

Webinar Series on the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) and the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP).

Webinar 4: Serving a public good – The Pacific Regional Federation for Resilience Professionals

Summary

Purpose

Pacific Island Countries and Territories are extremely vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and geological hazards. The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded these pre-existing vulnerabilities. Such a scenario re-enforces the need for appropriate national and regional technical capacity and expertise.

The Pacific Resilience Federation for Resilience Professionals (PRFRP) is the first ever registered professional organization for resilience (Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)). The webinar provided an opportunity to learn more about the PRFRP, its objectives, possible benefits and impacts. The establishment of the PRFRP aims to remove one of the barriers to improving national resilience to climate change and disasters: A lack of technical capacity and expertise as a result of the absence of sustainable accredited and quality assured formal training programmes.

Background

The **Moderator and Head of the Pacific Sub-regional office of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and a member of the PRP Taskforce representing the UN agencies Mr. Andrew McElroy** highlighted the PRFRP as an innovative approach to support capacity building and addressing some of the barriers especially around technical capacity and accredited trainings. The establishment of the Federation demonstrates Pacific innovation and leadership and is very much aligned with the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) and the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP).

Summary of Discussions and Interventions from Panellists

Dr. Morgan Wairiu: Chairperson of the Pacific Regional Federation for Resilience Professionals (PRFRP), Deputy Director, PaCE-SD, The University of the South Pacific and member of the PRP Taskforce representing Academia said the PRFRP is a global first being the first-ever registered organization for resilient professionals. It aimed to fill the gap of limited capacity and expertise because of a lack of sustainable accredited and quality assured programmes in DRR and CCA. The PRFRP provides an industry certification scheme for practitioners. It also sets the benchmark for quality in CCA and DRR training. Finally, it administers a resilience industry skills advisory committee that facilitates the development of curriculum and practices and provides support through professional advisory services.

The PRFRP works through collaborative and effective representation to governments and industries. With no similar established organizations, it is taking time to put in place guidelines, ethics, practices

and business plan. An Executive Committee (EC) has been established to work through these issues as well as secure professional membership. This requires guidelines for registration and how members can contribute. The Secretariat is supported by EU PACTVET. EU PACRES will take over once PACTVET has come to an end. Beyond this support, sustainability is an issue. Curriculum development has included Certificates 1 to 4. Certificates 1 to 4 are able to bridge the gap from primary to higher levels of qualification. Certificates 5 to 6 are currently being developed. The PRFRP is aligned with the FRDP as it is integrating CCA and DRR through its training courses. It also plays a related role in quality assurance as a qualification accreditation and industry standard advisory body. The Federation also contributes to the FRDP through strengthening the capacity of resilience professionals.

Mr. Apenisa Tamani: Vice Chairperson of the PRFRP said the key factors that will make the Federation model a driving force to enhance quality assurance and opportunities is through a network of experts from regional and external training institutions. As custodians of regional resilience qualifications, the Federation can help convert these to national qualifications that can be taken down to the community level. There has been increased, particularly from the northern Pacific. Increasingly, countries are adapting the courses to suit their specific context. Apenisa encouraged participants to visit the PRFRP website and to register to be a part of the PRFRP: www.prfrp.net.

Ms. Melinda A Mathers, SPC EU PACRES team said that the Federation initiative is one element of the wider EU PACRES project and continues the work progressed under the EU PACTVET project. The main objective is to strengthen the Federation's institutional development as well as the capacity of individual members. The 100+ members of the PRFRP have been contacted and more than 60 have re-affirmed their membership.

PRFRP has the potential to become an organization that supports various Pacific regional industrial associations active in the resilience domain and boost related skills development, education, training and employment. An annual general meeting of the PRFRP membership has been called. The Executive Committee, which has been recently established, is being actively supported to put the Federation on a solid footing. Greater active participation from the membership would be a big support to this process.

Experiences from the National level:

Charles Pierce, trainer for the climate change programme offered by Vanuatu Institute of Technology said that prior to the establishment of the PRFRP, he designed courses on climate change specifically for the Rural Training Centres (RTC) in Vanuatu. There are 35 RTC spread over the islands with limited TVET training for students unable to continue their education beyond grade 10.

Eleven units in climate change and disaster risk reduction were developed. However, the initiative through the RTC proved financially unsustainable. The programme moved instead to the Vanuatu Institute of Technology in Port Vila. The programme started with a cohort of 32 students. On completion it was not accredited but this has since changed with accreditation from the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority. Charles designed a higher-level course pitched at certificate level 3 and accredited by the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority. Many of the students continued from Certificate 1. The courses are slightly different to the regional Certificates 1,2,3 and 4 but are recognized as equivalent to Certificates 1 and 3. A second cohort undertook the training in 2018 and have just finished in 2020. The issue now is that students have to fund themselves as there is no longer any support from donors.

