



# GUIDANCE NOTE

Early Recovery from Disasters in the Pacific

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United Nations Development Programme

CRISIS PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

## About Pacific Crisis Guidance Notes

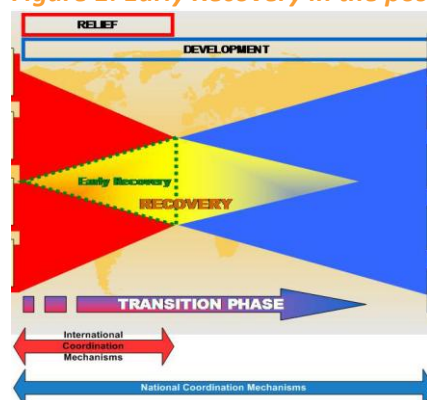
PCG Notes is an ongoing series of practical how-to guides that aim to contribute to the analysis, prevention and response to crises in the Pacific region by governments, regional organizations, civil society and international agencies. The series focuses on crisis issues relevant to the Pacific, draws upon Pacific knowledge and experience, and takes into consideration the Pacific context in providing guidance. Electronic copies of the Notes contain links to references, contacts and other sources of information. PCG Notes is an initiative of the UNDP Pacific Centre in partnership with key stakeholders. For more information and other volumes, see [www.undppc.org.fj](http://www.undppc.org.fj). Inquiries about the series can be directed to Nanise Saune at [nanise.saune@undp.org](mailto:nanise.saune@undp.org)

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## Overview

Early recovery (ER) is a coordinated effort to facilitate a return to normalcy in the lives of communities affected by crisis. It aims to: rebuild self-reliance following a disaster; close the gap between the initial emergency response phase and longer term recovery and development; minimize the risk and damage of future disasters; and strengthen community resilience. Early recovery begins immediately after a disaster event and can continue up to 18 months in large scale disasters. Figure 1 shows the positioning and relationship of early recovery in the post-disaster process in relation to emergency relief and development.

Figure 1: Early Recovery in the post-disaster process



## Key Pacific Challenges

The Pacific is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. Extreme events in the region since 1950 have affected approximately 9.2 million people and caused 9,811 reported fatalities and \$3.2 billion in damage.<sup>1</sup> In some countries such as Samoa and Tonga, more than 40% of the population is affected by disaster in a typical year. The most prevalent disasters are cyclones, which account for 76% of reported disasters, followed by earthquakes, droughts and floods.<sup>2</sup> High exposure to climate change risks, isolated populations, small economies, and limited adaptive capacity make Pacific Island countries particularly vulnerable to disasters.

While efforts in the region to date have had some success, the importance of early recovery, as a way for Pacific communities to transition from emergency relief and establish a foundation for longer term development, has not been fully recognized.

### Early Recovery is different from ....

..... **Emergency Response or Relief** – which focuses primarily on saving lives and may last for days, weeks or a few months for large disasters.

..... **Reconstruction** – which entails large construction or infrastructure projects (smaller scale reconstruction is sometimes part of early recovery).

..... **Business as Usual** – because it looks for opportunities for transformational change which arise after a disaster.



Disaster recovery planning in Tokelau supported by UNDP

## Pacific Early Recovery in Practice

### Coordination

In the Pacific, national governments usually lead the response to disaster but can call on regional agencies (CROP agencies) and the international community to assist. In representation of the UN system, the UN Resident Coordinator (UN RC) usually assumes the role of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) in times of disaster. The most active CROP agency supporting disaster recovery is Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), in particular its SOPAC and Land Resources (LRD) divisions. The government may also engage directly with bilateral donors.

To ensure reliable support to governments, the international community under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has designated UNDP as the lead agency to coordinate early recovery, linking with disaster response.

For effective early recovery, coordination must involve a range of stakeholders such as government departments, local authorities, national and international NGOs, community-based organizations, women's organizations, UN agencies, international financial institutions, donors, and the private sector. Churches in the Pacific, with their wide networks, also play an important role in early recovery. Pacific governments can also call upon the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) through the UN RC. The only exception is PNG, as it is not a PHT member.

