# **FINAL REPORT**

# United Nations Development Programme Solomon Islands Strengthening Disaster Risk Management in Solomon Islands June 2018 to June 2020



Reporting Period	June 2018 to June 2020		
Donor	DFAT		
Country	Australia		
Project Title	Strengthening Disaster Risk Management in Solomon Islands		
Project ID	00114770		
(Atlas Award ID)			
Outputs	00112648		
(Atlas Project ID and	Strengthening DRM in SOI		
Description)			
Strategic Plan and/or CPD	Outcome Group 1: Effective risk- informed development plans,		
Outcomes	disaster preparedness and recovery mechanism.		
Implementing Partner(s)	UNOCHA		
	NDMO		
Project Start Date	October 2018		
Project End Date	June 2020		
[Year] Annual Work Plan Budget	Strengthening DRM in Solomon Islands		
Total resources required	USD 517, 432.56		
Revenue received	Regular     USD		
	Other		
	• Donor DFAT USD 417, 432.52		
	<ul> <li>Trust Fund Cost Sharing USD 100, 000</li> </ul>		
	<ul> <li>Thematic Trust Fund C/S USD</li> </ul>		
	<ul> <li>Special Activities</li> <li>USD</li> </ul>		
	<ul> <li>EU funding</li> <li>USD</li> </ul>		
	• Total USD517, 432.56		
Unfunded budget	USD NIL		
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#### I. Executive summary

This report provides an overview of all activities and results delivered by the second phase of the joint UNOCHA/ UNDP project on Strengthening Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in Solomon Islands. Strengthening DRM in Solomon Islands phase II was an Australian Government funded project formulated based on lessons learned from phase I of the same project which was implemented from 2016- 2018. This report also contains activities and results not included in the original concept note but were delivered as supplementary activities due to change in circumstances during the project lifespan.

Strengthening DRM Phase II was implemented from October 2018 to June 2020 with an overall objective to support the Solomon Islands National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) operationalize the newly adopted National Disaster Management 2018, enhance humanitarian coordination amongst stakeholders and strengthen disaster preparedness. The project also extended its support to implementing response and recovery activities related to MV Solomon Trader oil spill on Rennell Island in early 2018 as well as COVID-19 preparedness and response activities in the first half of year 2020.

Strengthening DRM Phase II was programmatically under the oversight of UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Office for the Pacific in Fiji and administered through UNDP Solomon Islands country office. The project was classified as an Engagement Facility to allow for rapid scale up of upstream policy support and crisis response. As such a proper project document nor a project board to oversee the implementation of activities was required. Implementation of the project was guided by annual work plans that were developed in consultation with NDMO to ensure complementarity to national priorities. Regular reports were provided to the donor and NDMO to keep them informed of the project achievements, progress and challenges. Although the project came into existence in October 2018, planned activities had to be put on hold due the tropical cyclone season which commenced in November.

The project operated under a single output in the ATLAS with five activities originally but was later increased to six activities to cater for Rennell oil spill response. All intended activities and results were delivered to the expected level.

The project successfully delivered 80% of its activities and achieved the intended results to meet the overall project goal. It has contributed immensely towards strengthening the institutional arrangement defined under the National Disaster Management Plan 2018 especially through NDMO and the N-DOC Sector Committees.

The Resilience and Sustainable Development portfolio of UNDP provided administrative support to the project which provided opportunities for the project to support complementary projects. The achievements of the project also contributed towards Outcome Group One (1) of the UN Pacific Strategy 2018- 2022 which focuses on Climate Change, Disaster Resilience and Environmental Protection.

The final six months of the project was diverted to response to tropical cyclone Harold (TC Harold) and the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic operations. Activities planned to strengthen the National Emergency Response Team had to be put on hold to allow for technical advice to be provided to COVID-19 preparedness and response planning.

Total resource received by the project USD517, 432. 56 with expenditure at USD444, 992 and a delivery rate of 86% as at 31 June 2020. The combined delivery report is attached for additional information.

