the reinforcement of formal and informal policies, practices and procedures across such institutions. As we have seen, CCE minimum standards are already embedded in pre-existing laws and policies, such as the National DRR Policy and the National Humanitarian Policy. There are, however, a number of entry points for influencing revisions of particular key frameworks, including for example, the National Disaster Management Act of 1998, which is currently under review and which will lead to a consequential review of the National Disaster Management Plan of 1995. Efforts are being made to better integrate practical action on CCE with the implementation of the 2018 Rights of Persons Living with Disability Act. Similar work could be done on gender responsiveness in relation to the National Gender Policy.

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[74] D.H. Aquino et al. (2018) 'Challenges to building housing resilience: the case of Fiji post-cyclone Winston', Procedia Engineering 212: 475–80.

[75] P. Osei-Kufuor and F. Koomson (2014) 'Reducing poverty through community participation: The case of the National Poverty Reduction Program in the Dangme-West district of Ghana', International Journal of Development and Sustainability 3(8): 1611–1628.

Research for this paper also found that, while the commitment to CCE is there, what is often required is a better understanding of how to support practical implementation as part of preparedness and disaster management. This entails guidance on actions that go beyond a public relations approach to CCE.

Across the board, better articulated guidance on CCE to support a wider understanding of the concept, minimum standards for service delivery and standard operating procedures were viewed as gaps that could be addressed for more effective inclusion and accountability. Ensuring that communities' information and communication needs are prioritised alongside relief needs such as food and water will be an important step for all sectoral assessments across humanitarian and development programmes.

5.3   Programme funding processes

Any substantive initiative to enhance CCE must be given sustained budgetary support. While many aspects of CCE are well articulated in policies and legal frameworks in Fiji, the roll-out of practical actions is not costed in institutional terms. This has led to a lack of both capacity and capability for effective CCE delivery, with limited CCE human resource and technical capacity. The NDMO, for example, with responsibility for disaster coordination, requires clearly defined and budgeted CCE roles to fulfil its mandate. This would include having a clear differentiation between a budget for a government public relations communication role and wider CCE roles to ensure clarity and certainty of messaging and engagement with communities that enable communities to better address their challenges, find solutions and give feedback on services.

In Fiji, long-term development programmes are implemented as part of the government's standard programme and are funded through the normal government budgetary process. Each year, the NDP is translated into ministries' strategic and annual corporate plans for the purposes of implementation with related budgets.

The Integrated Rural Development Framework (IRDF) stipulates that development requirements are identified at community level through village/community meetings and consultative forums and submitted to the Provincial Development Board through the District Council, i.e. the Bose ni Tikina and the District Advisory Council. The Divisional Development Board considers the submissions from the Provincial Development Boards and prioritises proposals before submission to the National Steering Committee. This committee deliberates on the submissions from the four Divisional Development Boards and considers priorities before its submission to government for budgeting purposes. This is an annual cycle. It is to be expected, however, that, due to resource limitations, not all submissions will be funded. It is always important that decisions reached at all levels are communicated back to the community to retain their trust in the process.

The IRDF was approved and adopted by the government in 2009 and is an important part of Fiji's development scheme because it ensures that development is properly coordinated and funds are evenly distributed. In an address to representatives from the Northern Division in June 2020, the Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management, Hon. Inia Seruiratu, encouraged provincial administrators, district officers and assistant district officers to ensure the IRDF is actively pursued and functional, urging them to 'look at every Fijian equally and ensure developments in rural communities were carried out fairly'. To achieve this, he reiterated that there must be plans at the village, Tikina, provincial, division and sectoral levels: 'when we have plans then we can start requesting for funding'.[76] The efficacy of the framework needs to be continuously strengthened and reinforced to ensure that people and communities remain the focus of all development projects with effective CCE at their heart.

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[76] Fijian Government (2020) 'Provincial Administrators Encouraged to Ensure IRDF is Actively Pursued', 16 June.

5.4   Pre-positioning a national platform for CCE

A Communications Cluster has been in existence, if rather loosely, since 2012. The impact of TC Winston in 2016 heightened the need to enhance the ability of government and stakeholders to effectively reach out to and engage with communities during disasters. With the support of the CDAC Network and Ground Truth Solutions, and a range of local and international CCE partners, the Communications Cluster was revived in 2019 and its terms of reference approved in May 2021.

