

Focus On The Intersections:

ROLES OF CHURCHES AND CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

**In Localization Of Climate Change,
Disaster Risk Management And
Humanitarian Actions In Fiji**

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Project Title: Disaster Ready

Purpose:

Strengthen local humanitarian capability and preparedness in the Pacific and Timor-Leste so that communities are better able to respond to and recover from rapid- and slow-onset disasters.

Objectives:

1. Communities are better prepared for rapid- and slow-onset disasters.
2. The rights and needs of women, people with disabilities, youth and children are being met in disaster preparedness and response at all levels.
3. Government, NGOs, the private sector, and communities coordinate more effectively for inclusive disaster preparedness and response.
4. National NGOs and faith-based organisations have more influence and capacity in the country humanitarian system.
5. AHP NGOs work effectively together and with other relevant stakeholders.

Project Period: January 2018 to June 2022

Target Groups: Communities and Churches

Partners:

Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) Fiji partners: Fiji Council of Churches, ADRA Fiji, Methodist Church in Fiji, Anglican Archdiocese of Polynesia, Fiji Baptist Convention, Ola Fou, Caritas, Roman Catholic Archdiocese, Salvation Army and Seventh Day Adventist Church

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CAN DO GIS Church properties mapping in Levuka, Ovalau

ACRONYMS

List of all acronyms – church-based organizations, churches – include members,

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Fiji
AHP	Australia Humanitarian Partnership
CAN DO	Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations
CARITAS	The Catholic Agency for Justice, Peace and Development, Fiji
CC	Climate change
DRM	Disaster risk management
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
PIANGO	Pacific Island Association of NGOs



WASH Response TC Ana 2020 handover over the at Delainavesi Boarder

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Localization of humanitarian action is a priority in Fiji and other Pacific Island Countries. Churches and church-based organizations play significant roles in localization actions. However, the breadth and depth of churches and church-based organizations roles in localization are not clear and widely recognized and appreciated. This research was commissioned by CAN DO and ADRA to 1) document the roles of churches and church-based organization in climate change, disaster risk management and localization of humanitarian action. But the reality of COVID-19 lockdowns has brought to the fore that localization is not only for humanitarian action but in all actions related to climate change, disaster risk management and humanitarian action – hence, we refocused the report on the roles of churches and church-based organizations in localization of climate change, disaster risk management and humanitarian actions. 2) The research synthesizes the roles and partnerships of the churches and church-based organizations and present valuable recommendations for CAN DO, ADRA, national and international actors working on climate change, disaster risk management and humanitarian actions. To understand the roles of churches and church-based organizations and develop recommendations, a qualitative research approach using focus group discussions with church members, key informant interviews with church-based organizations and partners. This research including the method has been built on CAN DO partnerships and PIANGO and HAG tools such as the Localization Evaluation Framework. Information including in this report were collected from Communities and organizations based in the Central Division of Fiji.

All participants (from the community, church-based organizations, government, and NGOs) strongly agreed that churches and church-based organizations play a significant role in preparing for, and responding to, climate change, disasters, COVID-19, and the localisation of humanitarian actions in Fiji. However, the roles, partnerships, resourcing, and capacity to carry out the roles effectively and efficiently are perceived differently, depending on community location, denominational membership, and availability of supporting resources and networks.

The main roles of the churches and church-based organizations in the localization agenda is based on their ability to reach everyone, everywhere, every time. In Fiji, the critical roles the churches and church-based organizations are involved in localization of climate change, disaster risk management and humanitarian actions are:

1. Consultative agents to identify needs of communities
2. Accountability to donors
3. Increasing the education and awareness of everyone
4. Engaging and mobilizing communities and partners to act climate change, disaster risk management and humanitarian action priorities

Churches and church-based organizations are working with many partners in Fiji (both local and international partners) to implement their roles in localization of climate change, disaster risk management and humanitarian actions. Key lessons from working with partners include.

- The need for Monitoring and Evaluation skills from a faith-based approach to evidence and sharing lessons between partners – room for learning and improvements.
- Sharing resources and learning from one another
- Sharing of maps and the value of GIS
- Transforming the roles of first responders

