

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **MEANS OF STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

The implementation of the common strategy for disaster reduction rests primarily within the countries of the region, and the policies, resources and capacities that are to be put in place at national and local levels. The role of regional organizations will become more pronounced and streamlined over the remainder of the Decade. Several projects and activities are already in place supported by international donors. These will provide part of the required support to reduce natural disasters in the region, but it is anticipated that further international support is needed to enable countries to fully implement the above strategies.

For support activities to contribute to the common goal of disaster reduction in the Pacific, it is imperative that programmes and projects are implemented in a coordinated and coherent manner, and that they are consciously planned to complement, and relate to, other activities.

The following summarises some of the specific roles and activities that have been determined at this stage:

#### **5.1 NATIONAL POLICIES, RESOURCES AND CAPACITIES**

The first and most important means to support implementation of the disaster reduction strategy are the policies, resources and capacities of each of the Pacific island countries. Irrespective of support from regional and international partners, it is primarily our countries who will have to shape the way in which they prepare for, respond to, and reduce the impact of natural disasters.

The way to move ahead is to strengthen the relevant institutions, develop human resources, and put plans and programmes in place in line with identified strategic measures. But the basis of all these is the adoption of firm policies to counter the impact of natural disasters. These policies will have to be put in place in a step by step fashion, in ways that clearly demonstrate the benefits of investing in disaster preparedness and disaster reduction programmes to those involved. A careful, step-by-step approach will ensure wide support for activities and investments that are not always perceived as directly development-oriented, but which ultimately contribute to more sustainable development of Pacific island countries.

A common characteristic of Pacific island countries is that they have a high level of community organization and strong ties within communities. An expression of the importance of the community, are the systems of land tenure that prevail in the South Pacific. Although these systems are highly variable throughout the region, they are commonly based on communal land ownership patterns. This will have to shape the way in which disaster reduction projects are designed and implemented; real reduction of risks will not be possible without full involvement of communities.

Strong community linkages, accompanied by strong community leadership, provide excellent opportunities for community-based disaster awareness programmes. Community level activities for disaster awareness provide good opportunities for disaster reduction in the short term; these programmes can be linked to longer term disaster mitigation programmes at community level.

In the implementation of disaster reduction strategies, we should also draw on the strength of non-government organizations (NGOs), which could be major players in disaster reduction in the region. Linkage between local communities and national disaster institutions and coordination of efforts of NGOs are needed to draw the full benefits. Ties will have to be formed with key sectors of the economy to allow for a concerted effort in risk reduction.

### ***THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION IN WESTERN SAMOA***

*At a national meeting of NGOs held in 1986, the Government of Western Samoa stated their intention to consolidate a national disaster plan for the country, and asked them if they would be willing to support an umbrella organisation of their choosing to represent them on the government disaster coordination body. The NGOs made a collective and unanimous reply in the affirmative. NGOs of Western Samoa recognise that disasters create community welfare needs on a large scale. They have come together to form the Disaster Support Organisation (DSO) of Western Samoa to support government efforts in counter-disaster activities. In recent times, DSO has provided assistance during two tropical cyclones (Ofa, 1990 and Val, 1992), and the Taro blight disease (1993) which has destroyed more than half of the Taro crop in Western Samoa. The role of NGOs has evolved to include the immediate tasks of damage assessment, reconstruction and clearing, and rendering assistance where needed in the villages, to sustain them until government assistance*



*arrives. NGO representatives at village levels receive requests for assistance from villagers and direct these to the National Disaster Committee (NDC). It is also their responsibility through DSO and Western Samoa Red Cross to continue to undertake and participate in disaster preparedness and mitigation throughout the country. Through the provision of education materials, workshops, and provision of non-perishable relief supplies, NGOs are ensuring that all people in Western Samoa will be well informed and maintain a high level of alertness and preparedness in readiness for future natural hazard impacts.*

Where applicable, the private sector should be fully involved in disaster reduction. For example in the tourism sector, private sector interests go beyond the protection of their own interests. It is also important for this sector to have adequate disaster preparedness and response mechanisms in place in areas like transport, communication and health care.