The Ministry of Communications is responsible for leading the Communications Cluster as a whole. The Department of Information within the Ministry of Communications leads the CCE Working Group, with the support of FCOSS and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as co-leads. The Department of Communications within the Ministry of Communications leads the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) Working Group, with the support of the Telecommunications Authority of Fiji as a co-lead. There are two-way communication and reporting lines between the Working Groups and the overall Cluster.

The Cluster is tasked with implementing collective approaches through these two Working Groups. Among its specific goals are:

• Development of national guidelines and/or standard operating procedures relating to CCE and emergency telecommunications.
• Delivering common, inclusive and consistent public messaging and communication with communities, including supporting media content development, common feedback mechanisms, data collection and analysis in preparedness, response and recovery.
• Supporting the NDMO and the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group in the formulation and implementation of CCE and emergency telecommunications strategies for preparedness, response and recovery.
• Collating best practice and generating inclusive opportunities to share lessons learned and build CCE and emergency telecommunications capacities.

The revitalisation of the Fiji Communication Cluster, and specifically the inclusion of the CCE Working Group within its framework, is a major development for CCE and its embedding into national systems and processes in Fiji. CDAC provides technical and secretariat support to the CCE Working Group, whose membership comprises government ministries, NGOs and CSOs. Working in complementarity with the ETC Working Group is essential as digital technologies 'are a key component of inclusive economies and have provided a path for the financially excluded to enter the formal economy'.[77] While one-way information-sharing is more familiar, two-way communication and addressing community opinions are less ingrained in current ways of working at the cluster level and need to be strengthened.

Elevating the status of CCE in other clusters and in the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group is a critical pathway for the future, with the Protection Cluster Communication Group in particular offering potential synergies with the Communications Cluster.

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[77] B. Peters and S. Chanel (2021) 'An Inclusive Digital Economy Can Accelerate Development and Growth in Solomon Islands', UNDP in Fiji, 21 October.

5.5   Civil society structures and networks

Many humanitarian actors have a well established presence in Fiji, including the Fiji Red Cross Society, Fiji Council of Churches, Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation, Partners in Community Development Fiji, Empower Pacific, Fiji Rainbow Pride, FemLINKpacific, Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development (FRIEND), Live and Learn, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Care, Plan, Caritas, Global Compassion, Save the Children and Habitat for Humanity, among others. Over the years these organisations have developed valuable experience and networks with government, communities and the mainstream media. These networks could be used to leverage CCE initiatives, including with the Communications Cluster, Inter-Cluster Coordination Group, Fiji Red Cross Society local branches and volunteer networks throughout Fiji, members of Disaster Ready and other DFAT- and wider donor-supported initiatives.

5.6   Champions for CCE

Fiji has a history of championing ground-breaking issues, from women's and LGBTQI rights to climate action, with champions originating from across society, including youth and minority groups and government representatives. In the context of CCE and disaster management, Fiji's chairmanship of COP 23 in 2017 has shaped the nation's approaches to addressing climate change and disaster management issues.[78] In 2020–2022, significant champions have emerged for disaster management and in particular prioritising CCE in the Cyclone Yasa (and other cyclones) and the COVID-19 response, including advocacy by leaders such as the Ministry of Health Permanent Secretary and the Director of the NDMO for collective CCE for DRR and disaster resilience. Such leadership prompted sustained CCE both at the national and subnational level and particularly at the policy level. This report does not, however, explore how it was viewed at the community level in terms of effectiveness.

It seems there is greater resolve than ever within the political arena to effectively mitigate the risks and impacts of climate change and disasters, including public health crises, and to reduce the resulting economic burdens. Hence, this is an opportune moment to usher in efforts to strengthen CCE, which will help advance the government's climate change and DRM strategies. Furthermore, the current fight against COVID-19 has revealed the importance of community leadership to an effective response, a learning that can be applied to Fiji's continuing climate change and disaster management needs.

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[78] Prime Minister of Fiji (2020) 'Frank Bainimarama – Policy Leadership', UNEP Champions of the Earth.

