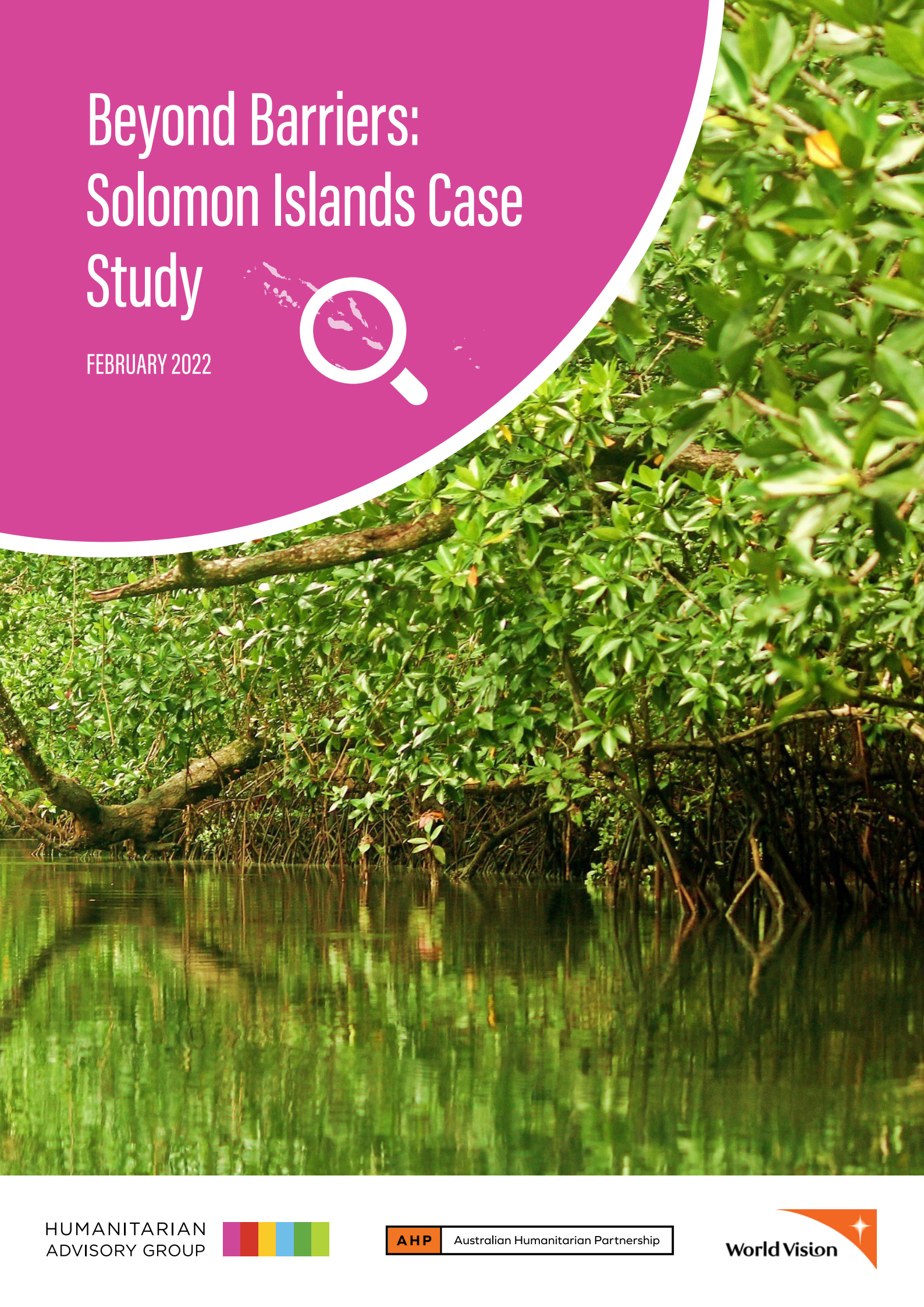


Beyond Barriers: Solomon Islands Case Study

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HUMANITARIAN
ADVISORY GROUP



AHP

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About the research

This research project explores opportunities for integrating climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) programming, focusing primarily on local practice and implications at the community level, while recognising that these are shaped by national and regional policy frameworks. It seeks to capture local evidence of best practices and identify opportunities to strengthen and build on these models.

Phase 1 of this research focuses on case studies across the AHP Disaster READY program, including Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Phase 2 will extend data collection outside of AHP programming to ensure findings are widely applicable across the region; this will include case studies in Tonga and Kiribati. This data is being collected through desk review,¹ key informant interviews at the global, regional, and national levels, and community focus group discussions in case study countries. Recommendations from this work will inform future AHP programming and supplement ongoing discussions at the national and regional levels in the Pacific.

The research is being undertaken by Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and supported by World Vision Australia through the AHP Disaster READY and Partnership and Performance Funds 2. These funding streams are managed by the Alinea Whitelum Group on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

About Humanitarian Advisory Group

Humanitarian Advisory Group was founded in 2012 to elevate the profile of humanitarian action in Asia and the Pacific. Set up as a social enterprise, HAG provides a unique space for thinking, research, technical advice and training that contributes to excellence in humanitarian practice. As an ethically driven business, we combine humanitarian passion with entrepreneurial agility to think and do things differently.

