

Demonstrating change on locally led humanitarian action in the Pacific: *Ki Namuka vata ga nikua*

Tracking progress across four years and four countries

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Civil Society
Forum of Tonga



PIANGO

Pacific Islands Association of
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Desiles Du Pacifique

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About the title: *Ki Namuka vata ga nikua* is a Fijian idiom that literally translates to “We will all reach Namuka today”. It means that it makes no difference if one travels one way or another, or faster than someone else. The result is the same. We will all get there at the same time. In the journey of localisation, different actors have their own philosophies, approaches and speeds in how they are making progress. But everyone must play their part in this journey.

About the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations

The Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO) is the major regional non-governmental organisation (NGO), with membership in the 23 countries and territories of the Pacific Islands. For over 25 years PIANGO has served the Pacific through strengthening and building the capacity of the civil society sector, giving it a voice for policy formulation and development, and strengthening National Liaison Units (NLUs) or umbrella organisations in member countries.

About Humanitarian Advisory Group

Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) 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.

Partnership for research impact

PIANGO and HAG are partnering on this research on localisation in the Pacific, and working together to increase the reach and influence across the region. HAG and PIANGO previously produced a paper outlining Pacific priorities for measuring change, and four localisation baselines – in Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji and the Solomon Islands.

PIANGO has a strong civil society network of organisations involved in humanitarian preparedness and response in the Pacific, and has been involved in promoting localisation initiatives and perspectives in national, regional and global forums. PIANGO was actively involved in the Pacific lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit.

HAG undertook a three-year research initiative called Humanitarian Horizons in 2018-21. The first project in the Humanitarian Horizons research program was Intention to Impact: The Localisation of Humanitarian Action. This project explored the action and impact of localised approaches to humanitarian action, with a focus on four case study countries in the Pacific. The project aimed to generate tools and approaches to measure localisation that can be adopted and used to inform humanitarian programming.

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FOREWORD

The Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisation (PIANGO) with its four National Liaison Units (NLUs) – Development Services Exchange (DSE), Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS), Vanuatu Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (VANGO) and Civil Society Forum of Tonga (CSFT) – undertook a series of research into understanding the roles of the NLUs in their capacity as humanitarian respondents. The study not only recognises the efforts of the NLUs, but also focuses on the resilience of communities as first responders. The research provided an accompaniment process between PIANGO and its NLUs, helping to enhance their research capacity as well as ensuring that the data is grounded on the work that they do in their communities.

This research is a check into the progress of a series of studies in a Pacific approach to measuring localisation that initially began with the baseline research in four countries since 2018.

PIANGO with its NLUs are delighted that *Demonstrating change on locally led humanitarian action in the Pacific: Ki Namuka vata ga nikau* provides an overview of changes in civil society organisation humanitarian sector responses. It identifies meaningful progress, and we are adamant that this will provide guidance about ‘where to from here - what’s next?’

COVID-19 has had many drawbacks but has also forced a positive shift in the humanitarian response system with respect to partnerships, local leadership and coordination – a positive move towards building more resilient communities and reinforcing local leadership and localisation.

Vinaka Saka Vakalevu, Malo aupito, Tenk yu Tumas, Tenk yu to the Humanitarian Advisory Group for allowing PIANGO and its NLUs to be part of this exciting journey.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ki Namuka vata ga nikua is a Fijian idiom that literally translates to “We will all reach Namuka today”. It means that it makes no difference if one travels one way or another, or faster than someone else. The result is the same. We will all get there at the same time. In the journey of localisation, different actors have their own philosophies, approaches and speeds of making progress. But everyone must play their part in this journey.

This report is the culmination of four years of research on localisation in the Pacific. At a time when the humanitarian sector is trying to understand and reorient approaches to supporting locally led response, this research shows how far we’ve come – and how far we’ve yet to travel. It is part of a broader effort across the sector to explore how our ways of working can become more locally led, appropriate and fit for purpose, as reflected in the new iteration of the Grand Bargain 2.0.

Four years ago, Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO) established a research partnership seeking to define a Pacific approach to measuring localisation. We set out to measure progress at the sector or country level, and conducted localisation baselines in four countries across the Pacific.¹ This report presents the findings of a review of progress on locally led response since those baseline processes. It seeks to understand what has and hasn’t changed in the localisation journey, and why. It accounts for the impact of COVID-19 within the context of pre-existing and parallel dynamics.

We also sought to do research in a locally led way – in partnership. HAG and PIANGO co-designed and

implemented the research together with PIANGO’s National Liaison Units (NLU), maximising our respective strengths and capacities. We also explored how this approach influenced the use and uptake of the research along the journey.²

The process has seen many twists and turns that have elicited rich data, intense debate and lots of questions. It has seen Pacific actors advocating strongly for transformed partnerships and leadership approaches to improve locally led action, and international actors examining their approaches and seeking to further change. This report takes us on a voyage, from the conceptualisation of localisation as a journey in the first consultations we undertook with Pacific stakeholders, to understanding the importance of defining success and the points along the journey that would show us that change was happening. This report is the story of the journey. We start by looking back at where we’ve come from; move on to the current state of locally led action across Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga and Solomon Islands; and finish with the implications for the future.