6. Possible future pathways for more systematic CCE

It is important to build on the existing CCE mechanisms that are already part of institutional and CSO structures in Fiji. Learning from recent disaster responses, including the COVID-19 pandemic, there is now, more than ever, an opportunity to deepen and strengthen disaster prevention, climate change adaptation, emergency preparedness, response and recovery through an expanded and sustainable CCE system. This calls for a more synchronised approach across the humanitarian–development divide. The separate report on the status of two-way communication in Fiji[79] mirrors many of the recommendations in this paper, although offering more granular detail on how to implement some of the high-level findings presented here. Overall, they also call for the embedding of CCE structures, backed up by sufficient international and local investment and staff capacity. The following are areas that would merit from further strengthening.

Support the embedding of commitments on CCE in legal and policy frameworks and implementation plans

This paper has found a number of legal frameworks and policies already in place that could be used to embed CCE as part of Fiji's legal and governance systems. Potential entry points include:

- The National Disaster Management Act of 1998, which is currently under review and which will require a consequential review of the National Disaster Management Plan of 1995. This could enable entry points for concrete CCE commitments that are then budgeted for as part of the annual budgetary process. Other legislative frameworks under review in 2022–2030 could equally be influenced.
- National and divisional policy reviews, such as any upcoming reviews of the National Humanitarian Policy and the Integrated Rural Development Framework, to ensure the role and power of communities in decision-making is elevated.
- Community development and community engagement policies. CCE is an important instrument in Fiji's development landscape, but it needs to be strengthened to enhance its effectiveness and extend its application. It should be determined if indeed there is a need to reinvigorate and support the implementation of a Fiji Community Engagement Policy and to guarantee that it continues to meet one of its main objectives: to ensure that, through engagement, people and communities participate fully in the process of development.
- Consider the development of an overarching national CCE framework to support the operationalisation and monitoring of agreed CCE-related commitments. Such a framework could outline concrete actions for leaders at national, divisional, provincial, district and village level to put communities at the centre of decision-making in both emergencies and ongoing development. The framework could outline the relevant structures and any related gaps. It would allow for dialogue between administrative levels, facilitating information flow and engagement as well as expediting and capturing community feedback and ensuring accountability at all levels.

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[79] GTS & CDAC Network (2021), Status-of-two-way-communication-in-Fiji.pdf (groundtruthsolutions.org)

Put measures in place to elevate the Communications Cluster's prevention and preparedness role between disasters
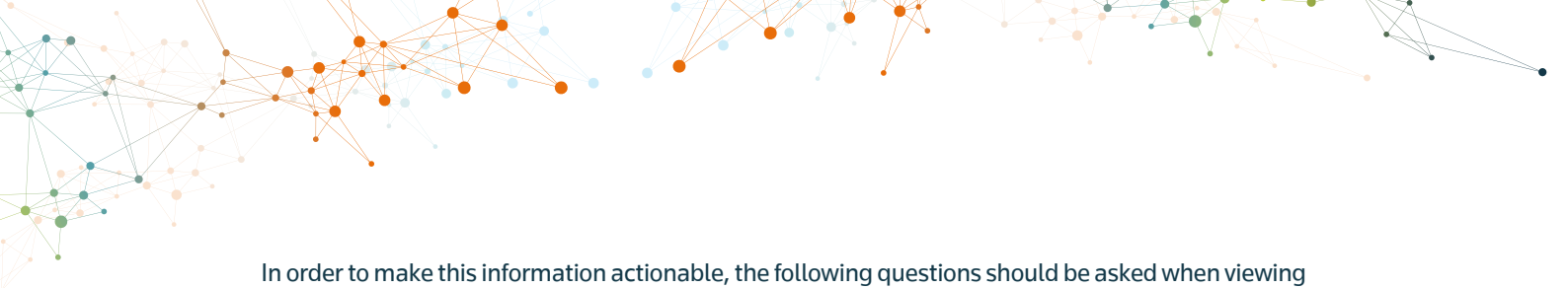
Operationalising the Communications Cluster's full potential would support the strengthening of the prevention and preparedness aspects of CCE in a crisis, and in particular, the need to include people receiving humanitarian or development assistance in the decisions which affect their lives. The current sequential approach has been shown to fall short as a solution. Concerted efforts could be made to ensure an effective process for participation and feedback is in place and that design and management decisions are responsive to the views of communities and people. This would also ensure fulfilment of the government's SDGs and WHS commitments for Fiji. Entry points could include:

- Defining greater synergies between the leadership roles of the Ministry of Communications, the NDMO and the Telecommunications Authority of Fiji in steering the Communications Cluster in order to strengthen the focus on prevention and preparedness outside of the disaster response phase. This could be facilitated by:
  • intentionally expanding the membership of the Communications Cluster to ensure CCE is considered from both a humanitarian and development perspective;
  • putting CCE on the NDM Council and NDMO meeting agendas relating to mitigation, prevention, preparedness and emergencies and their dedicated committees;
  • leveraging the members of the Communication Cluster's CCE working group to support the roll-out of the NDMO's commitments relating to CCE.
- Further strengthening the wider cluster system through the establishment of a Communications Working Group within each sectoral cluster, with links to the Communications Cluster. One good example of how this might work already exists in the Safety and Protection Cluster, where its Communications Working Group collaborated with the Gender-Based Violence Working Group on a suite of products and services to promote and support the two helplines run by the Ministry of Women, which is the Cluster Chair.[80]
- Strengthening links between the work of the Communications Cluster CCE and ETC Working Groups to ensure that vulnerable populations, such as rural communities that are often disproportionately affected by disasters and isolation, are prioritised for communications infrastructure. CDAC and cluster members should continue to advocate for evolving communications technology to focus on those most at need, and that they are designed and developed around disaster-recovery capability. Entry points should be sought in government policy and legislation.

Review existing poverty and spatial mapping and analyse the links to CCE to better target and address the CCE needs of the most vulnerable

Mapping poverty and disaster impacts together with mapping of communications infrastructure and coverage can be valuable in prioritising CCE resources, as the poorest and most vulnerable communities are the least likely to have access to life-saving information or a voice in decision-making. While disasters are often portrayed as acts of nature, the major factors influencing disaster risks are human and social vulnerability, combined with the overall capacity to respond to or reduce the impact of natural hazards. Poverty is therefore a major factor increasing disaster risk, exacerbating vulnerability to disasters and reducing existing coping capacities. It is only by analysing and addressing these two issues together that agencies can determine differences between communities and assess their relative livelihoods security and level of vulnerability. This assessment can guide the government and supporting organisations in setting priorities for CCE programmes, as well as the design of programmes that are attuned to the specific situation at the local level.

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[80] Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (2020) 'Press release: Resource Kit for Responding to Gender Based Violence and Child Welfare calls during COVID19', Facebook, 5 May.

In order to make this information actionable, the following questions should be asked when viewing each map:

- What levels of poverty as well as risk/vulnerability do the maps show?
- What do these maps reveal about the poverty and disaster interface?
- What do these risk maps indicate about responding to future CCE challenges?
- How can organisations integrate this information into CCE planning?
- What other information about capacity/resources would be helpful to include/overlay with a CCE poverty and risk map?

Several useful tools on poverty data already exist that can be used as a starting point, such as the World Bank maps and summaries on poverty trends in Fiji[81] and UNDRR's work on spatial disaster impacts,[82] together with a link to the Fiji Red Cross Society and collective initiatives such as Disaster Ready whose partners work directly with communities.

A **symposium on CCE in the context of the humanitarian–development interface** could be facilitated by NDMO and the Ministry of Communications to better inform humanitarian and development efforts on CCE. It could include mapping existing activities, analysing gaps in the current 'nexus' and agreeing on a way forward to streamline efforts, enhance focus on communities and promote transparency and participation at all levels, including in CCE systems. A timely, flexible and dynamic CCE context where government and non-governmental actors work together has been proven to work best in emergency contexts and could form the basis of the framework for the symposium. The outcome of the poverty mapping proposed above could feed into this symposium.

Develop an overarching CCE implementation plan and advocacy package for the cluster system to enable more systematic CCE

An overarching CCE plan could help to create greater awareness of the critical role of CCE in creating more efficient responses and more effective preparedness and recovery. Such a plan could be used to bridge gaps, provide accessible and meaningful ways to engage with communities and embed CCE as a component of existing humanitarian and development structures, aligned with the National DRR Policy and National Humanitarian Policy. The plan should also be a tool to promote transparency in risk-informed decision-making processes.

- The development of the plan could be led by the CCE Working Group via co-leads FCOSS and UNICEF, working in cooperation with the Communication Cluster and the Fiji Inter-Cluster Coordination Group. It could include areas of action for the clusters, such as common, pre-approved messaging pre-tested with communities, for dissemination before, during and after disasters and other emergencies most likely to affect Fiji. Building on the analysis in the 2021 _Fiji Media, Language and Telecommunications Landscape Guide_,[83] a collaborative mapping of strategic and trusted communication channels and spokespeople could also be valuable so that these can be prioritised quickly in an emergency. The plan would need to be modular so that it can be flexible and agile to address diverse, cascading and overlapping disasters (e.g. COVID-19 and cyclones) as one plan does not fit every CCE context.