## **5.2 REGIONAL COOPERATION AND SUPPORT**

Although natural disasters, in terms of their impact and management, are essentially national concerns, there are several reasons why strengthening regional linkages and fostering a degree of commonality is useful. Firstly, the problems that are experienced by countries, and the institutional in-country arrangements within the region, have certain general similarities, despite some considerable differences. It is considered, and shows from our experience, that these similarities and differences can provide a fruitful basis for cooperation.

A further reason for promoting regional linkage and a degree of commonality is the consideration of efficiency. Technical support to all Pacific island countries on an individual basis, as has been the norm, will continue to be very fragmented. Technical support to countries from a regional level seems more appropriate to provide continuity. With a degree of commonality and established regional links, it will also be possible to ensure that disaster reduction in the region can be sustained over a longer period, thus providing the on-going support that will be needed by countries in view of their limited human resources.

A regional approach for disaster reduction will be achieved through cooperation and exchange between national disaster management officers, support from regional organizations and support from international organizations and other donors. In particular the South Pacific Disaster Reduction Programme mentioned in Section 5.3 is expected to serve as a focal point for regional level activities. The activities of this programme will in due course be incorporated within the structure of regional organizations.

In the South Pacific, regional organizations play a very significant role in supporting the small island developing states in their development efforts. So far, their involvement in disaster matters has been limited, but it is anticipated that the role of regional organizations in disaster reduction will become more pronounced and streamlined over the remainder of this Decade, increasingly contributing to the implementation of common disaster reduction strategies.

The South Pacific Forum is an important regional policy-making body with involvement in disaster management. The mandate of the Forum Secretariat includes disaster management, but at present the Secretariat plays a limited role. The main role of the South Pacific Forum and its Secretariat is expected to be in policy coordination and in providing technical assistance for member states.

The other regional organizations are expected to contribute to disaster reduction from their specific technical and organizational mandates, as a continuation of their present programmes. The South Pacific Commission [SPC] is expected to focus on technical advice, training, assistance and information in social, economic and cultural fields to 22 governments and administrations in the region. It currently has work programmes in agriculture, fisheries, rural health and nutrition, sanitation and water supply, population, community education and media. The South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission [SOPAC] has a regional mandate for production of technical information on coastal and other geological hazards, including hazard assessment for earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides and coastal erosion.

The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme [SPREP] is to assist member countries and territories to maintain and improve their shared environment and enhance the capacity of countries to provide a present and future resource base to support the quality of life of the people. SPREP activities are linked to natural disaster concerns in particular through climate change, coastal management and sustainable development programmes. The University of the South Pacific [USP] is a regional tertiary academic institution with a wide range of subjects, including geography, agriculture, social science and maritime resources. The University has a network of extension centres covering all project countries. This regional network may be beneficial to disaster reduction efforts. Other contributions of USP can include training material, personnel and facilities, regional disaster management training, curriculum development and specific technical assistance, research and studies.



### SOPAC AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

*SOPAC's involvement in disaster preparedness is linked to its work on geological processes, many of which cause natural hazards in island nations of the Pacific. This work has been carried out for many years under the Coastal Programme and has recently been expanded into a newly established Onshore Programme.*

*SOPAC's Coastal Programme includes field studies to assess interaction of geological, environmental and oceanographic processes and the effects coastal infrastructure developments have on these processes. An important aspect of SOPAC's coastal work is the assessment of geological process in the coastal zone, both natural and human-induced. Investigations include historical air photo interpretation, beach profile monitoring, sediment budget studies, and review of the history of foreshore and harbour developments. The results are applied to development projects to optimize the design and operation of coastal structures and to minimise any adverse effects. The work also applies to village level as well as to the national development level.*

*The Secretariat will endeavour to respond to requests for assistance following special events such as cyclones, map the subsequent effects on the physical environment, and provide advice on hazard identification and mitigation.*



*SOPAC applies studies to optimize the engineering design of sea walls to withstand extreme conditions, thus avoiding damage such as this failure during a moderate cyclone.*

### **THE SPREP WORK PROGRAMME IN RELATION TO NATURAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN THE PACIFIC REGION**