1 Localisation baselines in [Vanuatu](#), [Fiji](#), [Tonga](#) and [Solomon Islands](#) and the Measuring Localisation Framework are available at <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/measuring-localisation-framework-and-tools/>

2 See PIANGO and HAG, *Walking together in Partnership: Exploring the impact of localisation of humanitarian action research in the Pacific*, 2020. Available from <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/walking-together-in-partnership-exploring-the-impact-of-localisation-of-humanitarian-action-research-in-the-pacific/>

KEY FINDINGS

Right now, we are in multiple places at once. We have not arrived at the destination on our localisation journey, but are still progressing towards it. Change is not occurring uniformly across the key localisation domains. Across domains, as well as within them, some areas are progressing faster, some slower and some not at all.

Change is more evident in “operational” aspects within the domains we measured than “strategic” aspects. We can think about activities

on a spectrum from high-level, strategic areas to action-focused, operational levels. Operational change relates to processes or procedures in implementation, such as actors discussing localisation principles and including them in partnership agreements. There is less evidence of change in strategic aspects that require a more fundamental shift and are intended to create change at a goal or outcome level. For example, although there have been positive actions to embed better actions and approaches to partnership, the research found little evidence of transition of power within partnerships to local actors. Although in reality these levels are linked, we hope that highlighting the distinction between them will help to identify and consolidate positive change while maintaining pressure for more effort where it is most needed.

Perceptions of change are not consistent across international and national/local organisations.

As with the baselines, international actors give more positive evaluations of progress than local

and national organisations in several areas. This raises questions about why a perception gap persists. Is there a lack of dialogue about experiences and challenges? Are changes and priorities being evaluated differently by different actors? Whose expectations and views are being heard?

Overview of findings

Provided below is an overview of findings for each localisation domain. During this progress review, we assessed the level of evidence available against the seven domains of localisation and provided a rating for each against the categories of None, Limited, Some and Strong Evidence. Across the domains, overall, there have been changes in practice at an operational and response level while more strategic shifts are needed.

We have also indicated how ratings assigned during this progress review compare against the ratings from the baselines. In partnership, coordination and complementarity, policy influence and advocacy, and participation domains there has been a noticeable change in practice, which has seen them receive a higher rating than the baselines. In three domains – leadership, funding and capacity – the progress review ratings were similar to the baseline ratings. While there were changes in practice within these three domains, the evidence was not sufficient for them to receive a higher rating.

About the ratings and review process

Assigning ratings to localisation domains followed a similar methodology during the baselines and this progress review, and was done based on the evidence available at the time of each research. It is important to note that the progress review data represents a subset of the data collected in the baseline process and the composition of samples is not identical from the baselines to this review (see methodology and limitations for further information).

Where we have seen a greater shift in practice



Partnerships

Overall, there have been improvements in the quality of partnerships. National and local organisations have benefited from different types of partnership models that are reflecting their priorities better than before, and localisation principles are more often incorporated in partnership design. A wider range of models are being explored, however, the extent of transition of power has been relatively limited.

Key finding: There is **SOME EVIDENCE** of equitable and ethical partnerships, **demonstrating a shift from LIMITED TO SOME EVIDENCE** measured during the baselines.



Coordination and complementarity

With a greatly reduced international presence, local and national actors have been participating more fully in coordination forums. Remote technologies – while sometimes bringing their own challenges – have supported more recognition of local coordination and response networks, with community focus points able to communicate directly through online forums.

Key finding: There is **SOME EVIDENCE** of equitable and ethical partnerships, **demonstrating a shift from LIMITED EVIDENCE** measured during the baselines.



Policy influence and advocacy

There has been progress in some of the Pacific Island countries, with local organisations (especially coordination networks) having more opportunity to influence policy formulation and decision-making. At the regional level, the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific has continued to catalyse and support the policy influence of civil society organisations – especially local actors.

Key finding: There is **SOME EVIDENCE** that policies better reflect the priorities of national and local civil society actors, **demonstrating a shift from LIMITED TO SOME EVIDENCE** measured during the baselines.



Participation

Community involvement in responses has increased, but the participation of affected people in decision-making about programs – especially programs of international agencies – remains limited. In addition, the mechanisms used to gather feedback are not always holistic or culturally appropriate.

Key finding: There is **LIMITED TO SOME EVIDENCE** of changed practice in relation to community participation, **demonstrating a shift from LIMITED EVIDENCE** measured during the baselines.

Where we have seen a limited shift in practice

Across leadership, funding and capacity domains there has been some positive change and examples of good practice. Whilst these are important to recognise, the scale and reach of the changes has not shifted the overarching rating from the baseline; hence, in these domains, progress has not been extensive or consistent.



Leadership

There continues to be some to strong evidence of local leadership, a positive trend that is continuing on from the evidence found in the baselines. COVID-related travel limitations for international staff and the unique circumstances presented by the multidimensional pandemic response increased opportunities for operational leadership from local and national actors and the prominence of local staff within international organisations. However, international agencies are still significantly more prominent than national and local agencies in strategic spaces and donor conversations.

Key finding: There is **SOME TO STRONG EVIDENCE** that national actors define and lead on humanitarian action, but with **insufficient evidence to support a measurable shift from the baseline rating**.