About Disaster READY

The Disaster READY initiative is part of the AHP, a five-year (2017–2022), \$50 million partnership between DFAT and Australian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to improve humanitarian response. Disaster READY was designed to strengthen disaster preparedness and management across the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

Disaster READY serves to strengthen local humanitarian capability in Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, PNG and Timor-Leste so that communities are better prepared for and able to manage and respond to rapid and slow-onset disasters. This includes ensuring that women, people with disabilities, youth and children's rights and needs are being met in disaster preparedness and response at all levels. Additionally, it assists governments, NGOs, the private sector, and communities to coordinate more effectively for inclusive disaster preparedness. Response and national NGOs and churches have more influence and capacity in the country's humanitarian system.

¹ A literature review from this research was published in July 2020: [Beyond Barriers: Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific](#).

Acronyms

AHP	Australian Humanitarian Partnership
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCD	Climate Change Division
CRRC	Climate and Risk Resilience Committee
CSO	Community Service Organisation
DFAT	Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRDP	Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific 2017–2030
HAG	Humanitarian Advisory Group
KII	Key Informant Interview
MDPAC	Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination
MECDM	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NDC	National Disaster Council
NDCA	National Disaster Council Act 1989
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
N-DM Plan	National Disaster Management Plan 2018
PDC	Provincial Disaster Committee
PNG	Papua New Guinea
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SI-CCP	Solomon Islands Climate Change Policy
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VDCRC	Village Disaster Climate Risk Committee
WVSI	World Vision Solomon Islands

Introduction

Solomon Islands is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, ranked as the 2nd most vulnerable country on the World Risk Index 2021.² Solomon Islands currently maintains separate policies and governance structures for climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR), but updated disaster management plans are being increasingly linked to climate considerations. There are indications that the country is progressing towards a more integrated strategy, including plans to develop a national framework for resilient development to complement the regional Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific 2017–2030 (FRDP).³ At the community level, there are opportunities to build on existing community knowledge and capacities and agencies' good practice to ensure more systematic roles for communities in decision-making. This case study explores Solomon Islands' progress in the integration of DRR and climate change adaptation (CCA), identifying key themes and opportunities for stakeholders to advance approaches that reduce risk and enhance resilience in communities.

Purpose of the case study

This case study was conducted to understand country-specific approaches to CCA and DRR integration and inform strategies to strengthen community-level outcomes. The study focused on Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) programming in Solomon Islands, though its results are intended for a wider range of stakeholders.

This case study will complement six other country case studies and additional Pacific-wide datasets. Findings across the entire dataset will be presented in a final report that responds to the overarching questions below.

1. What are the existing challenges and opportunities in the implementation of integrated DRR and CCA programming?
2. How can AHP programs strengthen the integration of DRR and CCA at the community level in case study countries?

Definitions

Disaster risk reduction (DRR): Disaster risk reduction is aimed at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development.⁴

Climate change adaptation (CCA): The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate change and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects.⁵

Integration: In this report, 'integration' refers to the integration of DRR and CCA, meaning, the combination of interventions that address CCA and DRR with the intention of improving humanitarian and development outcomes for at-risk and crisis-affected populations.⁶

2 [World Risk Report 2021](#)

3 [Solomon Islands National DM Plan 2018](#); for more information about national alignment with the FRDP, see Box 3

4 [IPCC 2019 Glossary](#)

5 [IPCC 2019 Glossary](#)

6 This is a working definition adapted from the Global Nutrition Cluster and will be explored further and refined in this research. Available at https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/icnwg_developing_an_integrated_response_approach_gfsc_20191128.pdf

Methodology



Data collection in each country was led by national researchers, overseen by a senior researcher based in Suva, Fiji and supported by Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG), World Vision Australia and AHP agencies and partners. The research used a mixed-methods approach, including a desk review of 23 documents, key informant interviews (KIIs) with 10 stakeholders and community focus group discussions (FGDs) in six communities with 45 representatives (including men, women, children, elders and people with disabilities). National researchers contextualised research tools for each country.

Limitations

COVID-19 context and restrictions: COVID-19 restrictions delayed fieldwork in Solomon Islands, and meant some stakeholders were unavailable for interview due to competing priorities.

Representativeness: Ten stakeholders participated in in-depth KIIs, and 45 people participated in FGDs in six communities. These methods elicited a range of perspectives, but the small number of participants relative to the population of Solomon Islands means the generalisability of the results is uncertain and they should be interpreted cautiously.

Applicability of findings: This study was intended to generate findings that are relevant not only to AHP agencies but other agencies operating in Solomon Islands. However, the focus of stakeholders and communities was on AHP agencies and programs, possibly limiting the findings' broader applicability.

Structure of this report

This report presents a brief snapshot of findings from data collection in three main sections.

- i. The first section provides an **overview of relevant disaster and climate contexts** in Solomon Islands.
- ii. The second section provides an **overview of policy and practice** in the country that influence DRR and CCA interventions and approaches.
- iii. The third section presents the **key findings and opportunities for stakeholders** in Solomon Islands.

Section 1: Setting the scene – the disaster and climate context in Solomon Islands

This section provides a brief overview of Solomon Islands' climate and disaster risk and the institutional arrangements that structure climate and disaster risk reduction efforts.