*SPREP has, in the past, incorporated many disaster-related projects and activities into its work programme and budget as part of its mandate to manage the shared environment of the Pacific region. While these are spread throughout the various programmes, the majority of these activities are being undertaken as part of the 'SPREP' Climate Change Programme and are associated with weather/climate-related extremes such as tropical cyclones and droughts. A proposed new Climate Change work programme, to be tabled at the 1994 SPREP meeting in Kiribati during September, gives even greater emphasis on the impacts of extreme events in the Pacific region, particularly the linkage between climate change and natural disasters.*

*In this region, as is the case elsewhere in the world, natural disasters are environmental disasters. There is a real and obvious need to link disaster management, sustainable development and sound environmental management into national planning strategies if the full potential of the many resources of the region is to be realised.*

*In collaboration with other regional and international organisations, SPREP will continue to expand its role in assisting the region to meet the goals of IDNDR, and successfully manage natural disasters. Projects relating to natural disasters and the environment will complement activities concerning the socio-economic impacts of disasters. There has been discussions within SPREP regarding proposed workshops to highlight the linkages between population and natural disasters. Through activities such as this, the impact of natural disasters on development in the region will be minimised and we can all enjoy living in a better prepared and safer environment.*

## **5.3 INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE: ON-GOING AND NEW INITIATIVES**

The "South Pacific Disaster Reduction Programme" is a four year regional project, which started in January 1994. The project is funded by UNDP with co-funding from Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Peoples Republic of China and possibly other donor countries. The project will be implemented by the South Pacific Programme Office of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and is expected to serve as a focal point of disaster management activities in the region. The main objective of the project is to strengthen institutional capacities and develop human resources to enable these countries to mitigate the impact of natural disasters, improve disaster preparedness and to improve post disaster recovery management, and thus reduce a major constraint on sustainable development.

The project is expected to contribute significantly to the priorities outlined in Chapter 4, in particular to Section 4.1. The three main components of the project are in-country training and technical assistance, the provision of technical support materials, and regional cooperation and coordination. The project will assist in setting up databases and includes some pilot projects for disaster mitigation. A major function of the project is to provide a regional forum for disaster reduction activities, through which projects and activities can be carried out in a coordinated and coherent manner. The project will assist Pacific island countries in identifying priority activities and programmes for disaster reduction, that go beyond the scope of the actual project, and for which additional funding sources will need to be found.

Several other programmes and projects are in place or will be implemented shortly. A major Australian contribution to the IDNDR is the Pacific Disaster Preparedness Programme, which was started in 1989 and which provides packages of assistance for countries, according to their needs, for



the development of national disaster preparedness. Australia has further organized several meetings of disaster managers in the region, leading up to the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction. This type of support is expected to continue and contribute to the implementation of disaster reduction strategies.



*Participants of the SWP Regional Meeting of IDNDR Committee Representatives, Vanuatu, 1993*

SPREP has recently formulated a project proposal for "Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Pacific Islands Region". One of the project components is coastal hazard management planning and coordination, which includes hazard mapping and development of disaster mitigation plans and strategies for coastal areas. Implementation of this project is expected to contribute in particular to 'hazard and risk assessment' and 'disaster mitigation for sustainable development'.

The European Community is currently looking into possibilities to support the improvement of cyclone forecasting and warning dissemination in the region. This would contribute in particular to the implementation of our fourth stated disaster reduction strategy in Section 4: 4.4 (Community Awareness and Disaster Warning). Other on-going international assistance programmes and new initiatives are mainly on a country-by-country basis; which we documented in greater detail in the National Summary Reports prepared for the World Conference.

The above programmes and projects, when implemented in a coordinated and coherent manner, form a substantial contribution to risk reduction in the South Pacific region, and will assist in implementing the strategies set out until the end of the Decade. As institutional capacities and awareness develop in Pacific island countries, it becomes more feasible to identify and implement strategic risk reduction projects which have wide support, including that of policy makers. The main additional requirements for international assistance to fully implement the outlined strategy will be in the field of international training and disaster-related education, national workshops, training and awareness programmes, and resources for implementation of disaster mitigation projects.