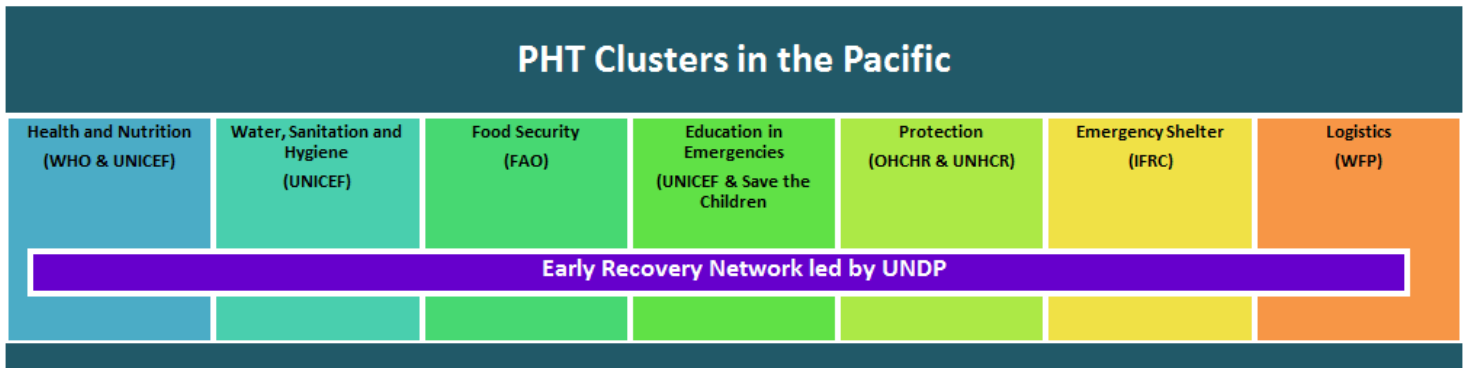
The PHT is a standing mechanism to strengthen preparedness on an ongoing basis and support governments to facilitate coordination and strengthen responses in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. Members include UN agencies, regional organizations, NGOs, donors and Red Cross organizations. The PHT mechanism is made up of seven clusters and the Early Recovery Network across the clusters (Figure 2). The PHT structure has been adjusted from a suggested global model to meet the specific needs of the Pacific. Follow this [link](#) to learn more about the PHT.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank 2012, [Acting Today For Tomorrow: A Policy and Practice Note for Climate and Disaster Resilient Development in the Pacific Islands Region](#), World Bank, Washington, DC.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank 2006, [Not if but When: Adapting to Natural Hazards in the Pacific Islands Region: A Policy Note](#), World Bank, Washington, DC.

The Early Recovery Network for the Pacific region is led by UNDP. The role of this Network is to support government to coordinate the work of the clusters and provide technical assistance.

**Figure 2: The Early Recovery Network within the PHT collaborative mechanism**



Regardless of the mechanism, ensuring that early recovery is part of the work under each cluster is vital for enabling a smooth transition from emergency response to development.

## Principles

Governments may consider developing overarching principles when engaging in early recovery in the Pacific based on global best practices and Pacific experiences to date such as below:

- **ensure national ownership** by placing national and local authorities in charge of planning, execution and monitoring of early recovery; involving civil society; and, being supported by international agencies and donors.
- **maximize synergies** among different actors through efficient coordination of stakeholders
- **“build back better”** to ensure that shelter, infrastructure and systems are more resilient to better protect people and communities against future disasters
- **promote local and national capacities** by ensuring that external technical assistance complements rather than replaces existing capacities, and is seen by national actors as supportive rather than directive
- **promote gender equality** by assessing gender-specific needs and vulnerabilities, and acknowledging capacities and skills
- **use participatory practices** to identify needs, empower communities and create the foundations for sustained and active participation throughout the early recovery process
- **monitor, evaluate and learn** through appropriate participatory mechanisms that allow timely identification of corrective measures and capture the voices of the target population

See more details on overarching principles in the Guidance Note on Early Recovery at this [link](#).

## Process

Global best practice shows that pre-disaster recovery planning is effective in promoting a strong recovery. Post disaster early recovery work should ideally start from day one after the disaster event and continue until normal life and livelihoods have largely resumed. Eighteen months is the generally accepted time limit for early recovery even for large disasters, but early recovery may only take a few months in smaller disasters.

Table 1 outlines possible steps and actions for early recovery in sequence, although these may vary depending on the scale and type of disaster, government capacity to respond, and government willingness to call upon the international community. Each disaster and the response to it are unique.