The recommendations from the study focused on addressing the intersections between the breadth and depth of churches and church-based organizations' roles and partnerships in delivering and reporting of activities related to localization of climate change, disaster risk management and humanitarian actions in Fiji, and lessons learnt from the actions.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Pacific Islands have experienced adverse impacts of climate change, disasters, and COVID-19. The impacts of climate change, disasters and COVID-19 are projected to intensify in the future (Ilese et al., 2020; Ilese et al., 2021; Lough et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2016). Christian beliefs affect communities' perception on climate change and disasters. These beliefs contribute to action or inaction on climate change and disasters (Bird et al., 2021; Havea et al., 2018). The role of churches and church organizations in addressing environmental challenges such as climate change and disasters has been well recognized around the world and the Pacific Islands (Bomberg & Hague, 2018; Christian Aid/Gideon Mendel, 2019; Mitchell, 2018; Nche, 2020). This is based on the understanding that churches and church-based organizations are directly working for and with local communities. The coverage of churches and church-based organizations is critical in implementing the localisation agenda in Pacific Island Countries (Flint et al., 2018; Humanitarian Advisory Group & PIANO, 2019; Mitchell, 2018). There has been work done on localisation in PICs led by the Pacific Island Association of NGOs (PIANGO), the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and partners (Flint et al., 2018; Nche, 2020). They developed a framework and tools to evaluate the localisation work of many partners in PICs (Humanitarian Advisory Group & PIANO, 2019). They also applied the framework to document evidence of localisation in PICs (Civil Society Forum of Tonga et al., 2019; Development Services Exchange et al., 2019; Flint et al., 2018).

There is agreement that churches and church-based organizations play important roles in localisation, but the details of the roles and what needs to be improved upon, is less understood. The Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations Australia with funds from the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) and in partnership with CAN DO Fiji and ADRA delivered a project in Fiji. The CAN DO project focuses on:

- Volunteer training.
- volunteer motivation program.
- mapping training and mapping churches and member properties.
- CAN DO working policies and procedures.
- leadership training.
- identification of warehouse to store response and recovery stock in strategic locations.
- procurement of appropriate and relevant stocks.
- women actively participating in the DRM cycle.
- research into psychosocial support programs to bridge with humanitarian sector.
- development and roll-out of psychosocial support program.
- assist with partner compliance in line with humanitarian principles.
- development of Safe and Ready Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping of church properties for potential Evacuation Centers
- development of the Theology of Disaster Resilience in a changing Climate.

The CAN DO project and ADRA partnered with the Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD), The University of the South Pacific (USP) to carry out research to understand the role of churches in localization of humanitarian actions, climate change, disaster risk management (DRM) and COVID-19 in Fiji. The key questions for localization, Climate change, and the DRM approaches are:

- How might CAN DO support churches to become more effective in their influence role on climate change and DRM
- What are the best practices of churches leading localization of humanitarian actions, climate change and DRM
- Best practices on partnerships, leadership, capacity, coordination, participation, policy influence and advocacy.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Study sites and scope

The study employed two approaches to understand different perspectives on the roles of churches in localisation of actions related to climate change, disaster risk management, COVID-19, and humanitarian actions. To understand the general roles of churches, key informant interviews were conducted with eight church-based organizations, government departments, and PIANGO around the Suva area in Fiji (Table 1). The selection of organizations was based on the partners CAN DO works with in Fiji. The research team contacted the organizations and appointments were made with participants at their respective offices. Key informant interviews were conducted with members of six church-based organizations, the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and PIANGO. These organizations are crucial stakeholders in climate change and disaster risk management (CCDRM), COVID-19 and the localisation framework and evaluation. The interviewers were postgraduate in climate change and postgraduate in geography students at the Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development, USP. All interviews were conducted in English. Transcripts were coded and analysed in Dedoose, a qualitative analytical software.

Table 1 List of organizations interviewed as key informants with 60% women participation.

Faith Based Organisation
Anglican Archdiocese of Polynesia
Seventh Day Adventist Church
PIANGO
Methodist Church in Fiji
Roman Catholic Archdiocese -Caritas
Fiji Council of Churches
Fiji Baptist Convention
NDMO

As church organizations are made up of members, we also sought a perspective from community members of Molitua Village, Tailevu, Fiji. The village was selected because of the diversity of around eight denominations within the village, accessibility (30 minutes from Suva), and good pre-study relationships with the researchers. Thirteen focus group discussions (FGDs) with thirty participants were conducted with five different denominations in the village (Table 2). The FGDs were facilitated by climate change postgraduate students from the Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD), The University of the South Pacific (USP). The transcripts were translated, coded, and analysed in Dedoose.