Climate and disaster risk profile

Solomon Islands is a large archipelago comprising six major islands and approximately 1,000 smaller islands; the land is mostly mountainous, heavily forested, and volcanic in origin, but includes a few low-lying coral atolls. It has high exposure to a wide range of geological, hydrological and climatic hazards, including tropical cyclones, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, floods and droughts.⁷

The country faces numerous severe climate-related threats:



Climate change is expected to affect the country's coastal resources through increased ocean acidification, sea level rise and coral bleaching⁸



The sea around Solomon Islands has risen by an average of 8mm a year since 1993, well above global projections. This threatens more than 80% of the population who live near the coastline, along with most services, infrastructure and agriculture⁹



Rising sea levels have submerged five of the archipelago's islands in the last 50 years¹⁰



Planned relocation has been used as an adaptation strategy for communities in low-lying areas affected by sea level rise, saltwater intrusion, earthquakes and extreme weather events¹¹



The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre predicts that sudden-onset hazards are likely to displace an average of 4,000 people in Solomon Islands per year¹²



Tropical storms are becoming more frequent and intense, and the country is prone to El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events, making rainfall highly variable from year to year.¹³

7 GFDRR, World Bank and SOPAC, Reducing the risk of disasters and climate variability in the Pacific Islands: [Solomon Islands country assessment](#)

8 IDMC, [Sudden-onset hazards and the risk of future displacement in the Solomon Islands](#), 2021

9 COP23, [Solomon Islands](#), accessed 14 October 2021

10 New Scientist, "Five Pacific islands vanish from sight as sea levels rise", 9 May 2016

11 IDMC, Sudden-onset hazards and the risk of future displacement in the Solomon Islands, 2021

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.





Box 1: Spotlight on April Valley

One of the communities visited for this research was the April Valley Community, located East of Honiara in Panatina Ward. Many residents of April Valley were relocated here after devastating floods in 2014 swept away homes along the Mataniko river and claimed the lives of 20 people. In recent years, the community has experienced cyclones and floods, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in food shortages and significant damage to houses and agriculture. Access to clean water is also limited, but the government is currently working to install new pipelines for the community. AHP agencies and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have provided agricultural tools, clean water and a seasonal calendar to support the community. Participants in the FGD said they are well informed about the impact of disasters and climate change. They receive regular updates via social media.¹⁴

Overview of climate change and DRR governance

The Solomon Islands Government (SIG) has expressed its intention to better integrate CCA and DRR as part of its move towards a more resilient development approach (see Box 2). This approach aims to consider risk reduction as a cross-sectoral issue and facilitate the shift towards more integrated programming, both in terms of integrating DRR and CCA policy frameworks and how they relate to development programming.¹⁵

Currently, climate change and disaster management governance responsibilities sit separately, but within the same Ministry. Coordination of DRR and CCA began in 2008 when the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology was established. The Ministry consisted of three government divisions: Environment, Climate Change and Meteorology. The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) was incorporated into this Ministry, which changed its name to the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM), in 2010.

Despite this high-level coordination, there are opportunities to systematically integrate climate and disaster governance. Several Solomon Islands Ministries are implementing climate change and DRR activities; however, this is currently being undertaken in a mostly siloed approach.¹⁶ While policies exist for both climate change and DRR (see section 2), the clarity of roles for relevant institutions and associated coordination structures could be strengthened. The SIG recognises the need for institutional strengthening, and several initiatives are currently in progress at the national and provincial levels,¹⁷ including a proposal for a new integrated Climate and Risk Resilience Committee (see Box 2).

¹⁴ FGD 5

¹⁵ SPC, PIFS, UNDP and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, [Solomon Islands Climate and Disaster Risk Finance Assessment](#), 2017.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.



Key governing bodies

- Within the SIG's governance and institutional arrangements, climate change policy is governed by the **Climate Change Division (CCD)** and DRR by the **National Disaster Council (NDC)**, both of which are departments under MECDM.
- The National Disaster Council Act 1989 (NDCA) established the NDC, which serves as the strategic decision-making body for committing resources and priorities for disaster preparedness and response and advises Cabinet during a disaster. The NDC includes the **National Disaster Operations Committee (NDOC)** and the **Recovery Coordination Committee**. The proposed future framework for resilient development would additionally establish a **Climate and Risk Resilience Committee** (see Box 2).
- The **National Disaster Management Office (NDMO)** works with the NDC to coordinate and monitor planning and arrangements for DRR at the national level and to oversee implementation of NGOs and partners.¹⁸
- The **CCD** monitors Solomon Islands vulnerability to climate change, mobilises resources for adaptation and mitigation, manages and shares information and serves as the primary focal point for UNFCCC.

The National Climate Change Policy calls for a National Climate Change Council and National Climate Change Working Group; however, neither of these bodies are currently operational.¹⁹

- **Provincial Disaster Committees (PDCs)** and sub-committees are set up to oversee DRR at the provincial/municipal level. Climate Change Committees have recently been established in all nine provinces but are currently under-resourced and yet to be operationalised.²⁰ A Provincial Climate and Risk Resilience Committee has also been proposed but not yet operationalised. Ward/village committees have also been established to oversee DRR at the ward/village level.

Box 2: Proposed Climate and Risk Resilience Committees

The National Disaster Management Plan of 2018 (see section 2) proposed developing a Framework for Resilient Development for Solomon Islands, to complement the FRDP at the regional level. This framework will establish Climate and Risk Resilience Committees (CRRCs), which will be responsible for the reduction of disaster and climate risk within social and development planning processes and practices. This body will work alongside the committees of the NDC at the national and provincial levels. This committee is additionally planned to be replicated at the provincial level.²¹ The realisation and operationalisation of the CRRC would demonstrate significant progress in Solomon Islands' efforts to better integrate CCDRR institutional arrangements.

¹⁸ Solomon Islands National Disaster Risk Management Plan, 2010.