- To promote CCE to stakeholders it is important that an **advocacy plan** is developed. Such a plan should aim to increase awareness, create interest, build favourable attitudes and create a 'brand' for CCE. It should further seek to improve broad support, including from donors, for CCE. The plan should identify the methods to enable government, civil society and international supporting

[81] World Bank (n.d.) '_Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population) – Fiji_', dataset. See also: World Bank (2021) _World Bank Group's new Country Partnership Framework for Fiji_ (2021–2024).
[82] ADPC and UNDRR (2019) _Disaster Risk Reduction in the Republic of Fiji: Status Report_.
[83] CDAC Network (2021) _Fiji Media, Language and Telecommunications Landscape Guide_.

partners to better engage with communities while reaching out to stakeholders. It should also focus on broadening the membership of the CCE Working Group to include strong representation from the private sector and mainstream media.

- As per good practice, all such plans that involve stakeholder engagement (government and non-governmental) with communities should include a key communication component on the protection of communities from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment by responders. A focus on inclusion and safeguarding is essential in both the CCE and advocacy plans.
- Funding of the plan and related human resources should be addressed as part of national budgeting process and international donor support.

Operational agencies would need to find a way to integrate their workplans more closely with the overarching plan to support CCE partnerships across sectors.

Elaborate an accountability framework for the Communications Cluster to keep meaningful CCE progress on track to meet locally agreed minimum benchmarks

As the national co-lead of the CCE Working Group, support should be given to FCOSS to develop an accountability framework to ensure that communities remain the primary focus of humanitarian and development initiatives. Existing accountability frameworks tend largely to focus on financial and political accountability.

- The new framework should be developed to focus more on collaborative social[84] and humanitarian accountability, which means being accountable to the people on the receiving end of humanitarian and development actions. This work should be done in collaboration with CCE Working Group members, and in line with the objectives of Fiji's National Humanitarian Policy and the terms of reference of the Communications Cluster, to strengthen monitoring, reporting and accountability during all phases of the disaster management cycle. Donor support for this work would be a precondition of its fulfilment.
- The framework should spell out the obligations of each responsible person, institution and organisation so that they can be answerable for their actions and decisions.
- The framework should monitor success against a set of locally agreed, minimum benchmarks for CCE.[85]

Mobilise action on CCE across national and divisional institutional structures and identify CCE champions

- All relevant government ministries could actively participate in and advocate for collective CCE for DRR and disaster resilience, perhaps drawing on the advocacy of supportive champions such as Ministry of Health Permanent Secretary and the Director of the NDMO.
- Create awareness of the need to integrate questions relating to community information and communication needs and preferences into ministry, department and stakeholder surveys.
- Review communication processes at divisional and district level within the existing disaster management and resilience structures and find practical two-way communication entry points to ensure community perspectives are addressed and reflected in decisions.
- Develop tailored CCE training for governing authorities at national and divisional levels to strengthen a common approach across government.
- Support tailored CCE training for local and international CSOs and UN agencies as well as the Pacific Humanitarian Team.

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[84] World Bank Group (2021) *GPSA in Review: Collaborative Social Accountability for Development 2017–2020* notes that: 'collaborative social accountability is understood as a process that engages citizens, civil society groups, and public-sector institutions in joint, iterative problem solving to improve service delivery and sector governance and foster public accountability' (p. 14).
[85] See for example: CDAC Network (2020) *A Framework for Assessing Success of National CCE Platforms*.