Step	Possible Key Actions led by Government but Involving Stakeholders
<b>Pre-disaster ER preparedness</b>	<p>Prepare National Disaster Risk Management Plans with contingencies for early recovery across clusters.</p> <p>Seek out capacity building in early recovery from organizations such as UNDP.</p>
<b>ER Network activation as part of the response</b>	<p>Consider activating the PHT (UNDMT in PNG) and ER Network and assign a government official as a lead.</p> <p>Liaise with the UN Resident Coordinator for any assistance from UN agencies as necessary.</p> <p>Create, share and regularly update contact lists of key government officials and ER Network members.</p> <p>Provide dedicated human and financial resources to the ER Network lead in a large crisis.</p>
<b>ER needs assessment to identify needs, capacities, and priorities</b>	<p>Undertake ER needs assessment as part of broader humanitarian needs assessment or as a stand-alone assessment, which is advisable for large disasters.</p> <p>Form an inclusive assessment team from government, traditional leaders, civil society, UN, donors, and other local and international actors. Ensure gender balance and gender analysis expertise.</p> <p>Develop and use a standard assessment tool for all disaster affected regions. Ensure that cross-cutting issues of gender, youth, human rights, conflict sensitivity and disaster risk reduction are in the tool.</p> <p>Identify priority ER needs, main geographical locations, quick impact opportunities, gender inequalities, and existing ER capacities in governments, civil society and communities.</p> <p>Draft a brief assessment report with indicative resources required in plain language, in the local language and English, for distribution to stakeholders to ensure donor alignment and inform decision makers.</p>
<b>ER strategic framework and implementation plan to ensure clarity on what needs to be done</b>	<p>Draft a framework and implementation plan for ER, in the case of large disasters.</p> <p>Make clear priorities, estimated costs, and timeframes in the plan. Also include monitoring, evaluation and reporting tools, considering gender sensitivity.</p> <p>Develop and adopt overarching principles to guide the early recovery process.</p> <p>Make certain of the relevancy, sustainability and ownership of the plan by ensuring that the government plays the lead role while encouraging inputs from all key stakeholders including civil society.</p> <p>Identify responsible offices and/or agencies to lead each cluster and/or geographical area.</p> <p>Consider how ER will flow into long-term recovery and impact on ongoing development projects.</p> <p>Plan for the handing over of the ER Network's work to government as part of an exit strategy for international actors.</p> <p>Submit framework and implementation plan to Cabinet for review and endorsement.</p> <p>Consult donors and consider diversion of existing funds to support ER work.</p> <p>Use endorsed ER framework to mobilize resources internally and from donors.</p>
<b>Design and implementation of ER programmes based on Framework or Humanitarian Action Plan</b>	<p>Use local materials and labour as much as possible to stimulate local economy.</p> <p>Expand livelihood options and build skills of survivors by providing training in disaster reconstruction and disaster resistant construction.</p> <p>Ensure that men, women, girls and boys all have opportunities to determine and benefit from ER efforts (See Case Study 1).</p> <p>Use opportunities to address gender imbalances through, for example, placing women in decision making roles and providing employment outside of traditional gender norms.</p> <p>Track progress using monitoring and evaluation tools developed in planning.</p>

## Types of ER Activities

Early recovery activities range across clusters, and should emphasize disaster risk reduction. A few examples are below:

**Livelihoods:** Providing temporary employment or “cash-for-work” programs to generate income for clearing rubble, repairing of fishing boats or re-establishing agriculture through soil rehabilitation and supplying tools, seeds and fertilizers (see Case Study 1).

**Water and sanitation:** Restoring drinking water sources; installing disaster-proof water tanks.

**Health:** Supporting hospitals and clinics to resume full operations.

**Basic services:** Repairing community infrastructure such as wells, meeting halls, and water tanks; re-establishing local transport links through boat, small bridge and road repair.

**Education:** Ensuring children are back in school with proper materials and classrooms or transitional learning spaces.

**Governance:** Restoring the functions of government by making offices operational, rescuing files and databases, and restoring internet access; strengthening National Disaster Management Offices.

**Security and rule of law:** Conducting safety surveys; developing community-based monitoring mechanisms; preventing gender-based violence through appropriate psychosocial support and referral pathways for services.

**Shelter:** Demonstrating risk resilient housing models; providing appropriate shelter solutions.

**Environment:** Conducting environmental clean-up campaigns; rehabilitating damaged coral reefs.

**Reintegration of displaced populations:** Supporting government for return of displaced populations; ensuring due access of women to land and property.

**Assessments:** Using vulnerability and risk information to inform water, health, education and livelihoods recovery programmes.

## Tools and References

Further information about early recovery in the Pacific and in general can be found at the below links. There are checklists, tools and detailed guidance notes which can provide practitioners and managers with plenty of useful information.