Funding

Local and national actors continue to report difficulty in accessing sufficient funds, and there has been little effort to reform funding structures to improve conditions for them (despite some reporting more access to core funds). Strikingly, international actors often significantly underestimate the challenges that their local and national counterparts face, suggesting that dialogue on these issues is also lacking.



Key finding: There is **LIMITED EVIDENCE** of action to localise funding, but with **insufficient evidence to show a measurable shift from the baseline rating.**



Capacity

Despite more joint work to define capacity needs, local and national actors are still struggling to motivate international actors to recognise and act on their priorities when delivering support. This has been exacerbated by the increased demands placed on local and national actors in the pandemic context as institutional support has not always followed, and some organisations have even experienced the poaching of their staff to fill roles required after the departure of international staff. Similarly, capacity remains a one-way street – there has been little action on supporting local actors to assess the capacity of the international partners or to move towards capacity-sharing approaches.



Key finding: There is **LIMITED TO SOME EVIDENCE** of international actors providing appropriate and targeted capacity-strengthening support to local and national organisations, but with **insufficient evidence to support a measurable shift from the baseline rating.**

What will come next?

This review shows that there are pockets of traction, good practices – largely at an operational level – and in general a shift in the consciousness and narrative around localising humanitarian aid in the Pacific. As this debate has become more nuanced, there is greater understanding of different approaches, challenges and opportunities. These areas of traction need to be celebrated and supported. This will create a visible endorsement of the positive changes made by both national and international actors and support a required shift from operational to strategic change.

Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has created an environment for more radical shifts, this will only be a turning point for sustained change if there is intentional energy and action to make it one. As many research participants pointed out, we don't know how the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will evolve after the emergency phase ends.

The slow progress in more strategic areas of change is not surprising, because these require more fundamental shifts that will result from coordinated and sustained efforts across the sector, rather than individuals taking operational steps to localise humanitarian action. Developing a shared vision of locally led humanitarian action at the country level is an important next step in achieving collective action – understanding together what change is required (at operational and strategic level), agreeing on objectives, and continuing to monitor progress. This shared vision and associated planning will also need to include a plan for holding actors accountable for agreed changes to practice.

INTRODUCTION

This report explores whether and in what ways locally led response has shifted across four countries in the Pacific since the baselines conducted by Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO) during 2018 and 2019. It shows that there have been important changes in several areas, underpinned by a shift in consciousness about the critical significance of local leadership across the sector. The report provides insights about what practices and changes are having impact, and where there needs to be greater investment. It draws on research led by the national umbrella bodies in the four countries – Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu – and on other emerging research across the sector.

About this report

This report shows an overview of progress across multiple settings, examined as a group. Where the baselines sought to provide a country-level picture of progress, this analysis provides a regional snapshot of trends across Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu and

the Solomon Islands, recognising that there are unique and distinct issues within each context.

This report has three sections:

1. Where we have come from?
2. Where we are now?
3. Where we are going?

The first section provides an overview of the approach taken to developing the measurement process, the baseline reports, and the methodology for the research. It situates this progress review as the final step in this four-year process, shows the research journey, and how the stages fit together.

The second section articulates the findings of the localisation check-in – where change has occurred, where it has not, and why. It first presents findings in the seven domains of the measurement framework and then provides briefs for each of the four case study countries.

The third section projects into the future – it highlights where and what types of efforts are required by international and national actors to build on momentum to reinforce positive shifts and scale up good practices.

Photo: Fabio Hanashiro on Unsplash



WHERE HAVE WE COME FROM?

MEASURING LOCALISATION - IT'S POSSIBLE

This four-year research initiative has demonstrated that it is possible to measure progress on localisation. It developed a framework and measurement tools, then tested them in four case study countries, firstly through a baselining process and then through checking in two years later. This research has shown that the process is as important as the outcome; bringing together key actors to discuss what the end goal should look like and to reflect on progress and challenges is essential to making change. It has led to increased discussion, debate and advocacy through a research process that provided concrete evidence for local and international actors to use. This approach and related research outputs have been used by Pacific and international actors for a range of purposes, such as advocacy to national governments and representation to international stakeholders.³ The process and its products have also influenced approaches to measuring and progressing localisation beyond the Pacific.⁴

About the process

In 2018, PIANGO led a consultation process with key national and international humanitarian actors in three countries to explore Pacific priorities for measuring change. Members of PIANGO's network of umbrella bodies, known as National Liaison Units (NLUs), were instrumental in this. The consultations helped to identify seven priorities for a holistic approach to tracking

localisation, captured in the paper *Tracking Progress on Localisation: A Pacific Perspective*. A definition for localisation was agreed on as part of this consultation process, adapted from an earlier report produced by national researchers and the Australian Red Cross (ARC).⁵

“Localisation is a process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the independence of leadership and decision-making by national actors in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations.”⁶

About the framework and baselining approach

Building on this process and incorporating Pacific priorities and contextual factors, PIANGO and HAG developed a Measuring Localisation Framework.⁷ This framework articulates how stakeholders can measure progress on localisation at a country level and provided the methodology for PIANGO, the NLUs and HAG to conduct four localisation baselines in Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji and the Solomon Islands. The baselines constitute an evidence base for national actors to advocate for accountability and change and for international actors to track implementation of localisation commitments. PIANGO and its members have disseminated the work across the region, and shared it in national, regional and global forums.