### II. Background

The disaster management and disaster risk reduction institutional arrangements of Solomon Islands have gone through numerous changes since the enactment of the National Disaster Council Act in 1989 and the establishment of National Disaster Management Office as the main implementing body. Various institutional arrangements were put in over the years based on the given context and priorities of the government. The amendments to the systems, structures and processes were often driven by learnings from responding to and recovering from large scale disaster events that affected the country.

In 2018, the Government of Solomon Islands endorsed a revised National Disaster Management Plan which sets out the institutional arrangements for Disaster Management. The plan provides guidance on the coordination and management arrangements at the national and provincial level and sets the overarching policy for all hazards preparedness, response and recovery. The Plan also covers the involvement of private sector, NGOs and regional organizations in supporting Solomon Islands Government in the area of disaster management. To support the implementation of the Plan, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in collaboration with UNDP and funding from the Australian Government provided technical guidance and training to targeted components of the National Disaster Management plan. A major component of the project focused to supporting the Government in humanitarian coordination and disaster preparedness through the following activities:

1. Strengthening of intersectoral coordination between N-DOC, N-DOC Sector Committee and non-

state stakeholders with a view to ensure concerted efforts in preparedness and response.

2. Engagement with regional and global humanitarian partners and civil society for effective disaster preparedness and response.

3. Strengthening of in-country capacity to provide timely support to national level response including supplementing capacity gaps at provincial level.

- 4. Ensuring minimum level of preparedness at selected provinces.
- 5. Project management support

At the request of the Solomon Islands Government, the project facilitated the deployment of environmental experts from the UNEP/UNOCHA Joint Environment Unit to conduct an initial scoping mission of the MV Solomon Trader oil spill event. The project also supported coordination of spill response, recovery and lessons learned workshop with additional funding from UNDP.

Resources and time were diverted to COVID-19 preparedness and response in the final six months of the project to support government's efforts. The project operationally closed on 6 June 2020 however some of its critical activities continued to be implemented directly by UNDP through the new DRM and Recovery project that is also funded by DFAT.

### III. Progress Review

This section provides an overview of the project progress against specific outputs. It highlights the extent to which the outputs were achieved with respect to annual work plans. Contributing factors to challenges are also highlighted here including recommendations for consideration by similar projects in future. Although the project concept note had five outputs, the ATLAS system only had one overall

output with five activities. For this report, each activity is captured as a result with subsets of activities under each.

Result 1. Strengthened intersectoral coordination between N-DOC, N-DOC sector committees and non- state actors for concerted efforts in preparedness and response.

Achievements for result 1 include:

Activity 1.1: Consultations on the role of N-DOC Sector Committees around the response programme cycle. In partnership with Australia Assist program, support was provided to the six N-DOC Sector Committees to develop their Terms of References and Standard Operating Procedures. These as key documents that define the membership and the roles and responsibilities of each sector's operation. Individual consultations were held with each of the six N-DOC Sector Committees in mid-2019 followed by two one-day workshops to consolidate inputs from all N-DOC Sector. The N-DOC Sectors were able to map out key action points during the first workshop in September 2019 to complete ToRs and SOPs. The second workshop held in December 2019 provided the opportunity to present the final drafts of those key documents.

The SOPs and TORs provided for clarity of roles and responsibilities of those committees thereby allowing them to have clear preparedness, response and recovery plans for disaster events. The response programme cycle for Solomon Islands used in this exercise provided a timebound approach to making information available for resource mobilization purposes. Capacity of the N-DOC sectors to develop their own preparedness, response and recovery plans proved to be useful during times of emergencies especially during the initial stages of COVID-19 planning.

The main challenge of activity 1.1 is the lack of dedicated capacity within the six N-DOC sector committees to develop SOPs, ToRs and other sector specific plans. Addressing this challenge requires a dedicated capacity and strengthening of structures and processes within each N-DOC sector's operation. The responsibility to coordinate often rests with the lead ministry who may not necessarily have the right human capacity and financial resources to support its role in disaster risk management. In such a case, secretariat role of N-DOC sector committee should be a shared responsibility even though the leadership is required to remain with the ministry that has the mandate to lead a given sector. This may also include NGOs supporting government ministries in secretariat roles for each sector.