Table 2 Details of the focus group discussions at Molitua community

Youth (combined)	Women (adult)	Men (adult)
Methodist Church in Fiji	Methodist Church in Fiji	Methodist Church in Fiji
Seventh Day Adventist Church	Seventh Day Adventist Church	Church of God
Assembly of God	Assembly of God	All Nation Christian Fellowship
All Nation Christian Fellowship	All Nation Christian Fellowship	
Church of God	Church of God	
30% of participants	60% of participants	10% of participants

Data collection tools

The initial coverage of this research was on climate change, disaster risk management and localisation. We added COVID-19 because it is a slow-onset, high impact “disaster” for communities, which humanitarian partners are responding to. The localisation evaluation framework (Humanitarian Advisory Group & PIANGO, 2019) was used as a guide to develop the interview guide for key informant interviews with church organizations and church-based humanitarian organizations. The guide for the key informant interviews for church-based organizations, partners (such as government) and NGOs had six sections:

- Section 1: Interviewee background.
- Section 2: Role(s) of the church.
- Section 3: Partnerships.
- Section 4: Localisation and beneficiaries.
- Section 5: Resourcing.
- Section 6: Skills and knowledge

The guide and protocol for the FGD targeting members of the community had three key sections:

- Role(s) of the churches.
- Partnerships.
- Localisation focusing on the roles of churches and how churches are providing support to the communities in the area of climate change, DRM and COVID-19 during and after disasters.
- Additional questions regarding understanding of values, rules and knowledge systems that inform actions from the community perspective.

The data collection tools were developed by the USP research team and reviewed by the CAN DO team from ADRA and Australia. The comments were considered in the finalisation of the tools. The key informant interview and FGD guides were piloted with students at USP Marine Campus. The feedback, especially on timing and framing of questions, was helpful in finalising the data collection tools. The participants signed consent forms before the data collection took place.



AHP Country Committee Meeting with Commissioner Eastern's Office TC Ana Response.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

All participants (from the community, church-based organizations, government, and NGOs) strongly agreed that churches and church-based organizations play a significant role in preparing for, and responding to, climate change, disasters, COVID-19, and the localisation of humanitarian actions in Fiji. However, the roles, partnerships, resourcing, and capacity to carry out the roles effectively and efficiently are perceived differently, depending on community location, denominational membership, and availability of supporting resources and networks.

The findings of this research are organized into different themes based on the roles of the churches and partners in the spectrum of localisation of actions to address climate change, disaster risks, COVID-19, and humanitarian actions (Figure 1).