3 Captured in HAG and PIANGO, *Tracking progress on localisation: A Pacific perspective*, 2018, <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/tracking-progress-on-localisation-a-pacific-perspective/>

4 As outlined in HAG, *Reach and Reality: Tracking the impact of our research*, 2020 <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/reach-and-reality/> and HAG, *Contributing to change: Getting it right. Reflections on the Humanitarian Horizons research program* (forthcoming)

5 HAG and PIANGO, *Tracking progress on localisation: A Pacific perspective*, 2018

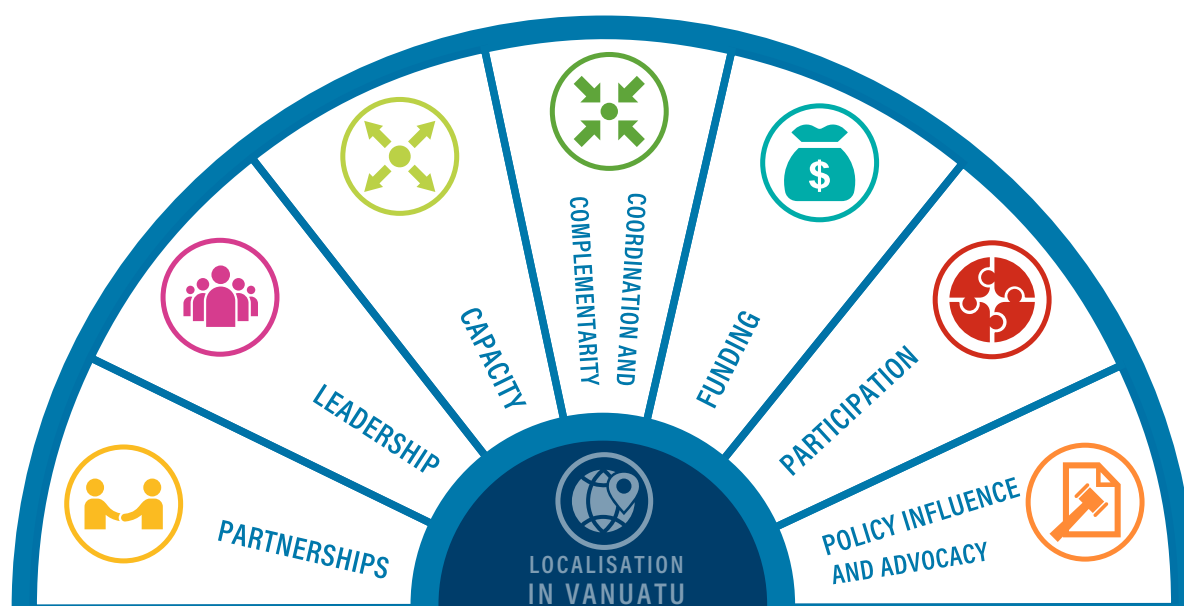
6 Australian Red Cross. *Going Local: Achieving a more appropriate and fit-for-purpose humanitarian ecosystem in the Pacific*, 2017

7 HAG and PIANGO, *Measuring Localisation Framework*, 2020 <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/measuring-localisation-framework-and-tools/>

About the framework

The [Measuring Localisation Framework](#) has seven areas of measurement: partnerships, leadership, capacity, coordination and complementarity, funding, participation, and policy influence and advocacy (figure 1). Each area has a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators, with associated means of verification. Indicators and means of verification were drawn from the consultation process and previous work on localisation at regional and global levels, including HAG's Measuring Localisation paper, the START Network and ALNAP.⁸ In the baselines, we assessed the level of evidence of action against indicators in each of the seven areas of measurement. The four levels of evidence are: no evidence; limited evidence; some evidence; and strong evidence.

Figure 1: Localisation framework with the seven areas of measurement



Working in partnership

Working in partnership is a journey. The path we take and how we walk together on it are as important as the destination. PIANGO and HAG intentionally set out to establish a partnership that sought to test and implement localisation principles. Our partnership was founded on the idea that it was possible both to track progress on localisation and to influence change using the research evidence, with Pacific researchers and partners leading the way.

PIANGO and HAG began discussions about developing a partnership together in 2017. Initially,

the processes to develop the partnership centred around creating a shared vision for the partnership and exploring our complementary strengths, even before we began to discuss research design and methodology. We also set out to pilot different ways of working together on research that supported broader localisation objectives and principles, and in particular for HAG as the international partner to hold ourselves accountable for “walking the talk”. Our partnership and the impact of our research are explored in [Walking together in partnership: Exploring the impact of localisation of humanitarian action research in the Pacific](#).⁹








8 Humanitarian Advisory Group, Measuring Localisation: Framework and Tools, 2019. <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/measuring-localisation-framework-and-tools/>


9 https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/HAG-PIANGO-Walking-Together_Final.pdf


WHAT DID THE LOCALISATION BASELINES SHOW IN 2018-19?