#### Activity 1.2: Establishment of Solomon Islands Humanitarian Country Team

Individual consultations were held with draft ToR in place to establish the Solomon Islands Humanitarian Team (HCT) however due to uncertainty of leadership during the project lifespan, this initiative was not able to move forward. The HCT is a coordinating forum usually led by a Humanitarian Coordinator to provide strategic direction for collective inter-agency humanitarian response. It usually comprises of UN agencies, NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, and other organizations with humanitarian mandate. This role is sometimes played by the UN Resident Coordinator as in the case of Fiji however in the absence of an HC position, a HCT is usually established during a crisis. For Solomon Islands, the Pacific Humanitarian Team based in Fiji provided support as and when required by stakeholders in country. Existing coordination fora such as the UN Local Team, the monthly Development Partners meeting and the Solomon Islands Alliance for Humanitarian NGOs (SIAHN) provided the platform for discussions on DM and DRR matters. Given all the above-mentioned committees/ fora, there was no pressing need to establish an additional coordinating forum. The N-DOC arrangement also provided an avenue for involvement of non- government stakeholders.

#### Activity 1.3: Trainings for N-DOC Sector on the Initial Damage Assessment and Reporting

Training on Initial Damage Assessment (IDA) methodology which includes development of IDA questionnaire, data collection process using the Kobo toolbox app, collation, analysis, and reporting was conducted for assessment teams as part of the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 tropical cyclone season preparedness activities. 25 participants mainly from the NGOs and Red Cross participated in the training and the field assessments that followed. Assessment teams were able to collect data and compile basic reports to inform response and recovery operations for TC Oma (February 2019) and TC Harold (April 2020) respectively.

# Result 2. Effective engagement with regional and global humanitarian partners and civil society for preparedness and response.

# Activity 2.1. Process, mechanisms, and triggers for accessing/receiving relief assistance (expertise, assets and/or supplies) from PHT, FRANZ and civil society partners clarified.

The National Disaster Management Plan 2018 acknowledges the role of bilateral and multilateral organizations as well as the regional and non-governmental organizations in providing relief assistance during disasters. The plan also calls for those organizations present in country to be part of the existing national operational arrangements during preparedness to enable better flow of services during response and recovery. This project supported NDMO to define the process for triggering international assistance through various international mechanisms. The SOP of the Admin Support function team of the NEOC facilitates the request for international assistance.

The project provided technical assistance to development of Civil/Military Coordination (CIMIC)



Figure 1: Civil Military Coordination Training at Heritage Park Hotel, Honiara (Source: UNOCHA)

guidelines to access military assets and personnel during disaster events for which France, Australia and New Zealand (FRANZ) military organizations play a major role in the Pacific region. Four officers from NDMO, OCHA staff and one RSIPF officer participated in a lesson learned exercise in Townsville, Australia in October 2019 hosted by ADF where valuable lessons from hurricane Katrina 2005), (New Orleans TC 2016) Winston (Fiji and Townsville floods (Feb 2019)

were put forward by both civilian and military presenters to help define boundaries for the CIMIC guidelines. A second workshop was held in Honiara in November 2019 with participants from defence forces of Australia, New Zealand, United States of America, Solomon Islands Government and NGOs. Discussions and recommendations from this workshop formed the basis for the National CIMIC guidelines. A draft CIMIC guideline is now in place for NDMO to further develop based on the Oslo Guidelines on the use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief.

#### Activity 2.2. Simulation Exercise including FRANZ and PHT partners to test the established process.

The regional simulation exercise was postponed due to COVID-19 operations and restrictions however various components of the National DM Plan 2018 were tested during the COVID-19 simulated lockdown in May 2020. In collaboration with NDMO, Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the N-DOC Sectors, this project played a major role in development of the scenarios, conducting of the exercise and the lessons learned exercise to document the recommendations.

# Result 3. Strengthening of in- country capacity to provide timely support to national level response including supplementing capacity gaps at provincial level.

#### 3.1. Training of NEOC Functional Teams on Response Programme Cycle

This activity was conducted together with the development of the ToR and SOPs for the N-DOC Sector committees and involved going through the steps of Humanitarian Response Programme Cycle to inform the national process.