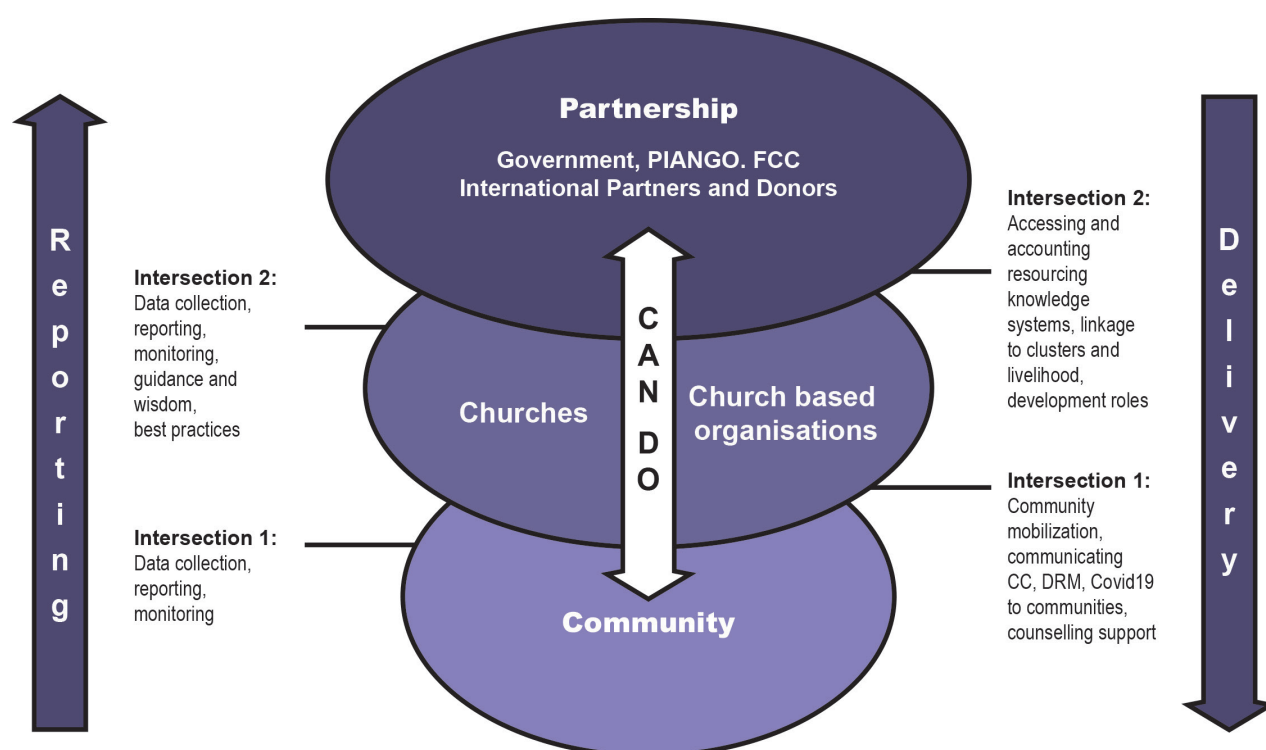


Figure 1 Focus on the intersections: The role of churches in localisation of climate change, disaster risk management, COVID-19, and humanitarian actions in Fiji.

4.1 Organisation and Individuals

There are different types of stakeholders classified in the church study:

Church Based Humanitarian Organizations

These are organizations such as ADRA and Caritas, with well-established roles and capacity to mobilize resources, people and with technical know-how and connections to deliver actions at the community level.

The churches

These are referred at both the organisational level (centralized administrative and strategic engagement in localisation) and individual level (church members at community level). The Methodist Church in Fiji, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Latter Days Saints (LDS), Anglican Diocese of Polynesia and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese-Caritas are the most active churches with programs to support and build community resilience. Other churches such as Fiji Baptist Convention are starting to engage in supporting communities in building their resilience and caring for the environment, but spiritual growth and living are their priorities. All FGDs participants agreed that churches should play a central implementing, coordinating, communicating and action role in localization of humanitarian actions. Based on their experiences in COVID-19 and past cyclones and floods, churches provided support for everyone.

Communities

Community is the common denominator of humanitarian actions; it goes beyond ethnicity, religion, economic status, gender, disability, and health. Supporting organizations include PIANGO, Fiji Council of Churches and NDMO, who have worked in partnership with church-based organizations in coordinating, providing resources and building capacity of communities.

4.2 Community/Individual Perceptions

Members of the studied community shared that the role of churches and church-based organisation in the localisation of climate change, DRM, COVID-19, and Humanitarian Actions should be:

- Praying/Bible teaching (spiritual assistance).
- Visits to provide assistance (e.g., money, food etc.) (physical assistance).
- Advisor/Counsellor/Protector (mental assistance).
- Creation of awareness through television channels and other modes (information and knowledge assistance).
- Helping in preparedness for disasters for example, planting food crops etc. (risk reduction assistance).
- Ensuring church members comply with instructions given by the Ministry of Health for COVID-19 (monitoring and enforcement).
- Encouraging care and the attitude of looking out for each other (communal and cultural assistance).
- Assisting members of the church to become productive Christians with whatever needs to be done at the family and community levels, and then at the national level. This covers environmental issues and a host of other areas.

4.3 Localized actions – reaching everyone.

The understanding of key informant interviewees and community members strongly emphasized the role of churches in reaching out to people during and after disasters. Church organizations and members are located in the community and if they are well equipped, trained, and resourced, they could reach everyone in a shorter time, saving lives.

“The church should be equipped. The church – meaning the people who work in, or for the church, which are the ordained or those who are trained to work for the church – should also be aware that when things happen, they need to cross over and be there, whether it is at a local parish, or a different level.” (Church-based key informant 1)

All organizations and community members agreed that localization is an important process, approach, and actions for addressing climate change, disaster risk management, COVID-19, and humanitarian actions. Church-based organizations, church organizations and members must be key stakeholders in planning, implementing, and evaluating the localization agenda. As key informant interviewees described:

“Localization is making certain that the systems that we adopt for the future are based on the experience, together with the mission and objectives that are ours. That is localization - we have to make sure that it is about us, with us and for us.” (Church-based key informant 2)

“Localisation is also about “Think global act local”, and I think with COVID happening, it’s really made us look more what’s right under our noses. A lot of things have been global and trying to fulfill tick the boxes abroad. But things locally ... we need to add more value, and to appreciate what the grassroots has to offer. And it is also a wakeup call to the people in the local areas. I have been too dependent and spoon-fed. This is a time for us to value what we have within.” (Church-based key informant 3)

One FGD shared that “churches reach everyone in the community. [This] goes beyond the denomination, disasters etc.”

4.3.1 Consultative agents to identify needs

Church-based organizations and churches are perceived by the communities as “spiritual and welfare” leaders who provide guidance and advice for members. The participatory and consultative approach of church operations in Fiji is crucial in facilitating discussions to identify the real needs of communities. This role is important both before and after disasters.