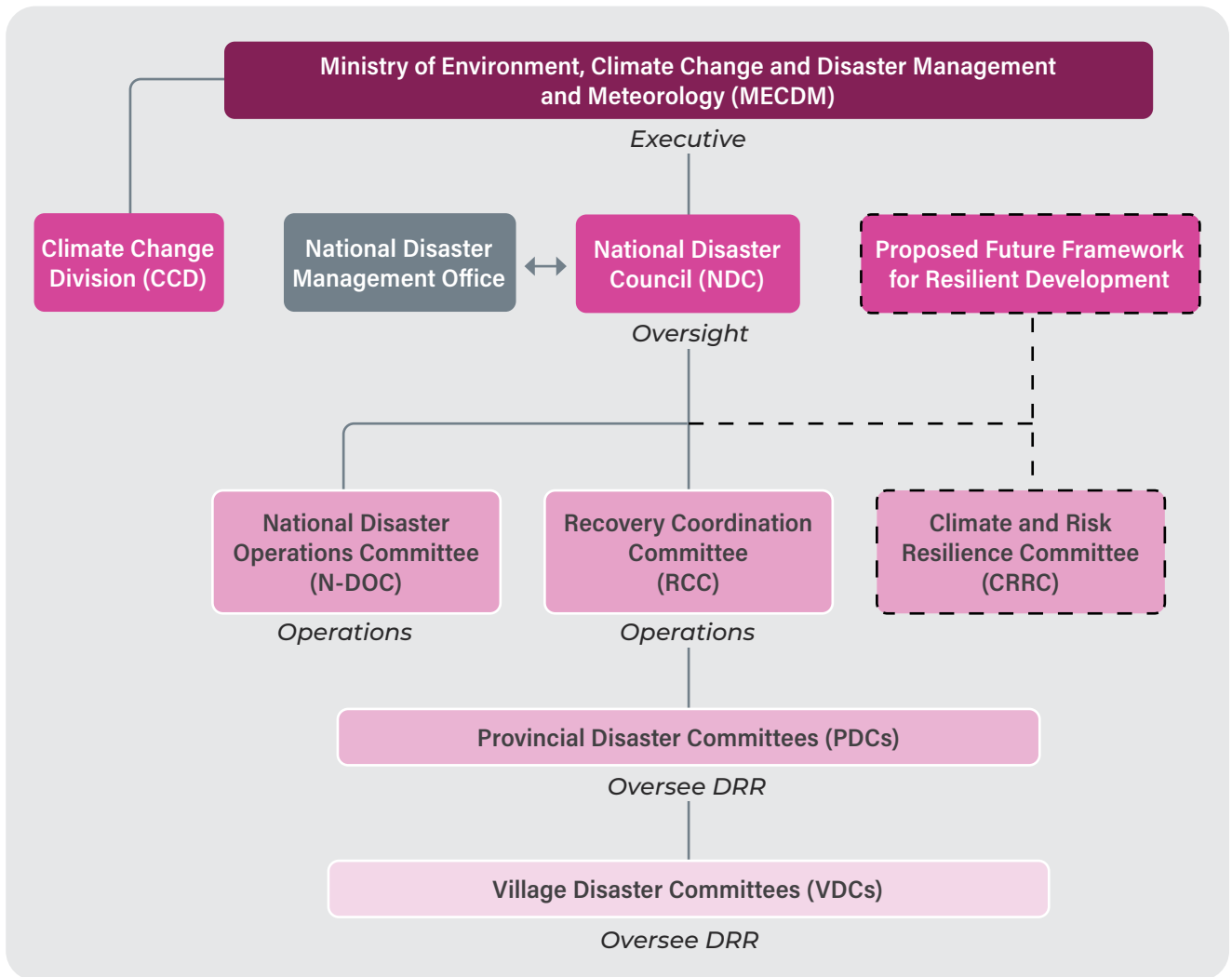
¹⁹ SPC et. al, Solomon Islands Climate and Disaster Risk Finance Assessment, 2017.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Solomon Islands National DM Plan 2018



Figure A: Disaster and Climate Governance in Solomon Islands



Source: Solomon Islands National DM Plan 2018

Section 2: Lay of the land – Policy and practice in Solomon Islands

This section highlights policies and funding arrangements relevant to disaster management, risk reduction and climate change in Solomon Islands. This provides the context in which implementing agencies operate. This section also provides a brief overview of AHP programming in the country.

Snapshot of key policies, plans and frameworks for DRR and CCA

Currently, Solomon Islands does not have a standalone, integrated policy for CCA and DRR. However, existing policies relating to climate change, DRR and sustainable development all recognise the interlinkages in climate change and disaster risks and the actions necessary to address both CCA and DRR holistically.

This section provides a high-level snapshot of the key policies, plans and frameworks for DRR and CCA in Solomon Islands, including relevant policies at the regional and international level that influence national policy instruments.

Figure B: Key plans, policies and frameworks for DRR and CCA in Solomon Islands



²² Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016-2035

²³ Solomon Islands NAPA

²⁴ Solomon Islands National Communications

²⁵ While the policy has lapsed, the country still refers to the associated documents to guide national decision-making and reporting obligations. See link to [Solomon Islands Climate Change Policy](#)

²⁶ Solomon Islands Nationally Determined Contribution, 2021.

²⁷ Solomon Islands National Disaster Council Act 1989

²⁸ Solomon Island N-DM Plan 2018

²⁹ Solomon Islands National Disaster Risk Management Plan, 2010

³⁰ NDMO Communications Strategy

While plans and policies for climate change and DRR currently sit separately in Solomon Islands, the N-DM Plan clearly outlines its alignment to the FRDP (see Box 3). According to the document, “[the plan] foreshadows a parallel national framework for resilient development for the reduction of disaster and climate risk through the sectors.”³¹ This is to be established under a new and integrated climate and risk resilience policy to replace the existing Climate Change Policy 2012–2017. This is a strong indication of the strategic direction the country is planning to take in integrating climate change and DRR, although actualisation and operationalisation of this policy is yet to occur.