The baselines showed a snapshot of progress at a point in time when humanitarian actors were still in the process of trying to work out what localisation meant for their policies, programs and approaches. The baselines in the four case study countries over 2018-19 showed a mixed picture of actions to strengthen and support a locally-led response approach (table 1). They also showed that there were discrepancies in the views of international and local actors on many localisation-related issues.


Table 1: Summary of localisation progress in each country captured through the baselines

	Fiji	Solomon Islands	Tonga	Vanuatu	Aggregate rating
 Partnerships	✓✓ Limited to some	✓ Limited	✓✓✓ Some to strong	✓✓ Limited to some	✓✓ Limited to some
 Coordination and complementarity	✓✓ Some	✓✓ Limited to some	✓✓ Some	✓ Limited to none	✓✓ Limited to some
 Policy influence and advocacy	✓✓ Some	✓✓ Limited to some	✓✓ Limited to some	✓✓ Limited to some	✓✓ Limited to some
 Participation	✓✓ Limited to some	✓ Limited	✓ Limited	✓ Limited	✓ Limited
 Leadership	✓✓ Some	✓✓ Some	✓✓✓ Strong	✓✓✓ Some to strong	✓✓✓ Some to strong
 Funding	✓ Limited	✓ Limited	✓✓ Limited to some	✓ Limited to none	✓ Limited
 Capacity	✓✓ Limited to some	✓✓ Some	✓✓ Limited to some	✓✓ Limited to some	✓✓ Limited to some

 **Partnerships:** There was limited to some evidence of equitable and ethical partnerships between local, national and international actors. Evidence from across the four countries showed efforts to strengthen partnership approaches, yet more was needed to ensure partnerships were built on meaningful and equitable values, because international actors appeared to dominate most partnerships.

 **Coordination and Complementarity:** There was limited to some evidence of commonly agreed approaches to “as local as possible and as international as necessary”. There was a consistent perception among all actors that national representation and engagement in coordination forums and meetings should be supported, yet action on this was limited. In Fiji and Vanuatu,

national actors believed that clusters were dominated and led by international actors, thus restricting the opportunities for national actors to influence and participate in clusters. In Tonga, however, national actors reported their voices were being heard in coordination forums more than those of international actors, with 60% of national actors and only 29% of international actors reporting their ideas were *mostly* heard.

 **Policy Influence and Advocacy:** There was limited to some evidence that policies better reflected the priorities of national and local civil society organisations (CSOs) across the four countries. While non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and CSOs reported positive examples of providing input, influencing and advocating for humanitarian policies and standards, evidence pointed to

an imbalance of power and representation between local and national non-state actors. Local actors in Vanuatu cited poor visibility of NGOs in national debates, while in Tonga, evidence indicated the need to better contextualise international standards and frameworks to better align to local and national priorities.¹⁰



Participation: There was limited evidence of changes to practice in community participation. While there was a positive increase in perception and awareness of the importance of community participation, there was little evidence indicating such practices had been implemented. In Fiji, there was a strong perception among all actors of the need to better include communities in decision-making, planning and implementation. Reports from the other countries indicated that community perceptions were sometimes integrated into programming and design stages, yet there was little to no evidence suggesting progress beyond this had occurred.



Leadership: There was some to strong evidence of action to support the strengthening of national actors leading on humanitarian action. Evidence varied across the four countries, being stronger in Vanuatu and Tonga, but weaker for the Solomon Islands and Fiji. In Tonga, local and national actors frequently occupied leadership roles and oversaw the decision-making, planning, and implementation of programs, while in Vanuatu, evidence indicated strong support

from international actors in enabling national actors to engage directly with donors.



Funding: There was limited evidence of strengthened financial independence and increased funding for local and national organisations. Local actors in the Solomon Islands and Fiji reported some evidence regarding longer-term, transparent and equitable funding, with increased amounts of overhead costs covered by international actors, while in Tonga local and national non-state actors had direct access to response funding from the National Emergency Fund. In Vanuatu, however, evidence indicated that local and national non-state actors faced significant barriers to accessing direct funding, including legal and risk management constraints, challenges of effective partnerships, and inherent inflexibility of some international actors' financial and accounting systems.



Capacity: There was limited to some evidence of international actors providing appropriate and targeted capacity strengthening. While evidence from across the four countries displayed a positive and consistent perception of the importance of capacity strengthening for local and national actors, there was no shared vision across all actors towards achieving this in accordance with local actor priorities and their requests. Local actors consistently stressed the lack of integration of traditional knowledge and capacities into responses.¹¹

10 CSFT, PIANGO & Humanitarian Advisory Group, Tonga baseline report, 2019, https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Tonga-baseline-report_Final_110719_electronic.pdf

PIANGO & Humanitarian Advisory Group, Localisation in Fiji: demonstrating change, 2019, <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Localisation-in-Fiji-Demonstrating-Change-Final-Report.pdf>

VANGO, PIANGO & Humanitarian Advisory Group, Vanuatu baseline report, 2019, https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Vanuatu-Baseline-Report_February-2019_FINAL.pdf

PIANGO & Humanitarian Advisory Group, Localisation in the Solomon Islands: demonstrating change, 2019, https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Localisation-in-Solomon-Islands_Base-line-reportv9Electronic.pdf

11 VANGO, PIANGO & Humanitarian Advisory Group, Vanuatu baseline report, 2019, p. 17, https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Vanuatu-Baseline-Report_February-2019_FINAL.pdf

METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROGRESS REVIEW IN 2021

This review process used an adapted version of the baseline research approach, based on the Measuring Localisation Framework. PIANGO, Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS), Civil Society Forum of Tonga (CSFT), Vanuatu Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (VANGO) and Development Services Exchange (DSE) led the research and data collection processes in each of the four countries, using COVID-safe practices. HAG supported additional data collection at the international and regional levels.