“Church should work in these spaces because it is a part of discipleship and awareness to teachings and training that relate to helping people in the local parishes. Pastoral Ministry meeting people, talking to them, and listening to them as well. More communication with the people at grassroots levels instead of thinking that we know what they need.” (Church-based key informant 4)

Church-based organizations and churches have been included in disaster damage assessment teams. They have led discussions at community level to identify emergency and recovery needs of households. Church-based organizations and leaders are respected in communities. They are trusted and communities are at ease talking to them and sharing their needs in stressful times. Church leaders could provide counseling services during damage assessments discussions. As a key informant shared:

“Sometimes we make all the decisions here. We think we know what they need. We need to listen to them, for them to say to us within the conversation...We are going to supply digging forks, all these different things when they came back, and some of them said, no, we do not need this. But instead of this, can you buy us this? That feedback and everything in us talking to each other has really been helpful” (Church-based key informant 3)

4.3.2 Being accountable to the donors

Church-based organizations and churches ensure that assistance from donors reach local communities. They deliver supplies directly to the people in need. The pre-disaster networks, knowledge of existing resources and capacity are already with churches based in different communities. For example, one church organization reported that during COVID-19, their pre-COVID-19 knowledge of household capacity in terms of resources was valuable in the initial response. The local knowledge of church organizations about households that relied on tourism for living, and those who lost their jobs, was useful in assessment of needs. The local knowledge of church organizations about households who switched to alternative sources of livelihood such as cooking, and farming was also critical in the response. Church organizations bought food and other local materials from those households and shared them with households in need of food and planting materials. It generated income for households and empowered them to be a part of the response.

Church organizations are crucial in monitoring impacts of interventions at the community level. The monitoring can use different tools such as WhatsApp groups, regular zoom calls and mobile calls rather than direct field visits. As a key informant shared during the research:

“And so, the feedback in it, we have sent it, we sent all of that with photos, and report back to the donors. They were so impressed that the money’s still coming in. And now we are wondering what is the next stage we have to do, telling them what is happening, that actually their dollars that they send is actually gone to these photos of the widows, that the disabled man’s case and everything...” (Church-based key informant 3).

The lessons learnt from responses to COVID-19 being planned, implemented, and monitored locally should translate to areas such as climate change and disaster risk management. However, more targeted trainings of church-based organizations and church members are needed on planning, implementing, and monitoring impacts of interventions in local communities using IT and mobile technologies.

4.3.3 Education and Awareness

Church-based organizations and churches are influential in conducting awareness activities on climate change, disaster risk reduction, COVID-19, and post-disaster actions. All key informant interviewees agreed that teaching is part of the work of churches – helping people discern what the Bible says in relation to what is happening with social challenges and disasters. Engaging churches (leaders and members) in raising awareness is important because they understand the context of the communities. They understand the socio-economic status, language, cultures and needs of targeted communities. There is a pre-existing trust between the members and messages from church leaders. Church leaders use the biblical messages of creation, custodians of the environment and parables to educate the communities. Examples such as the “good Samaritan” and “wise man who built his house on the rock” stories are often used to demonstrate the values of being prepared before hazards strike, being kind and humanitarian during and after disasters and addressing climate change and caring for the environment.

The awareness, especially from the pulpit, that is one of the best stages, to share, for example, when COVID-19 happened we were able to help alert all our people, and even blending in the Gospel, the sermon to include the social issues that we face today. So, churches are given to spread the information” (Church-based key informant 5).

All FGD members agreed that climate change, COVID-19 and disaster resilience should be included in the messages preached by pastors and leaders of the church. The churches need to look after both spiritual and physical needs of the members and communities. To invest both in the life we are living now and the life after death. One FGD mentioned: *“The church can’t continue praying without action, they need to seek assistance and resources as well”*.

Partner organizations agreed that church-based organizations and churches play a significant role in sharing knowledge, information and building skills of community members. As one key informant described:

“The faith-based organizations play a very important role in DRR, in that they have the direct reach with the communities, which is quite substantial, and they have the potential to create a very influential platform to impart knowledge on DRR related matters.” (NDMO key informant 1)

An example of the role of churches in creating awareness and sharing information is the television network program by the Fiji Methodist Church called Bula Spirit, where members of the public have been encouraged to restore what elders/ancestors used to do – go back to the original food and healthy lifestyles. They also have another television program called E Na Gauna Vaka Qo (“In times like this”). The Fiji Methodist Church believes that families are victims of climate change, disasters, and COVID-19. The television program addresses issues related to disasters and is now up to the 20th episode. The FGD participants also shared that the SDA has a similar television and radio program promoting personal and lifestyle health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, there have been limited trainings and support for churches and leaders to conduct awareness and trainings in the field of climate change, disaster preparedness, response and recovery in Fiji. It is left to the individual’s understanding on important issues to share with the communities. Technical knowledge and information on what climate change are, including causes, impacts and how to address them, should be shared with church leaders. Skills and knowledge to communicate and coordinate disaster risk reduction and disaster management are needed in trainings for church leaders and preachers.