### Early Recovery in General

CWGER (Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery), [Guidance Note on Early Recovery](#)

### Coordination of Early Recovery

OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), [The Cluster Approach in the Pacific](#)

CWGER, [Early Recovery Coordination Lessons Learned Exercise Report](#)

### Early Recovery and Gender

UNDP, [Key Things to Know about Gender Equality as a “Cross-Cutting Issue” in Early Recovery](#)

UNDP, [Eight-Point Agenda for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality in Crisis Prevention and Recovery](#)

International Recovery Platform, [Why Gender Issues in Recovery are Important](#)

### Assessment Tools

UNDP, [Review of Post Disaster Recovery Needs Assessment and Methodologies](#)

## Case Studies

### Case Study 1: Fiji Floods

Due to the severe flooding that occurred in the Western Division of Fiji in January and March 2012 many local residents experienced hardship, weeks without income, displacement in emergency shelters, and loss of household assets. A recovery programme funded by UNDP and Australia sought to assist their recovery by providing a temporary source of cash income in exchange for work related to restoration of livelihoods activities and improved preparedness for future disasters. The intention was that the quick, visible impact of the programme in the affected areas would give people hope and motivation to move forward. This disaster recovery programme was innovative in the Pacific context in that:

- For the first time in the Pacific, a recovery programme was undertaken as a joint programme bringing together contributions to support the Fiji government from several UN agencies namely, UNDP, UN Women, ILO and UNV;
- Given their higher poverty levels and the proven effectiveness of delivering assistance through women, this programme targeted primarily women market vendors. In the first location of Rakiraki women comprised 85% of participants;
- The programme was largely implemented by the local Town Councils. To build their capacity to design and implement similar programmes in the future, the UN partners developed an operations manual, registration system, reporting templates and standard communications products.

Some of the challenges encountered during the implementation of the project were: delays in start-up due to bureaucracy; an unexpected tendency to exclude one of the main ethnic groups from participation; and, hidden costs to participation due to travel time and distance to the worksite. The project's mid-term review report is at this [link](#).



*A woman plants native grass as part of a cash-for-work programme to protect the riverbank next to the market in Rakiraki.*

### Case Study 2: Samoa Tsunami

After the September 2009 tsunami, the ER cluster was activated for the first time in the Pacific with the Ministry of Finance and UNDP leading. Immediate early recovery was addressed through the Early Recovery Project (ERP) while the existing Community Centred Sustainable Development Project (CCSDP) contributed to village planning and development in the tsunami affected villages. The ERP had three components namely:

1. Rehabilitation of Livelihoods
2. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation
3. Strengthening Early Recovery Coordination

The livelihoods component implemented by local NGOs involved: cash-for-work to clear debris; support for women's income generation; and, micro-finance projects and business trainings for green enterprises mainly for women. The evaluation of the micro-finance aspect showed that the women were not empowered to manage the funds themselves but rather over relied on the NGO for fund management, call meetings and promote inter-loaning between participants. The business trainings over 5 days were comprehensive, but lack of follow up support meant that business ideas have had trouble getting off the ground. The DRR component focused on DRR village plans, DRR trainings and establishing Early Warning Systems. Implementation of DRR drills for evacuation was only limited to 2 villages and coordination with the Natural Disaster Management Office was lacking. EWS systems, both traditional and modern, are still not widely in place enough still after the project completion. For Coordination, seven clusters, including ER were activated and proved effective in coordinating the response to the disaster. The Final Evaluation Report of the Project is [here](#)



*A tsunami survivor in Samoa explains his situation to an official carrying out an assessment.*

### Case Study 3: Tonga Tsunami

In September 2009, an earthquake of 8.3 magnitude centred just off Samoa affected nearly 1700 people in Niuatoputapu and Tafahi in northern Tonga. The subsequent tsunamis destroyed 90% of the houses, killed 9 people and injured many others. The Government declared a “State of Emergency” for Niuatoputapu.

An assessment of ER needs showed that the major sources of income on the islands of Niuatoputapu and Tafahi were mat weaving, government employment and remittances from overseas. Mat weaving is undertaken by women’s groups on the island and the assessment showed that three private houses used for weaving were damaged but that mats could still continue to be a profitable business as the pandanus leaves, used as raw materials, were still intact. Moreover, while crops and livestock on mainland were not severely affected, most of the fishing boats were destroyed in the tsunami.

To assist the government-led early recovery effort, UNDP developed a programme comprised of the following livelihoods-based activities: reconstruction of the weaving huts in each of the three villages; procurement of a fishing boat which could also be used to connect the smaller island of Tafahi with Niuatoputapu; provision of fishing equipment and outboard motors for boats; and a cash-for-work temporary employment programme. One challenge that is not unusual in the Pacific was the island’s isolation. Due to its distance from Tonga’s main island, with only one flight a week on an eight-seater plane, it was difficult to monitor the program’s implementation and detect emerging issues. Another challenge was ensuring the equal involvement of men and women in the recovery work, as there was resistance by some parties to the proposal that women should be paid for work, just like the men. The 2010 annual report of the project is [here](#).



*An aid worker conducting a needs assessment inspects tsunami damaged housing in Tonga.*



*A community meeting in the Cook Islands to plan its early recovery process after Cyclone Pat hit in 2010.*

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