The review process was limited by time, resources and access in the COVID-19 context (see the limitations section below). As a result, the review used a subset of indicators from the original tools used for the baseline studies. The team ensured that the indicator subset covered all the domains of the localisation framework and provided enough data points to draw meaningful conclusions about what changed in each domain over the past two years.

A survey and key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted in the four countries, with data amalgamated across the four countries (figure 2), to the “regional” level. The survey measured stakeholders’ perceptions of change, while the interviews focused on understanding where progress has accelerated or stalled within the domains of change. Interviews and surveys were conducted with both national and international actors, including donors, international NGOs (INGOs), CSOs, United Nations (UN) agencies, governments, the private sector, and Red Cross.

An additional tool was used for the current review in recognition of the importance of capturing change at the regional level. Sixteen additional interviews were conducted with regional stakeholders to capture and understand change across the

country contexts. The report also includes analysis of regional processes, policies and initiatives and how they have supported progress (see timeline infographic on p. 16).

In order to compare the baseline and progress review ratings, the research team averaged the results from the country baselines to produce a regional baseline rating; this allowed regional baseline data to be compared to regional review data. However, it is important to note that the review data represents a subset of the data collected in the baseline process and the composition of samples is not identical from baseline to review or across countries. For the purposes of this review, the ratings provided against domains are an indication of where change is evident based on the data available and verified in interviews with key stakeholders.

The survey also included questions about changes since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. These questions allow comparisons between the experiences of international actors and local and national actors, instead of with the baseline data (which was gathered before the onset of the pandemic). They serve as proxy indicators of localisation progress, for example, by considering whether different types of actors had the same experience of funding increasing, decreasing, or staying the same.

Where possible, country-specific differences have been highlighted. Country-specific summaries appear in the section ‘Where are we going?’.

Figure 2 below shows the methods used and the stakeholders involved in this progress review. For the full set of tools, see the Localisation Measurement Framework.

Figure 2: Methodology



Limitations

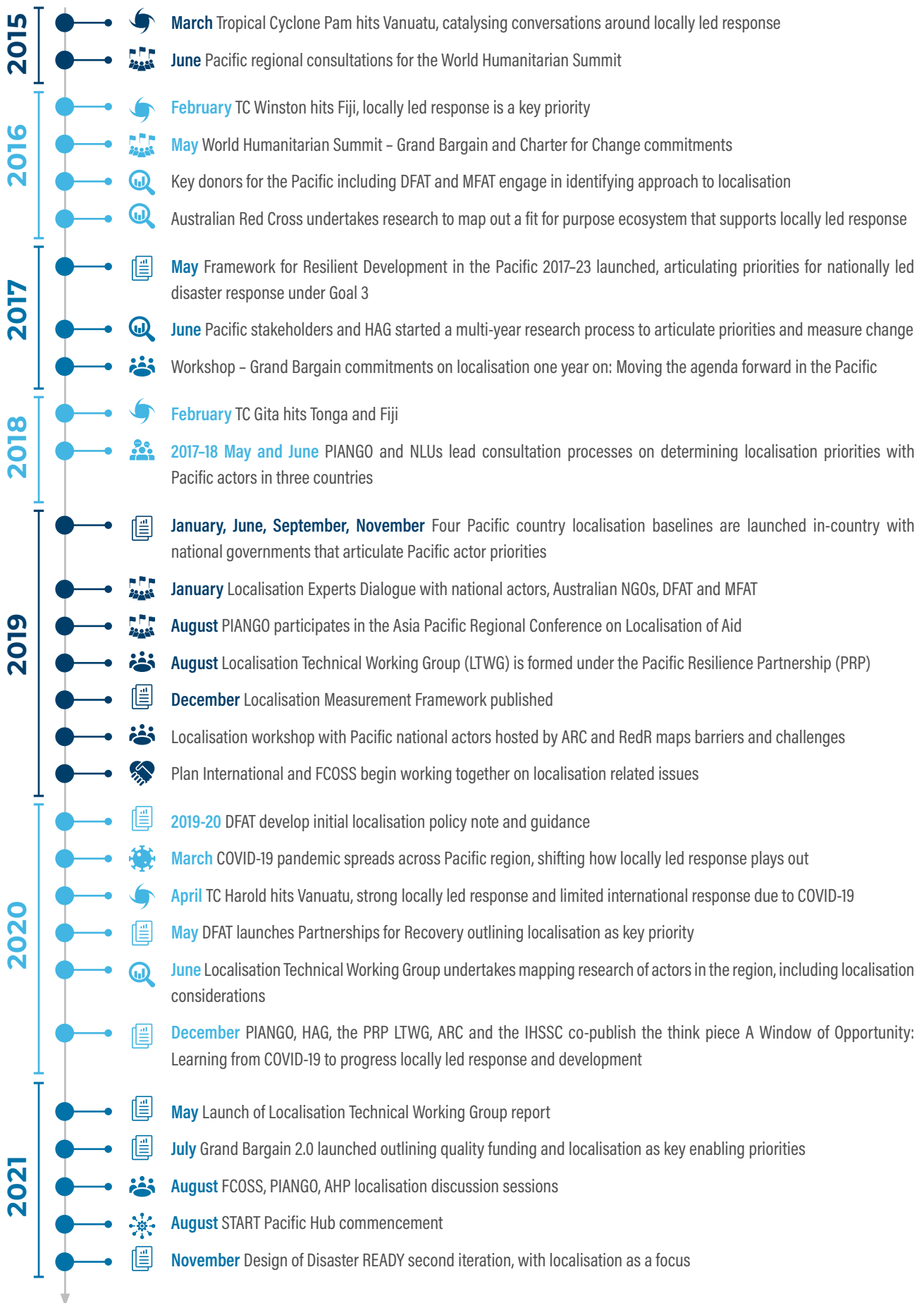
Scope: The report is intended to provide a snapshot rather than a full reassessment of localisation progress in each country, so the data collection for this review was less extensive than for the sum of the four separate baselines. Note that this report relies on a subset of the data gathered in the baseline process; this data also represents a snapshot in time. Comparisons should be treated cautiously given these limitations.