A good example of efforts to build the capacity of church organizations was the activities of the CAN DO project. According to the NDMO:

“CAN DO has been investing into DRR programs which includes mapping of churches and community halls that were used as evacuation centres. They are also undertaking community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) trainings to increase communities’ awareness and resilience to disasters.” (Church-based key informant 1)

More investment and partnerships are needed to build the capacity of churches to ensure the knowledge, information and communication with church members and communities are factual, relevant, and effective.

4.3.4 Engaging and mobilizing

There is a strong value placed by church leaders on traditional iTaukei governance processes. Church is one of the “legs” of the famous three-legged stool by Ratu Sukuna. The three legs in Fijian Society are the Vanua (land), Church and Government. Church organizations have significant influence in engaging and mobilizing communities. Church organizations agree that they have different ministries made up of youth, women and men who are always eager to mobilize support and address the needs and socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities of Fijian communities. The church and church leaders should be in a position to know what to do when it comes to the needs of the people, not only those related to their spiritual lives but also to their day-to-day lives. Churches are building an “army” of social workers who could engage and support communities to address social-cultural-economic and resilience needs. All focus groups mentioned that the church should provide any form of assistance that protects and helps church members. The members are the “sheep”, and the “Shepherds” should protect and provide for them. These services include prayers, giving advice, and gathering and sharing ideas. The participants of focus groups agreed that churches sharing resources with non-members would be a good example to inspire other churches and non-Christians to step up and learn how to protect and provide for members of their communities. The ‘copycat’ culture (people seeing actions and following or copying them) in Fijian communities will help in engaging communities and mobilizing the members to build resilience and help each other. The collective actions are a form of empowerment and ownership – members lead their own disaster preparedness, aid distribution and recovery.

One good practice shared by the Fiji Anglican Church was the building of a centralized building, providing a space for church-based and other organizations to meet, conduct workshops, mobilize actions and network. As one KII shared:

“When we built this building, we received the name is the Moana Anglican Services and Teaching Center. The vision was for people to use it for teaching. Whatever teaching they can, but we believe that when they come to a place as this, they will see a little bit about the furthering of God’s kingdom. I am actually absolutely amazed at how it has been able to contribute to the work of disaster resilience and management because almost all NGOs use this place to do their workshops. Firstly, because it is central. Secondly, it is disability friendly and so they use this place. And for us, okay, we have to charge money because we have to pay for water, gas, electricity...it has become a gathering place. For us, the biggest value of this place is that it gathers people. I have also been able to get to know a lot of people who work in disaster resilience and management through that work, because I am here, based here.... So, for us the mission of the church, you know, we are doing this thing; A lot of them come here to talk about disaster management and disaster resilience – all the NGOs. So, I feel that in a small way, we are contributing, even just gathering people together; it is a gathering place for people. And so, I can say, well, as an Anglican Church, at least if we do not do anything else, we gather people.”

One key challenge faced by church organizations affecting their ability to engage and mobilize church members to act on climate change and disaster risk management is the lack of volunteers to implement actions. Many members expect a form of payment or reward for their time and actions. This is mainly true for urban and peri-urban areas. Budgeting to engage and mobilize “volunteers” is often overlooked in projects that build resilience against climate change and disaster risk management. Community participation and mobilization is expected to be an in-kind contribution in many project budgets, but this contrasts with expectations in modern Fijian communities. Smaller churches are also facing issues associated with the small number of people available to mobilize for climate change and disaster risk management actions. In addition, most of the available people are elderly, the young generation are not interested in volunteering work. As one church leader mentioned.

“The main one is the lack of resource, since we are small in numbers – we have people but most work, so activities were mostly conducted during weekends to involve youths. We have retirees and we just act as mediators” (Church-based key informant 4)

4.3.5 Partnerships – Who are the churches working with?

Church organizations are working in partnership with diverse partners in the field of localisation, climate change, disaster risk management, COVID-19, and humanitarian actions. These partners ranged from government, church-based humanitarian organizations, PIANGO, Fiji Council of Churches and Universities. The roles of partners include Information sharing, knowledge and skills or training partners, funding partners, and coordinating partners. There is value in effective partnerships.