It was further highlighted that the uptake of the graduating students in terms of employment was limited. Only 2 of the graduates have been employed on a temporary basis by the national government, 1 by a regional agency and 2 are field officers for non-government organizations (NGO).



Most graduates have gone back to their community and are involved in awareness programmes. One graduate based in Santo has established a Local Conservation Area, that has climate change and disaster committees in 14 villages. The graduate co-founded an NGO called Santo Sunset Environment Network that aims to conserve eco-systems and biodiversity in another 25 villages along the remote and hazard-exposed west coast of Santo.

Five students have continued their education on resilience, with 1 pursuing a degree in environmental science and 4 doing Certificate 4 at USP. Other forms of resilience education not linked to the PRFRP include a post-graduate diploma in climate change at USP and short courses delivered by NGOs at community level focusing mainly on DRR. School curricula dealing with resilience is offered only in years 11 to 13. However, statistics show that only 14% of those starting year 1 reach years 11 to 13. It was recommended that the PRFRP put more emphasis on offering accredited courses in rural training centres to have a bigger impact as 70% of the population lives in rural coastal areas. Despite the challenges in terms of lack of uptake, there is optimism that the last mile can be reached through such initiatives.

Aliti Koroï from The University of the South Pacific in the Republic of Marshall Islands supports training on the Regional Resilience Certificate programme and shared that they are currently working with the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI) to develop learning resources. The first cohort of 18 started off well. However, the COVID-19 lockdown created challenges with keeping participants connected, particularly participants from the outer islands including from Ebeye.

Flights to Ebeye are not regular and online delivery has had technical problems. Resilience training is important for RMI and needs to start from the community level. Certificates 1 to 2 are earmarked for high school. Meanwhile, Certificates 3 to 4 is being delivered through CMI. To counter the challenges associated with lack of academic qualifications, the training has had to improvise. This includes having workshops and more awareness to enable students to transition into the training courses. Continuity of learning and the need for more trainers are two issues identified. There is also a need to reach beyond the main population centres. Despite setbacks, RMI has retained a sense of pride in efforts so far while at the same time understanding that these are initial steps on a long journey.

Question & Answer:

Are there plans to integrate the resilience training certificates into local tertiary institutions curriculum? Dr Morgan outlined that the professional body will provide the competencies and develop the qualifications. The expectation is that delivery of the programme rests with the national TVET providers and that it will be embedded in their qualification frameworks. The Federation is already working with Vanuatu Institute of Technology, Samoa National University and Cook Islands Institute. USP deliver Certificates 3 & 4 from their 12 campuses around the region. The Rural Training Centres ideally should be up to the level and quality of training required and be able to deliver courses at a similar level to any regional and national TVET providers. The PRFRP aims to provide the quality assurance and support to meet such requirements/standards.

What is the status of the RTCs in Vanuatu? Charles highlighted that the RTC have now been taken over by TVET under the Ministry of Education and Training. The main issue now is how to get funding to run the training course for the trainers, including printing training material. There is a desire to continue delivering training through the RTC. However, this has yet to materialize in terms of the necessary support.

Please clarify the criteria to enter these courses for those with no formal education and those with disabilities as well as women? Apenisa said that the entry requirements are relatively low in terms of Certificate 1. It can accommodate Year 10 graduates or people with experience working in the community. Enrolment in the programme is 100% competency based. Applicants are assessed on knowledge and skills. Resources have also been developed to integrate disability and gender



elements. Material and activities take account of the fact that no two learners are alike. Different modes of delivery, including visuals, auditory and even activities, are flexible to cater for such differences.

Please clarify the governance arrangements for the PRFRP to be more representative of the region's demographics and capacity constraints as well as the need to build political will at ministerial level through advocacy? Dr. Morgan emphasized that the body is open to all professionals in the resilience realm. He encouraged all those eligible to apply to be a member. PRFRP's role is to focus on quality assurance while national institutions deliver the actual training.

Wrap-up

The webinar made a clear and strong case for strengthened professionalism and accreditation in the Pacific in terms of training and qualifications on resilience. The initiative to strengthen the region's skill set via training opportunities is an excellent example of Pacific innovation. The challenge of sustainability related to funding is a significant one as is the need to take this opportunity beyond the main population centres to remote areas where a lot of talent and capacity resides. The perspectives of those delivering training and experiencing the challenges at the national level were compelling. Their ambition and commitment to build capacity is rightly saluted. The Federation's work is a great support to expanding the pool of current and next generation technical specialists to strengthen the resilience of their communities and countries.

Meet the Panelist

Webinar 4

Serving a public good – The Pacific Regional
Federation for Resilience Professionals

MODERATORS



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Head of the Pacific Sub-regional office of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

PANELISTS



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