Context: The COVID-19 context limited data collection in some ways, particularly by reducing the opportunity for face-to-face interviews. The demands of COVID-19 response may also have limited the availability of some potential participants.

Sampling: The samples varied between the baseline and current review both in terms of size and composition. The baseline

sample across four country contexts totalled 99 participants in survey and KIIs (country composition: 34% Fiji; 17% Solomon Islands; 28% Vanuatu; and 18% Tonga) (actor composition: 63% local and national actor and 37% international actors). This compares to the current review sample that totalled 107 participants in the survey and KIIs (country composition: 23% Fiji; 20% Solomon Islands; 15% Vanuatu; 26% Tonga; and regional 16%) (actor composition: 54% local and national actor and 46% international actors). Whilst the samples are different, the team tried to get their size and composition as close as possible to be able to make meaningful comparisons between baseline data scores and the scores in this review; these comparisons need to be considered cautiously, with an understanding that different samples may have influenced the results.

Snapshot of selected activities on localisation in the Pacific



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

SETTING THE SCENE

Several processes in the Pacific region over recent years have influenced locally led humanitarian action. These are outlined below.

1. Evolution of response structures and processes at the national level, and regional strategies and narratives around issues related to humanitarian response:

There have been several changes in both policies and response mechanisms seeking to strengthen locally led response. The Pacific Resilience Partnership's Framework for Resilient Development, the Blue Pacific narrative under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and the Localisation Technical Working Group have been important enablers at a regional level.¹² At the national level, in the case study countries there have been significant process changes; for example, in Vanuatu VANGO has been recognised as a key stakeholder in formulating humanitarian and response policies.¹³ Also in Vanuatu, during the response to Tropical Cyclone (TC) Harold in 2020, the government implemented a regulation that any contribution by donors to international response had to be matched with a similar-sized contribution to government.¹⁴

2. Advocacy and leadership by non-government local actors:

Local non-

government actors have taken a strong advocacy and leadership approach in supporting locally led response across the region and globally. While not entirely new, this has accelerated in particular for civil society in the context of the broader global localisation agenda. Civil society actors have engaged in key forums and processes to strengthen locally led response, and these have resulted in greater awareness and conversations at the national and regional levels.¹⁵

3. Increased focus on localisation in international actors' strategies, policies and approaches:

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT), New Zealand Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFAT), other key regional donors such as the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and some UN agencies have developed policies and strategies at the regional and global levels that have more clearly articulated supporting locally led response as a key priority.¹⁶ There have also been increased investment in and focus on aid more generally across the Pacific by large donor countries as a result of regional security issues.

4. Impacts of COVID on locally led response and civil society:

COVID has impacted the

12 See <https://www.forumsec.org/2019/02/12/keynote-address-by-dame-meg-taylor-secretary-general-the-china-alternative-changing-regional-order-in-the-pacific-islands/> and <https://gem.spc.int/projects/frdp> and <http://www.resilientpacific.org/localization/> and <https://prp.visualmetrics.io/en/media/167>

13 Vanuatu National NGO Policy

14 See HAG and VANGO, No Turning Back: Local Leadership in Vanuatu's Response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, 2020. Available from https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/TC-Harold-Practice-Paper_final-electronic.pdf