All Key informants agreed that the church organizations have the potential to be financing, implementing, monitoring and evaluation partners. They are also beneficiaries. All FGD participants agreed that local communities also have resources that could be mobilized when needed by churches and church-based organizations. The community resources (monetary and non-monetary) and skills (builders, farmers, health workers etc.) should be recognized and utilized in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Financial support can be from collection (soli or tithing). Different groups such as women, youth and men could provide specific skills and non-monetary assistants when needed to help local communities. All FGD participants agreed that they should not always be viewed as victims but could also be recognized as the first responders during and after disasters. Skilled people working in government departments, NGOs, are both members of the community and different churches. Their skills could be mobilized when needed. They can be utilized to train other church members to provide the services needed to prepare and respond to disasters. All participants also agreed that churches and church-based organizations should seek extra resources from local and international donors (including diaspora members of communities) to help build the capacity, provide technologies, and support local communities.

The KII shared those financial resources used for localization of climate change, disaster risk management, COVID-19 and humanitarian actions have been provided by many regional and global mother churches, branches, and affiliations of their respective church organizations. The financial and material resources have been valuable for local members and non-members in communities. Key implementing partners who helped with improving skillsets include NDMO, PIANGO, FCC, ADRA and CARITAS.

The need for Monitoring and Evaluation skills from a faith-based approach to evidence and sharing lessons between partners – room for learning and improvements.

A crucial recommendation from church organizations is for them to be involved in all aspects of project development. Not just being recognized as arms and legs to deliver services but also be included in planning, leading, monitoring, and evaluating processes of localization projects and actions. The churches experience with communities could inform project activities, priorities, and actions in Fiji. A step to the right direction is the support of the Australia Humanitarian Partnership and CAN DO Project. The learning of Monitoring and Evaluation skills from AHP, PIANGO has been especially important for church-based organizations. The skillsets equipped church organisations to be accountable and familiar with expectations of donors and development partners. As one key informant shared,

“AHP partners have been training us monitoring, evaluation, ... which you actually need to get people to actually do that. Yes, because you did that monitoring and evaluation well with a COVID-19 donor. But we need to do that with all the other things. And so, we are aware that we need to look to our partners to actually help us.” (Church-based key informant 2)

Sharing resources and learning from one another

The CAN DO project has provided a networking platform for churches to partner with each other and non-church partners to share resources and learn from each other. One church organization shared that CAN DO provided a network that enabled them to know about ADRA's work and learn from them.

“Now we are doing this is our area of interest, we have this much money have you got space in there? And so, we go into partnership in those in those ways, instead of going out on a limb but our own, that we find as we begin to do that, we will rediscover some of the wonderful things that is happening out there, especially with ADRA Fiji Adventist. You know, disaster relief is so much so we submitted to be in partnership with the Adventist Church. So, we learned so much from them, and we even go to them for advice.”

Sharing of maps and the value of GIS

A learning partnership shared by the Anglican Archdiocese of Polynesia Church in Suva where they partnered with ADRA in mapping the churches in the Central Division as evacuation centres. The drone footages and GIS maps generated from CAN DO project helped them understand the need to renovate St Luke Church to be used as an evacuation centre at the Suva Point area especially for the Muanivatu Informal Settlement. The same key informant also mentioned that the Professor of Climate Change from the University of the South Pacific used to provide a talanoa session on climate change to share technical knowledge and how to mobilize youth to support localization actions. CAN DO network should partner with technical institutions such as universities to provide technical information on climate change, disaster risk management and COVID-19. Mapping expertise in universities could be explored to support project activities. Other technical groups with expertise can be included.

“But we also doing training with the common interest groups, like the women, so you do the theology and women in leadership? Now who do we look to? So, we look at an organization that actually has strength in this area? When we looked at women in leadership, we looked at the Catholic Women's League, is the one that is good in this area. So, we said to them, can you lead in this area?”

Transforming the roles of first responders

The realization that disasters have increased stresses and trauma faced by communities led to the development of the Pacific Disaster Chaplaincy Network, where church leaders have been trained to be specialized practitioners to address trauma through counselling. It was a part of the mobilization in Fiji and now spread to other Pacific Island Countries through partnership with the Uniting World, Australia Government and CAN DO network. The Baptist Church in Fiji trains and mobilizes volunteers to provide counselling and psychological support to affected communities. Similarly, the Methodist Church of Fiji has trained 150 social workers as first responders. The traditional role of the church has shifted to a more skillful, well trained first responder to address psychological trauma.

