Climate Change Action through Civil Society Programs

Research exploring the best practice of climate change and disaster resilience integration into Pacific civil society programs

Background and objectives:

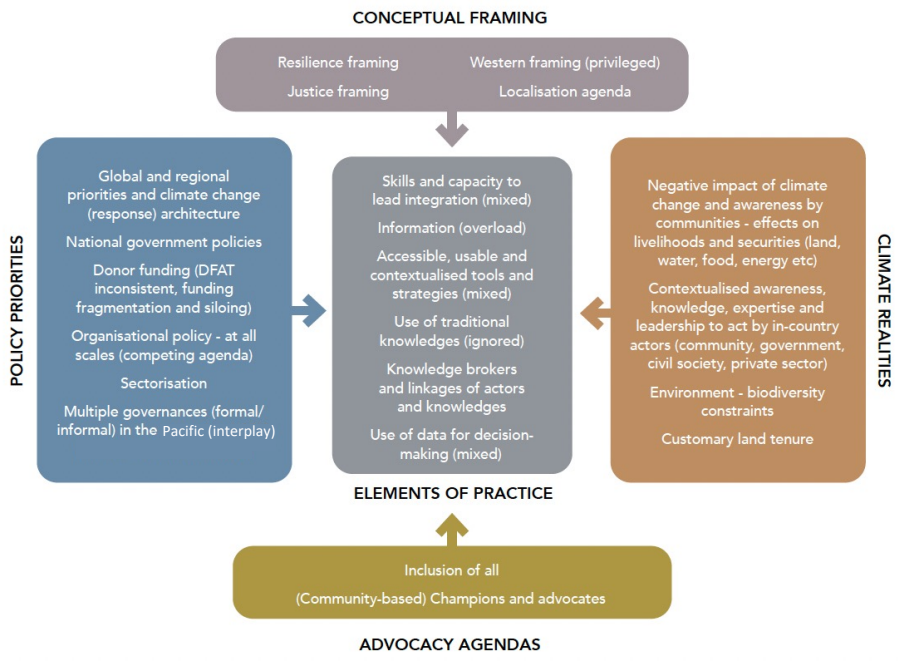
- Climate change is a critical issue for the development sector due to links between climate change, poverty, injustice and inequality.
- Australian and Pacific Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) need sustainable support to effectively integrate climate change and disaster resilience considerations into programming.
- The purpose of this research was to better understand i) the system and current practice of climate change and disaster resilience integration of CSOs working in the Pacific, and ii) the needs of CSOs for more effective integration in the future.

Approach:

The Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney (ISF-UTS) undertook the research in two phases:

- **Scoping Phase** focused on understanding the knowledge gaps and emerging enablers of best practice. Activities included participatory workshops with a Reference Group of climate change experts, key informant interviews with CSO climate sector leaders and a desktop mapping activity of DFAT-funded climate and disaster-related projects in the Pacific.
- **Peer Review Phase** explored what 'guidance' for climate change integration looks like with a sample of five Australian and Pacific CSOs. CSOs completed online surveys, interviews and Focus Group Discussions and collectively made sense of findings in participatory workshops with ISF-UTS and CSO participants.
- **This document provides key findings from the research**, including the practice of integration of climate change and disaster resilience by CSOs, and enablers of best practice for climate change integration.

The practice of climate change and disaster resilience integration by CSOs



The figure describes broad drivers of CSO climate change integration, and the 'system' in which CSOs are operating for integrating climate change.

- **The outside dimensions** of the figure describe different types of drivers, which could enable or hinder CSO integration of climate change and disaster resilience.
- **The inside of the figure** includes elements of the practice of climate change integration. These elements of practice are mixed (some are strong, others weak or mixed) as indicated within the brackets for most of the elements.

Participants of the Reference Group and CSO sector leaders from Phase 1 are acknowledged as key contributors to this work.
Phase 2 CSO participants are also acknowledged for their insights and contributions: Christine Lemau (ADRA Fiji), Sarah Mckenzie (World Vision Australia), Solomon Lahies (Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation), and Willy Missack (Learn to Serve Vanuatu)

This research was undertaken between May 2021 – July 2022, and led by the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney with the support of the Australia Pacific Climate Partnership.

Citation: Gero, A., Chowdhury, T. and Winterford, K. (2022) – Climate Change Action through Civil Society Programmes: Research exploring the best practice of climate change and disaster resilience integration into civil society programs – Research Summary. Prepared by the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney for the Australia Pacific Climate Partnership.

Climate Change Action through Civil Society Programs

Research exploring the best practice of climate change and disaster resilience integration into Pacific civil society programs

Enablers of best practice of climate change and disaster resilience integration

Multi-year, core and flexible funding options

Donor support through multi-year and core funding, and funding with flexible outcome options provide CSOs with adequate time to build relationships, better understand context, define outcomes with local actors, witness project outcomes, and design the next steps of climate change and disaster resilience integration based on the learnings from the previous steps.

Partnerships, relationships, and knowledge exchange for transformative and innovative climate action

Implementing novel approaches and introducing creative ways of working become possible when the relationships between organisations are built on trust. Long-term partnerships, ongoing engagement and knowledge exchange between Australian CSOs and Pacific partners can promote new ways of working, including innovative approaches and transformative actions that are needed to adapt to changing environments and contexts.

Ongoing and holistic approaches recognising the dynamics of climate change impacts

An ongoing approach to climate change integration is needed because of the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of climate change impacts, which require responses to be constantly recalibrating and reassessing levels of risk. A holistic understanding of communities' strengths and priorities should also be reflected in the integration approach.

Prioritising climate change action within organisations

Organisational prioritisation of climate change, and inclusion of climate and disaster considerations at a higher strategic organisational level were enablers for integration to take place across organisations. Joint advocacy efforts and participation in networks can support CSOs demonstrate the prioritisation of climate and disaster resilience within their organisations.

Strength-based approaches that recognise and champion traditional knowledge, local priorities and diverse climate leadership

Valuing and prioritising local knowledge, and bringing traditional and science-based knowledge together facilitated effective mutual learning between communities, Pacific partners and Australian CSOs. Locally-led activities, with diverse local climate leadership (including youth, women and girls and gender non-binary people) and knowledge brokers within communities and local government meaningfully engaged the community, enabling successful climate change integration.

Recognising the importance of both 'what' and 'how' of integration

The '*what*' of climate change integration refers to the content focus of integration, e.g., the latest climate and early warning science. The '*how*' of climate change and disaster risk integration refers to the process of integration, e.g., knowledge brokering and partnerships. Consideration of both the '*what*' and '*how*' of climate change and disaster resilience integration is critical to further progress climate change and disaster resilience into their Pacific programming.

UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures
Australian Aid | Australia Pacific Climate Partnership