#### 3.2. Consolidation of NERT based on UNDAC methodology

Strengthening of national level capacity to augment gaps at the provincial level is critical given the remoteness of most the provinces and the need to have timely response. To support this, the National



Figure 2: Launch of the NERT Training in Honiara in September 2019. Source: UNOCHA

DM Plan 2018 outlines the specific role of NERT as a rapid response mechanism that can be activated at short notice to provide a range of services to support coordination at the field.

The NERT is attached to the National Emergency Operations Centre and operates using set а methodology to support coordination and decisionmaking at the strategic, programmatic and field level

during a disaster response. This project has contributed to the following:

• Development of NERT concept in September 2018 with implementation commencing in September 2019. 35 participants were trained in the NERT methodology to maintain an Onsite-

Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) at the provincial and local levels. The NERT concept was adapted from the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) methodology and contextualized to Solomon Islands Disaster Management Operational Arrangements. The methodology focused on three main outputs:

i) Strengthened capacity of NEOC Functional Teams and N-DOC Sector Committee members to effectively manage a disaster response operation.

ii) Established and institutionalized NERT governance and management arrangements that will enable rapid deployment of trained staff and equipment to disaster impacted areas in Solomon Islands.

iii) Increased effectiveness of NERT through stronger partnerships with relevant entities that can provide resources and support services during deployment. These services include setting up of tents, remote IT setup, catering, WASH facilities and transportation.



The advisory and mentoring role provided by this project enabled senior NDMO staff members to develop training materials and implemented the first induction training on 9-14 September 2019. Through this investment. Solomon Islands NDMO became the first amongst the Pacific Island Countries to successfully plan and conduct 24-hour а disaster simulation

Figure 3: Group activity conducted by New South Wales Fire Service personnel. Source: UNOCHA

exercise as part of the NERT methodology.

- The implementation of the first induction training in Solomon Islands tested all three outputs of the NERT concept and provided opportunity for the review of training content, building of partnerships and management of NERT deployments. The training materials for onsite training and simulation exercise and work plan for support services will be used in developing a formal curriculum in future with the Solomon Islands National University for accreditation.
- Through the involvement of external subject matter experts, partnerships were fostered between the NDMO and New South Wales Fire Service, RedR Australia, Secretariat for the Pacific Community through its PIEMA project, OCHA Office for the Pacific and OCHA Geneva, UNDAC Section. Although this was a national initiative, the experiences of NERT induction training have generated discussions regionally for a similar concept to be adapted for other pacific island countries.
- This project also supported both an internal lesson learned exercise between NDMO staff and the external workshop with participants. Both events provided very good recommendations for future NERT training both from the perspectives of organization as well as the content of the training.

- The NERT initiative has proven to be beneficial during the COVID-19 operations which resulted in the first two deployments to Camp Management Sector Committee Emergency Operations Centre and the quarantine sites.
- Next immediate steps identified by the NERT training at the national level include internal lessons learned meeting between NDMO and OCHA Solomon Islands, evaluation of participants and training materials and compilation of training materials to develop a skeleton training package for NDMO to present to the Solomon Islands National University to develop a curriculum. Given the need to further develop various components of the NERT methodology, this initiative has been absorbed by the DRM and Recovery project of UNDP.
- The NERT initiative is a complementary project to strengthening the functional teams of the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) and the linkages to the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre. Its benefits are extended to include review of the existing NEOC and PEOC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

#### 3.3. Strengthening of AIM Wantok Network

Aim Wantok Network consist of all the Information Management Specialist of N-DOC Sectors who are able to provide support to the Assessment and Information Management function team of NEOC during times of disasters

#### Result 4. Ensuring minimum level of preparedness at selected provinces.

Each of the nine provinces of Solomon Islands is required to have a minimum level of preparedness to manage small scale disasters without the deployment of national teams from NDMO and N-DOC Sector Committees.



• Four provincial disaster officers (PDOs) were funded by this project to attend the NERT Induction training in September 2019. This is to ensure that the PDOs can work with the NERT when deployed to the provincial level to support assessment and coordination of humanitarian activities following a disaster.

Figure 4: Working in an EOC Training in Isabel Province in October 2019. Source: UNOCHA

implemented in October 2019.