Find and innovate ways of bridging community capacity gaps for two-way communication in disaster management

Communication capacity-bridging (CCB) for more effective communication with and between communities in disaster management is a key factor to consider and an important tool to develop in order for communities to gain greater control over their own future and foster a sense of ownership and empowerment. This could include:

- Greater emphasis by government institutions and civil society on enabling CCB, in collaboration with humanitarian and development stakeholders, to help build resilience within communities and better leverage existing development communication mechanisms. This could be integrated in existing CBDRM trainings.
- Develop a CCE training of trainers (ToT) approach. Such a training of CCE trainers could be convened to prepare a core group of individuals identified from institutional, agency and community level to provide CCE training to their peers. This could be a diverse group of individuals from government, CSOs, faith-based organisations, UN agencies and the telecommunications sector, among others. The training should be targeted primarily to address locally specific CCE challenges. This could also be considered as an extension to the advocacy programmes aimed at raising awareness of the importance of CCE. Four areas of CCE capacity would benefit from strengthening:
    1. Operational capacity of organisations.
    2. Change and transformative capacities.
    3. Composite capacities (planning, facilitating, managing and financing).
    4. Critical, technical and sector-specific skills.

Establish a common feedback mechanism for emergency response with effective information management systems anchored in the national response architecture

A common feedback mechanism should be put in place to ensure that humanitarian and development systems and operations are continually improved through the feedback and information received from communities. Common questions that are integrated into existing surveys can ensure data is easily compiled across agencies, providing a broad reach and a comparable data set. This area of work could include:

- A common feedback mechanism that is managed by the NDMO, with contributions from NDMO's partners, to ensure data is representative of community perceptions and that information is made available to all development and humanitarian actors.
- Developing standard operating procedures for effective participation and feedback of people affected by crises, including a common feedback mechanism. This would builds well on the existing NDMO commitment to listen to community feedback to shape disaster response.
- Developing an information management policy for development- and humanitarian-related information, led by the NDMO, to clarify responsibilities, align information management activities to the needs of government and ensure that data and information are available to support effective decision-making both for longer-term development and during disasters. This would enable better coordination and more efficient use of resources. Information disseminated to communities should be timely, easy to understand and follow a well-structured system.

Mobilise international partner support for national CCE leadership

To further leverage the potential benefits of CCE in preparation and response, international, UN, donor, NGO and private sector partners can:

- Support the capacity of the government to design and support effective two-way forms of communication to enable a coherent yet flexible feedback system that goes beyond knowing community needs.
- Facilitate exchanges between government agencies and civil society to address areas of concern to climate change, DRR, public health emergencies and disaster communication.
- Facilitate dialogue between Pacific Island countries on DRR and disaster communication experiences and systems.
- Support the capturing and application of learning on CCE experiences in Fiji and the region.
- Assist with measures to support local CCE capacity and leadership.
- Support national CCE implementation plans.
- Provide long-term, flexible and predictable funding to enable more systematic CCE in Fiji.

7. Next steps

This working paper is shared to open a discussion on the topic of the humanitarian–development interface of communication and community engagement in Fiji. It is anticipated that the contents of this paper and possible future pathways for more systematic CCE will be the centre of a workshop discussion in Suva in 2022/2023. Three expected outcomes of the workshop are:

1. Exploration of the paper's recommendations with members of the Communications Cluster and validation of recommendations to carry forward.
2. Key actions to ensure more predictable and deliberate two-way CCE in disaster management in Fiji.
3. Practical avenues for diverse individuals and communities to verify and triangulate the effectiveness of CCE.

Annex 1: List of abbreviations

CBDRM	community-based disaster risk management
CCB	community capacity-bridging
CCE	communications and community engagement
CDAC	Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	civil society organisation
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DRM	disaster risk management
DRR	disaster risk reduction
ETC	Emergency Telecommunications Cluster
FCOSS	Fiji Council of Social Services
ICT	information and communication technology
IRDF	Integrated Rural Development Framework
IVA	Integrated Vulnerability Assessment
LGBTQI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	non-governmental organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TC	Tropical Cyclone
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Annex 2: List of organisations consulted

Caritas Fiji (Catholic Church of Fiji)
Commissioner Eastern's Office
Commissioner Central's Office
Commissioner Western's Office
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian High Commission
Fiji Council of Social Services
Fiji Red Cross Society
Ministry of iTaukei Affairs
Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development and National Disaster Management
National Disaster Management Office
Disaster Management Consultant
Plan International
Roko Tui Rewa's Office
Members of the Communications Cluster CCE Working Group

(Note: Wider consultations were planned but this was not possible due to the COVID-19 situation in Fiji at the time of this study.)

CDAC is a network of more than 35 of the largest humanitarian, media development and social innovation actors – including UN agencies, RCRC, NGOs, media and communications actors - working together to shift the dial on humanitarian and development decision making – moving from global to local.

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