“That concept was not there before, so the first responders for the church is a new thing. The first aid that we were familiar with, after a disaster was to give clothes but now, we can observe a much more serious psychological problems post-disaster. It has been observed lately that the impact is more severe today. We’ve been really working with the suicide committee, we’re working with all these other agencies and NGOs, and this is what they’re noticing” (Church-based key informant 1)

In playing the psychological first aid responder, church leaders, social worker managed to counsel the communities to address not just disasters but reduce everyday crime such as violence, drug use, stealing and so forth. The churches are connecting with other government service providers to help train local communities to address psychological challenges. For example, during the COVID-19 response, the churches have been working together with the Health Department, Police, Health and Environment Departments to conduct trainings and awareness with local communities to address social, health, environmental and safety issues in the communities. For the Methodist Church in Fiji, involvement of church leaders and networks in addressing psychological challenges both as first responder after disasters and sustainably during the recovery phase is a new, exciting, and transformational role. However, more trainings and resourcing are needed for churches to effectively carry out the psychological first responder role in Fiji. Church leaders who provide psychological support to the communities are also impacted by disasters. Therefore, support is needed for the church leaders and social workers to address their own personal stresses.



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5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Focus on the intersections

Churches and church-based organizations have played significant diverse roles in the localization spectrum – partnership with international, regional, national organizations and departments to deliver and report actions to and from members of communities. They are crucial agents of localization of climate change, disaster risk management, COVID-19, and humanitarian action. It is clear as well that interventions from CAN DO, ADRA, AHP, PIANGO have helped to build the capacity of church-based organizations to plan, deliver, and monitor humanitarian actions related to climate change, disaster risk management, and COVID-19 at the local level in Central Division, Fiji.

As synthesized above, the following recommendations could help improve the effectiveness, efficiency and impacts of churches' role in localizing humanitarian actions in Fiji related to climate change, disaster risk management, and COVID-19. These are based on the intersectional role of churches as shown in Figure 1.0.

The overall recommendation is for partners to strategically engage more with church-based organizations in planning, implementing, monitoring, and reporting localization actions in Fiji.

5.1.1 Delivery role

Intersection 1: Community mobilization, Communicating CC, DRM, COVID-19 to communities, Counselling support.

- Trainings are needed on the different roles of the churches to maximize community mobilization, communication and raise awareness of climate change, DRM, COVID-19 through humanitarian actions.
- Trainings of church partners to conduct damage assessments and lead consultations on disaster recovery needs.
- Development and application of tools to guide and standardize the community services of the churches to ensure they are delivered using high standards to build resilience and prepare, respond, and recover after disasters.
- Resource mobilization is needed to promote volunteering programs and outreach at community level.
- Recognize the critical role of Churches and Church based organizations in mobilizing communities in the rural, urban areas including formal and informal types of communities in Fiji.
- Intersection 2: accessing and accounting resourcing, knowledge systems, linkages to clusters and livelihood, development roles.
- Networking platforms are needed for church organizations to share skills, lessons and build expertise to support the localization agenda.
- Church-based organizations such as ADRA Fiji, CARITAS Fiji should be supported and equipped to provide technical skills, trainings, guidance to church organizations on delivery of the localization agenda.
- Donors and development partners to increase the recognition of the strategic roles of church-based organizations to become equal partners in coordinating, delivering, and implementing humanitarian actions in Fiji related to climate change, disaster risk management, and COVID-19.
- Trainings are needed for church organizations to know how to write proposals, access funds and form strategic partnerships to deliver localization actions in Fiji.
- Government and regional organizations to encourage or give a place for churches/church-based organizations in different humanitarian clusters and livelihood programs.
- Encourage partnerships between universities and technical institutions and church organizations to fill the technical information gaps.

5.1.2 Reporting role

Intersection 1: Community based data collection, reporting, monitoring and impact evaluation.

- Training of church organizations and members to be involved in data collection, reporting, monitoring and impact evaluation processes at the community level. This includes the use of mobile and IT applications to share information.
- Provide resources and linkages for church organizations to enable them to collect data and use them for reporting and decision-making processes.

Intersection 2: Data collection, reporting, monitoring, guidance and wisdom, best practices.

- More trainings and applications of monitoring, evaluation, and collection of evidence on churches' roles in localization actions. This includes the participation of Church based organizations in Humanitarian Clusters planning, implementation, and reporting.
- PIANGO and partners could provide more guidance and support for church organizations to determine how to implement the localization evaluation frameworks and apply them across other activities such as livelihood and poverty alleviation roles.
- Provide resources for church organizations to have more manpower, technologies to enable them to play certain roles, such as liaising with international partners, implement project activities and collect data and information to monitor, and document impacts for learning.



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