Box 3: National alignment with the FRDP

The FRDP is the Pacific Region’s response to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and other global platforms for sustainable development and climate change. Global frameworks such as the Sendai Framework and Sustainable Development Goals contain an extensive hierarchy of expectations and targets for a wide range of geopolitical situations. The FRDP addresses these within the context of Pacific nations’ particular vulnerabilities and resilience issues.

Solomon Islands’ N-DM Plan explicitly references the three goals of the FRDP:

1. Strengthened integrated adaptation and risk reduction to enhance resilience to climate change and disasters
2. Low-carbon development
3. Strengthened disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

It states that the N-DM Plan will address Goal 3, while Goals 1 and 2 will be addressed by a new plan for managing disaster and climate risk, with a wider focus on resilient and sustainable development. The World Bank-funded Community Resilience to Climate and Disaster Risk in Solomon Islands Project (2014–2020), supported the development of the N-DM Plan and produced a position paper for the Framework for Resilient Development for Solomon Islands, which the MECMD is currently considering.³² The Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination (MDPAC) is also preparing new planning legislation and has expressed intention to establish links with the FRDP.³³

Financing mechanisms

Solomon Islands receives climate change and DRR funding from both multilateral and bilateral sources, as well as through the government’s domestic budget. This includes multilateral funding from financial entities under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and through development banks such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. According to a climate change and disaster risk finance assessment conducted in 2017, the largest bilateral donors are the European Union, Japan and Australia.³⁴

Most climate change and disaster risk reduction support to Solomon Islands has been project-based, which has made it challenging to sustain activities and retain expertise beyond the lifetime of

31 Solomon Islands National DM Plan 2018

32 World Bank, *Community Resilience to Climate and Disaster Risk in Solomon Islands Project*, Restructuring Paper, 2014.

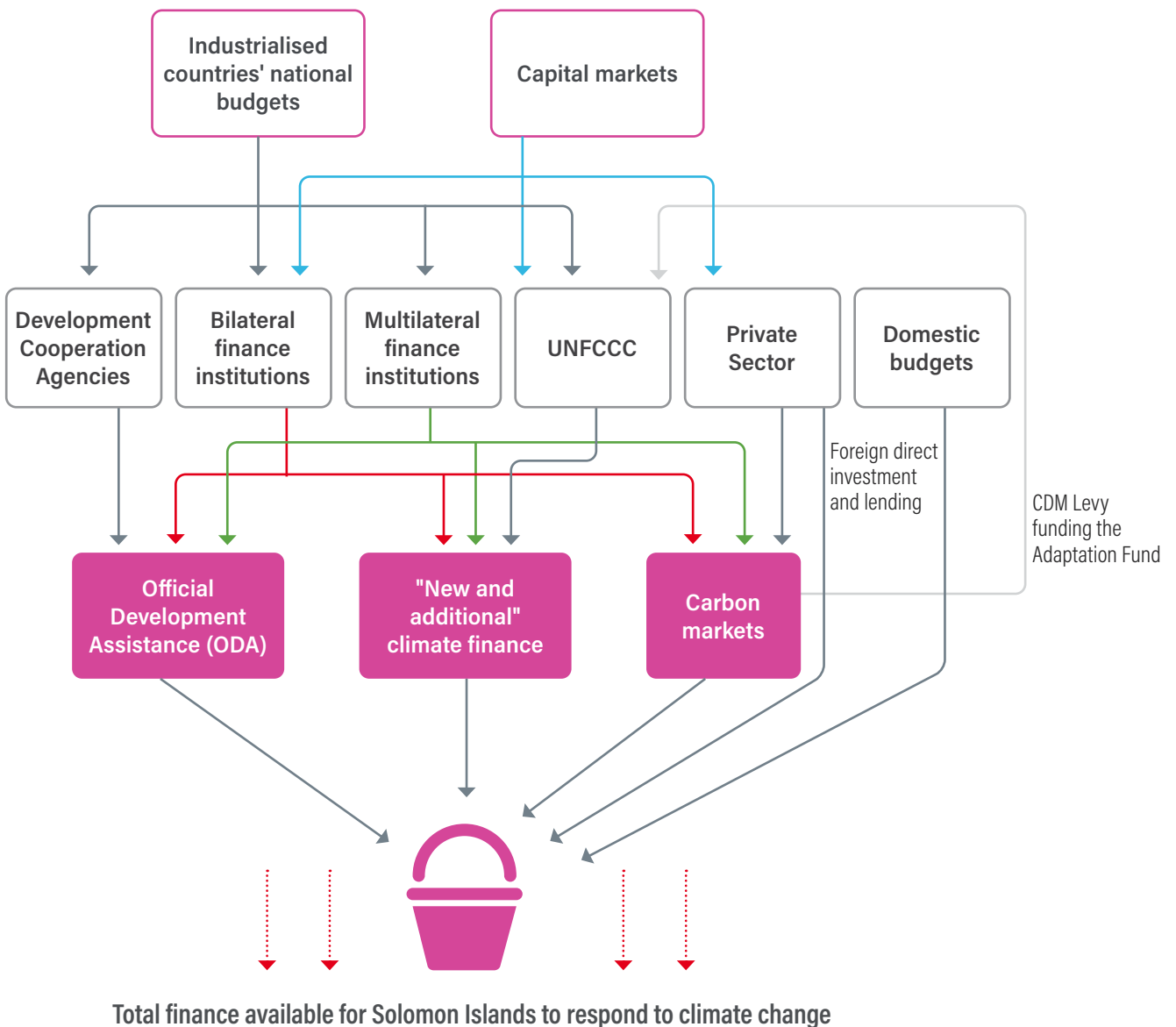
33 Ibid.