• Trainings on EOC management were held in Isabel and Western provinces to support to provincial emergency operations centres (PEOC) for Gizo at the end of 2018 while Isabel and Malaita provinces were

- Community level preparedness directly supported by this project in collaboration with the NDMO enabled the installation of flood gauges in 12 communities downstream from the Gold Ridge Mine. These sites were selected based on the ongoing threat of flooding from the tailing storage facility further upstream. Targeted communities are now better prepared through an awareness workshop on evacuation routes and information flow through community structures following the installation of those flood gauges.
- This project extended the "Tsunami Safe Schools program to "Tsunami Ready Communities". The shift in target population considered the fact that students spend most of their time in villages than just being confined to classrooms. Two out of seven communities in Western Province were supported through this project in extending the early warning arrangements to whole of community approach.

#### **Result 4: Support to implementation of Solomon Island Project**

To allow for effective functioning of this project, certain routine activities needed to be implemented on a regular basis to adhere to UNDP's internal control framework. This includes inputting and monitoring the budget in UNDP's ATLAS system. This means that staff time is also dedicated to project support which includes:

- Development and monitoring of project procurement plan, expenditures and outputs line with UNDP procedures.
- Conduct periodic budget revision to balance income with expenditure in a given period.
- Ensuring that financial contributions are made to shared facilities in UN Joint Presence Office.
- Contribution to Outcome group 1 for UN Pacific Strategy as well as to Solomon Islands Government biannual development partners review are the two main external engagements undertaken by this project.

#### Result 6: Coordination support to MV Solomon Trader Oil Spill Response Enhanced

The grounding of MV Solomon Trader in February 2019 and the subsequent oil spill triggered the necessity to collaborate between multiple layers of the government including the private sector and the global community. Based on an official request to UNOCHA from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, this project supported the development of Terms of References for experts required to conduct the scoping mission for a full Environment Damage Assessment.

In constant liaison with the UNEP/UNOCHA Joint Environment Unit (JEU) in Geneva, relevant experts were identified to conduct the mission. The mission was conducted from 20 March to 13 April 2019. The mission comprised of Professor Richard Steiner from University of Alaska, a world renown expert on oil spill, an environment expert from UNEP in Samoa and a logistician from the Danish Emergency Management Services. The findings of the mission supported the development of the first phase of the Environmental Damage Assessment. The project also supported roundtable discussions between the experts engaged by the legal representative of MV Solomon Trader, University of Queensland and the Solomon Islands Government on the EDA process. The EDA took place in September 2018 and focused on assessing the effectiveness of the clean-up and impact of oil spill on marine ecosystem.

With support of this project additional funding was secured through UNDP's core financial resources to implement ongoing monitoring of environmental and humanitarian impacts. In support of the government's efforts to build its knowledge base for management of future oil spill events, a lesson learned workshop was held in October 2019 in collaboration with NDMO, Environment Division (MECDM), Solomon Islands Maritime Authority, SPREP and UNEP., was engaged to support the initial scoping of environmental damage assessment which provided the basis for a full-scale assessments six months after the spill operation was completed.



Figure 5: Opening of MV Solomon Trader Lessons Learned Workshop funded by UNDP, Solomon Islands: Source: UNOCHA

## IV. Project Risks and Issues

**Environmental Risks:** Recurrent and sudden onset disasters presented risks to achieving planned activities. MV Solomon Trader and COVID-19 halted the progress of planned activities but also provided opportunities to test products of preparedness. To minimize such disruptions in future, activities should be done effectively during periods of peace time.

**Institutional/ Capacity Risks:** Change in government priorities and leadership of NDMO was considered as a risk to the project. Although the Director is still retained in his current post, reprioritization of budget due to COVID-19 demands have disrupted co-financing of activities by NDMO. This was minimized by repurposing of project funds to ensure activities were conducted.

**Loss of stakeholder support:** Staff turnover and transfer of key personnel in some of the N-DOC Sectors as well as NGOs contributed to decline in support to project activities in relation to information management working group.