34 SPC et. al, *Solomon Islands Climate and Disaster Risk Finance Assessment*, 2017

projects.³⁵ An assessment of CCDRR projects in Solomon Islands in 2017 showed that most focused on adaptation (56%), with a smaller share focusing on mitigation (33%) and DRR (11%).³⁶

Funding is managed through several focal points, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, MECDM, MDPAC and the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (see Figure C). Various implementing actors can access funds directly from donors and do not always report doing so to MDPAC, making it difficult to track funding. This leads to a considerable portion of climate change and DRR project funding (57%) falling outside of the direct purview of the national budget and therefore, not monitored, tracked or reported.³⁷

Figure C: Pathways for climate finance in Solomon Islands



Source: Atteridge et al, 2009

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.

AHP Disaster READY in Solomon Islands

Disaster READY in Solomon Islands is implemented by a consortium of five lead Australian NGOs and more than 18 local partners delivering risk reduction, adaptation and emergency response programming across the country. At the community level, Disaster READY focuses on inclusive community-based DRR to ensure that people with disabilities, women, children and other vulnerable groups are involved in disaster planning, and their concerns are being considered. Activities include strengthening preparedness and response leadership in village-based institutions and schools, implementing village and school disaster action plans, and further connecting provincial disaster management offices and communities.³⁸

Figure D: Communities visited that receive assistance through Disaster READY



38 Adapted from: AHP, *Disaster READY Solomon Islands*, 2021

Section 3: Integration in action – Findings and Opportunities



FINDING 1: The intent to integrate DRR and CCA policies, structures and governance has not been realised, creating progress delays towards integrated programming.

From a policy point of view, Solomon Islands has expressed clear intentions to progress the integration of DRR and CCA; however, the update and operationalisation of the policies remains stalled. This has created some challenges for integrated implementation at the community level, but also presents opportunity for the prioritisation of bottom-up community-led approaches in the absence of a unified national policy.

“DRR programs and CCA are not clearly integrated. In the sense that most DRR programs are focussed on short-term preparedness and recovery towards that covers multi-hazards [climatic and non-climatic hazards]. CCA programs are mainly implemented in a silo which focuses on specific climatic impact hazards of which the adaptation program is for a long-term benefit to the communities.” (National actor)³⁹

From the government perspective, close relationships between people in government working on DRR and CCA issues have led to a streamlined and effective approach to reducing risk, whether from natural disasters or climate change.⁴⁰ However, challenges related to entrenched top-down structures and siloes persist. Siloes are perpetuated by historical policies and approaches and by the international system, in which policies, governance and funding structures largely remain separate.⁴¹

The proposed Framework for Resilient Development in Solomon Islands and CRRCs demonstrate notable progress in progressing national strategy and thinking; however, this research has found limited evidence of any plans for operationalising these structures or increasing awareness among stakeholders. Increased efforts are needed to link policy to practice in communities.

In Solomon Islands, the gaps between siloes are closing through an increased focus on interlinkages in recent years. For example, several NGO respondents also generally shared a common understanding of the similarities and common goals of DRR and CCA.⁴²

“Both CCA and DRR are working to address the same outcome: reducing vulnerability and enhancing resilience.” (National actor)⁴³

Some stakeholders were able to highlight important shifts in programming that demonstrate progress towards integration. For example, some respondents highlighted the previous primacy given to DRR by

³⁹ Interview 5

⁴⁰ Interviews 1, 5

⁴¹ SPC et. al, *Solomon Islands Climate and Disaster Risk Finance Assessment*, 2017

⁴² Interviews 4, 6, 7

⁴³ Interview 8

some NGOs, which could be seen in the development of Community DRR Action Plans, which tended to focus on disaster management. However, there is evidence that these plans are increasingly being linked to CCA activities (see Box 4).⁴⁴

“There is more of an approach to DRR, for instance, but now there is the integration of CCA through the Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) training manual [...] the Community Action Plan aligns to CCA measures.” (INGO actor)⁴⁵

Box 4: Inclusive Community DRR Plans

Community DRR plans are developed collaboratively by governments, agencies and communities to reduce vulnerabilities and build capacities.⁴⁶ Local hazards, risks, vulnerabilities and capacities are identified and actions determined. This requires inclusive decision-making to ensure that plans account for and respond to the unique needs of different groups. All stakeholders agreed that inclusive village structures and plans are critical for effective community programming. These plans are the responsibility of the Village Disaster Climate Risk Committees (VDCRCs) in areas where these structures are active (see Box 7). Communities stated that DRR plans were helpful, particularly the drills and simulations run by the agencies, but several called for additional support in developing DRR and CCA plans.⁴⁷

In the absence of policy momentum and integrated governance, there is still opportunity to continue to pursue integrated models from the bottom-up. This can build on ongoing community initiatives and plans and agencies' own program designs, therefore finding alignment with integrated frameworks once the policy agenda catches up.



OPPORTUNITIES

Prioritise updating, operationalising and socialising policy frameworks that support integrated CCA and DRR

Support community-led design of inclusive local CCDRR plans and advocate for sustainable resources to support the plans



Finding 2: There are opportunities to draw more systematically on community knowledge, skills, resources and views.

Improving community resilience requires two-way knowledge transfer between communities and practitioners. Communicating technical terms in a local language occurs in few community projects; often there is no local translation for scientific terms. As a result, CCA and DRR strategies miss out on valuable data, lessons, and experiences of local knowledge in the preparedness and planning phases to enhance climate action.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Interviews 3, 7; FGDs 1, 3

⁴⁵ Interview 3

⁴⁶ Caritas, *Making CMDRR Operational at the Community Level: A Guide*, 2009.

⁴⁷ FGDs 1–3

⁴⁸ Kelman, 2015, *Disaster Risk Governance for Pacific Island Communities*, *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 13 (50).



“Implementers need to fully engage the community groups from the project’s design phase and train them on the integration approach. Simplify the information to the local context that can be well understood by the communities.” (INGO actor) ⁴⁹

Solomon Islands communities have been experiencing disasters for hundreds of years. Traditional and local knowledge that has passed down through generations remains an essential information source, even as global and local weather patterns and conditions continue to change (see Box 5). Communities shared examples of traditional practices used to prepare for and respond to disasters and climate shocks, such as reinforcing houses with coconut trunks, planting mangrove trees as windbreaks, relying on swamp taro for food security in times of disaster, and monitoring the river for an early warning signal delivered by conch shell or wooden drum.⁵⁰

Box 5: Traditional knowledge as a vital source of information in Solomon Islands

For thousands of years, before there was any established central government, Solomon Islanders lived in small, independent communities, living according to precisely defined but unwritten principles, norms and traditions.⁵¹ Disasters in Solomon Islands have been accepted as a part of regular life rather than as externally imposed extremes that require protective measures. “Disaster” was not a cultural concept within the communities, because they had the traditional knowledge to survive extreme weather events.⁵² Communities have held this knowledge for generations, and it offers a unique perspective from which to learn and build on in reducing risk. Often, “disaster risk governance” meant that communities dealt with a disaster as well as possible, without any external assistance.

Some community members recognised that in some circumstances, traditional knowledge is no longer sufficient due to the impacts of climate change.⁵³ This highlights the importance of communities and practitioners working together to share information and fill gaps on both sides. For example, as part of the Disaster READY Solomon Islands program, World Vision Solomon Islands (WVSI) has partnered with Solomon Islands Meteorological Service (SIMS) to help bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and scientific data (see Box 6)

“Traditional knowledge on the seasonal calendar is no longer effective due to impacts of climate change.” (Community member)⁵⁴

49 Interview 3

50 FGDs 1–6

51 Tuhonuku, 1995, *The reality of governance in Solomon Islands today*, *Pacific Economic Bulletin*, 10 (2).

52 Kuruppu and Willie, 2015, *Barriers to reducing climate enhanced disaster risks in Least Developed Country-Small Islands through anticipatory adaptation*, *Weather and Climate Extremes*, Vol. 7, p. 72-83.

53 FGDs 1, 2

54 FGD 1

Box 6: Combining traditional knowledge with science in Solomon Islands communities

In 2018, WVSI and SIMS worked with eight communities in Makira to leverage traditional knowledge and scientific data to develop strengthened early warning systems. The program sought to learn traditional warning signals from communities, including signs from the stars, birds, clouds and other indicators, and integrate these methods with scientific explanations. Traditional methods and scientific projections were discussed openly to demonstrate the value in each and to facilitate communities and implementers to work together to utilise their unique strengths. Traditional knowledge captured through this program is stored in a Traditional Knowledge Database maintained by SIMS and has been utilised frequently to prepare for disaster in Solomon Islands. It was cited by communities as very helpful in preparing for TC Harold in 2020.⁵⁵

Several stakeholders perceived that communities held an integrated understanding of risk management related to climate change and disaster.⁵⁶ When asked how they could be better supported in preparing for and responding to disaster, the most common responses among community members were support for more DRR activities, climate adaptation programs, mitigation activities and river diversion techniques.⁵⁷ These answers demonstrate awareness of both DRR and CCA activities within communities and an understanding that both are necessary to reduce risk.

The flow of information to communities, whereby information is generated and owned by both implementing agencies and communities, was perceived to be generally effective.⁵⁸ However, information flows appeared to be one-way, with the community receiving necessary information on the ground but lacking access to a mechanism to advocate to the system. There is evidence of good practice intentions among agencies in co-creating knowledge, but accountability appears to be limited and entrenched top-down mindsets continue to present challenges.

“We identify risk with people in the community [...] plans were developed but were not completed.” (INGO actor)⁵⁹

The importance of inclusive decision-making was also raised in regard to listening to and supporting the roles of different groups in the community. Community members shared that generally most groups are consulted in planning phases, but there is still room for improvement in ensuring all voices are heard in decision-making.⁶⁰

“The role of different groups [men, women, people with disabilities] in integrated approaches in the communities is for decision-making based on the existing capacity level they have.” (National actor)⁶¹

“[The] Disaster Committee should involve youth to build their capacity to help facilitate and conduct community awareness.” (Community member)⁶²

55 AHP, 2020, [Birds bring warning of Tropical Cyclone Harold – Solomon Islands](#)

56 Interviews 3, 4, 9

57 FGDs 1–4

58 Interviews 3–7

59 Interview 1

60 FGDs 1–4

61 Interview 2

62 FGD 2



OPPORTUNITIES

Work with communities to develop a platform for two-way knowledge transfer

that i) supports informed community decision-making, and ii) ensures community knowledge is communicated in relevant forums at the provincial and national levels

Advocate for and support a bottom-up approach for dissemination of relevant messaging at the village level

Work together with communities to translate technical terms into plain language and local dialect, and leverage traditional thinking and values



Finding 3: Gaps in coordination can be filled to better support integrated approaches at the community level.