## V. Lessons Learned

- Emerging issues and major disasters such as the MV Solomon Trader Oil Spill and COVID-19 created opportunities to test the National DM Plan and brought out the need to broaden its application in human- induced disasters as well as technological disasters that are triggered by natural hazards.
- MV Solomon Trader oil spill response operation brought out the disconnect between use of risk information in planning, implementation and constant monitoring of major development projects. The understanding and use of natural hazards assessment and vulnerability data in DM and DRR still has to be strengthened.
- The need to maintain joint preparedness activities and dialogue between government, NGOs and private sector on DM and DRR should be fostered in future. This would help to strengthen networks and create awareness key issues.

- Even though a lot of time and emergency have gone into developing IDA guidelines, information management remains a major gap within the N-DOC Sectors that needs to be strengthened.
- NERT training requires advanced planning and strong commitment from the government as well as good partnership with regional and global partners. It is an activity that requires a lot of resources and personnel to maintain interests amongst trained personnel.
- Connection between the Pacific Humanitarian Team and the global Cluster system and the N-DOC sectors requires consistent awareness and dialogue to how to engage during disasters.

### VI. Conclusions and Way Forward

Strengthening DRM in Solomon Islands project was one of the larger projects that has consistently supporting NDMO in implementation of the National Disaster Management Plan 2018 at policy as well as operational level for the past four years. Others include Australia Assist, Pacific Island Emergency Management Alliance project of the Secretariat for the Pacific Community, Australian Humanitarian Partnership through INGOs such as Oxfam and World Vision working on specific aspects of preparedness and response efforts. This made the project very relevant to addressing NDMO's capacity gaps and will continue to remain so because of ongoing capacity and funding issues. NDMO will continue to require specific advisory services through various mechanisms role in foreseeable future to support its role in delivering its mandate.

There is potential to broaden the scope of the project to address disaster management and disaster risk reduction as two complementary points of entry. The development and humanitarian nexus in the context of climate change should guide future programming. Climate change impacts and vulnerabilities can be addressed through various N-DOC sector committees however an entry point for NDMO's work is having data and information on these vulnerabilities in place to anticipate potential impacts of disasters on those vulnerable communities. Data collected by the Climate Change Division through Integrated Vulnerability Assessment (IVA) can also be used to guide the site selection for CBDRM activities that are currently conducted by PDMOs with support from most of the AHP partners.

The project was considered as successful and gained confidence of the main donor who continued to provide funding. Future project should maintain donor confidence in what it can realistically deliver.

One key activity that was not able to be established was the Humanitarian Country Team which in Solomon Islands context is challenging due to the current set up of the UN whereby the main coordinating agency during the lifespan of the project was moved from UNDP to WHO. While it was easy to implement this arrangement within the UN agencies in country, it was challenging to agree on the representation of UN and the broader NGO stakeholders within the N-DOC as the National DM Plan for Solomon Islands specifically mentions the role of the manager for UN Joint Presence Office which was UNDP Country Manager. That made it challenging to establish such a forum where the leadership rests with one agency however the representation at key government coordination forum

remained with the other. Similar arrangement might have to be established for responding to large scale disasters to manage influx of international responders however it is not necessary for now given that there are already established committees that can absorb the humanitarian action discussions. A contingency plan outlining the trigger for shift in leadership as well as services is required to avoid confusion during times of crisis or large-scale disasters.

Two activities that will remain relevant for new projects to absorb is the strengthening of information management setup at NDMO to support decision- making and further development of NERT. Information in relation to past disasters and future vulnerability trends are not easily accessible to support preparedness role of sectors and PDMOs setting up a system to support data and information collection, archiving, retrieval and publication would greatly assist planning and decision- making.

The NERT is a signature intervention of OCHA which is linked to the Global UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination system hence the need maintain connection with OCHA in future projects. Future trainings of NERT should consider specializations such as environmental emergencies, information management, reporting, logistics, Reception and Departure Centre, Protection in Humanitarian Action, and other relevant trainings.

# VII. Financial Status<sup>1</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Disclaimer: Data contained in this financial report section is an extract of UNDP financial records. All financial provided above is provisional.

*Disclaimer: UNDP adopted IPSAS (International Public Sector Accounting Standards) on 1 January 2012, cumulative totals that include data prior to that date are presented for illustration only.*