Nearly all stakeholders stated that existing coordination forums are generally effective to bring stakeholders together across levels to share information.⁶³ All stakeholders agreed that inclusive approaches to decision-making are critical in boosting community resilience.⁶⁴

However, some challenges in coordination were identified in terms of optimising mechanisms that meaningfully bring together the diverse range of stakeholders involved in climate change and DRR. More investigation would be needed to explore these concerns and develop actions to address them.

“Coordination mechanisms exist, such as AHP Disaster READY country committee, Solomon Islands Alliance of Humanitarian NGOs, CCA and DRR workshops and training. Those that attend the forum are the NGOs, UN agencies, donors, SIG ministries and CSOs [...] Critical stakeholders absent at times are the Climate Change Division, NDMO and other NDOC Sector Committees.” (INGO actor)⁶⁵

Whilst coordination mechanisms exist, there were reports that they were not wholly representative or integrated across the spectrum, with some critical agencies, for example the CCD, often being absent. Some concerns were raised around meaningful collaboration between DRR and CCA actors.⁶⁶ Stakeholders noted the importance of integrated systems and structures for information management aligned to the coordination structures to minimise siloes.⁶⁷

“Coordination mechanisms do exist, however, [they do not allow] partners [to] come together and do cross learning and to harmonise their work, programs and information sharing. Working in siloes is still common across sectors in the country.” (National actor)⁶⁸

63 Interviews 1–7, 10

64 Interviews 1–10

65 Interview 1

66 Interviews 8, 9

67 Interview 5

68 Interview 9

Some stakeholders indicated that local civil society organisations (CSOs) and faith-based organisations are present in these forums, and occasionally community representatives are invited;⁶⁹ however, this does not appear to be standard practice, as others indicated critical local organisations were left out.⁷⁰ Including these actors and facilitating clear linkages between national coordination and village-level structures will be crucial in ensuring the effectiveness of integrated approaches.

Operationalisation of coordination mechanisms at community level is ongoing. VDCRCs support effective coordination and information sharing between implementing agencies and communities.⁷¹ For example, the AHP Disaster READY Program has prioritised supporting VDCRCs in Solomon Islands (see Box 7), but due to the uneven investment of the resources and support to establish and maintain these structures across the country, VDCRCs are only present in some communities.

“[We receive messages] through networking with NGOs and radio. For those that have radio can pass on the information to the VDCRC chair, and he/she will pass on the warning messages to the entire community. There is effectiveness in the passing of messages in the communities.”
(Community member)⁷²

Box 7: Village Disaster Climate Risk Committees

World Vision Solomon Islands (WVSI) has been working to support communities to establish VDCRCs and provide training on the NDMO manual. The manual explains how to respond to hazards and offers support to communities in developing and implementing their own action plans. For example, in Numbu Village, the WVSI-supported action plan included activities to raise community awareness about disaster preparedness and to increase the reach and accessibility of early warning signals.⁷³ Other key actors, including Solomon Islands Red Cross, NDMO and Solomon Islands Development Trust, have prioritised support to VDCRCs as key to boosting community resilience. For example, in Marulaon Village, the establishment and training of the VDCRC facilitated the development of hazard maps, vulnerability and capacity assessments, evacuations plans, and a Response Plan and DRR Action Plan.⁷⁴



OPPORTUNITIES

Advocate for coordination structures to be better integrated and more inclusive of all actors working towards resilience goals, including community representatives

Further interrogate whether existing information management processes aligned with integrated coordination mechanisms are fit for purpose

Support the establishment and training of VDCRCs in communities and connect them to national coordination forums, ensuring that plans are in place to ensure their sustainability.

69 Interviews 4–7

70 Interviews 1–3

71 FGDs 1, 3

72 FGD 2

73 AHP, *Preparing for disasters in Guadalcanal Province–Solomon Islands*, 2017

74 Solomon Islands Development Trust, *Marulaon Village Disaster Plan*, 2016

Summary: Snapshot of findings and opportunities

There is a significant opportunity to leverage the good practice and progress that is being made in policies and operational practices to enhance community outcomes in Solomon Islands. Within the parameters of available data, this case study presents five findings and opportunities for consideration by implementing agencies. Future phases of this research will deepen the dataset and seek to implement and assess recommendations to link evidence to impact.

Findings and opportunities will be refined and triangulated across six additional case studies and presented in the final report, due mid-2022.

 KEY FINDINGS	 OPPORTUNITIES
<p>The intent to integrate DRR and CCA policies, structures and governance has not been realised, creating progress delays towards integrated programming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Prioritise updating, operationalising and socialising policy frameworks that support integrated CCA and DRR □ Support community-led design of inclusive local CCDRR plans and advocate for sustainable resources to support the plans
<p>There are opportunities to draw more systematically on community knowledge, skills, resources and views</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Work with communities to develop a platform for two-way knowledge transfer that i) supports informed community decision-making, and ii) ensures community knowledge is communicated in relevant forums at the provincial and national levels. □ Advocate for and support a bottom-up approach for dissemination of relevant messaging at the village level. □ Work together with communities to translate technical terms into plain language and local dialect, and leverage traditional thinking and values
<p>Gaps in coordination can be filled to better support integrated approaches at the community level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Advocate for coordination structures to be better integrated and more inclusive of all actors working towards resilience goals, including community representatives □ Further interrogate whether existing information management processes aligned with integrated coordination mechanisms are fit for purpose □ Support the establishment and training of VDCRCs in communities and connect them to national coordination forums, ensuring that plans are in place to ensure their sustainability