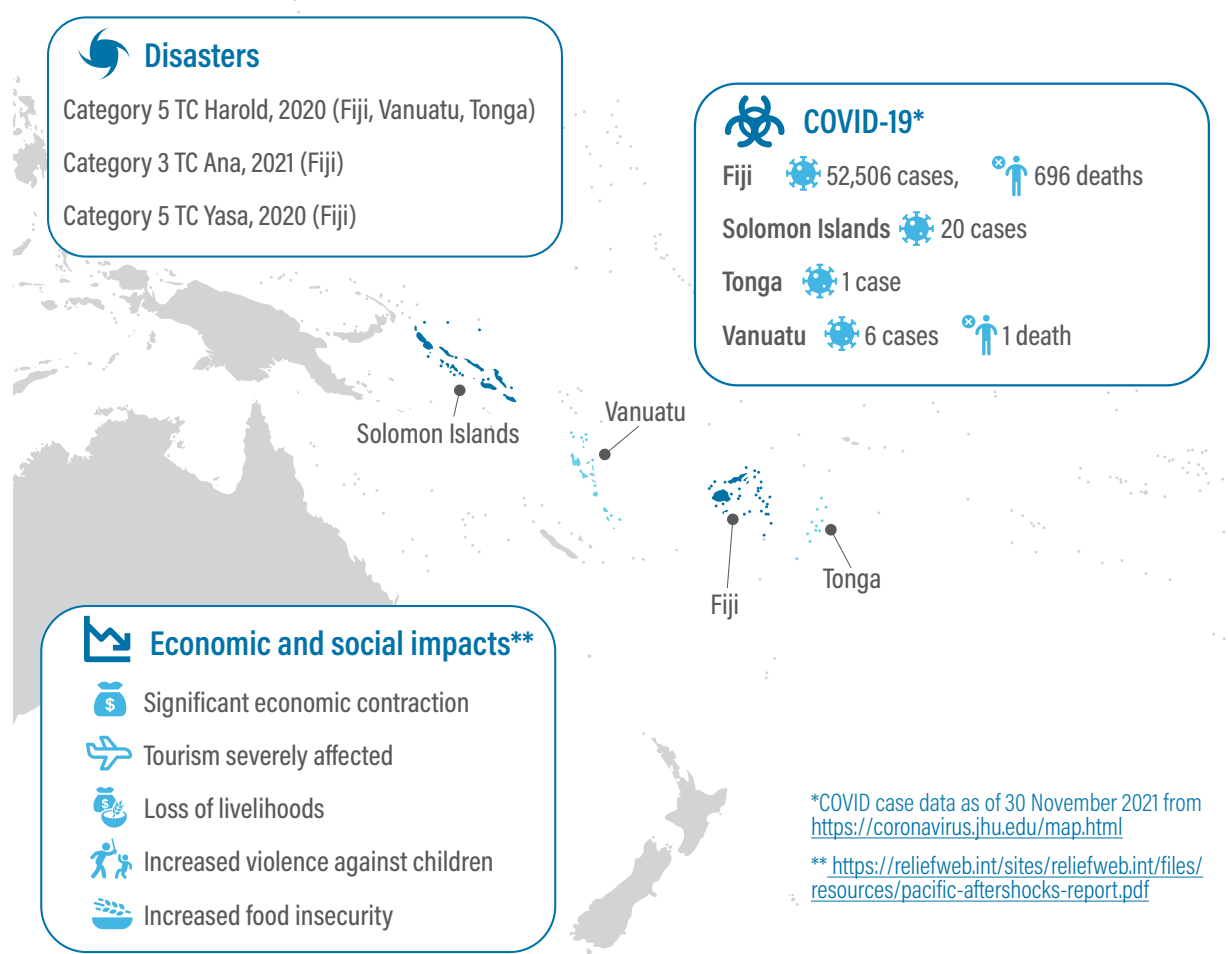
15 These include in the initiatives outlined in the infographic on p. 16.

16 DFAT's Partnerships for Recovery, 2019; The United Kingdom's FCDO guidance on provision of indirect costs to downstream partners for the Rapid Response Facility has influenced intermediary organisations to change their practices and transfer these costs to partners across their humanitarian funding; For example: UNICEF, A review of UNICEF's approach to localization in humanitarian action, Working Paper, Humanitarian Policy Section Office of Emergency Programmes, 2019.

region in different ways, with some countries such as Fiji experiencing high infection rates and lockdowns, and others, whilst not having high infection rates, experiencing economic and social impacts. This has affected locally led response in several ways, including reduction of international staff and an increase in remote working, documented elsewhere.¹⁷ Responses to rapid-onset disasters, such as TC Harold, which occurred in the midst of the pandemic in 2020, have operated quite differently due to international travel restrictions and safety protocols constraining responses.¹⁸ A key challenge for civil society

has been working with and through evolving government-led health response structures, which have differed from sudden-onset disaster responses led by national disaster management offices (NDMOs). While CSOs have largely been disengaged from government-led (primarily Ministry of Health) COVID-19 response coordination, COVID-19 response work has brought the CSOs closer together through more effective coordination and complementary work that sought to fill the gaps in government responses (including through community-led local groups formed to respond to the COVID-19 crisis).

Figure 3: Snapshot of key disasters 2019-2021 in Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga and the Solomon Islands



17 HAG, PIANGO, IHSSC, ARC, PRP LTWG, [A Window of Opportunity: Learning from COVID-19 to Progress Locally Led Response and Development](#), 2020

18 HAG and VANGO, [No Turning Back: Local Leadership in Vanuatu's Response to Tropical Cyclone Harold](#), 2020

OVERALL FINDINGS

“Everyone is on board with localisation. It’s more the implementation and the funding part that is the hardest bit to crack.” (International actor)

Progress: operational or strategic change within localisation domains?

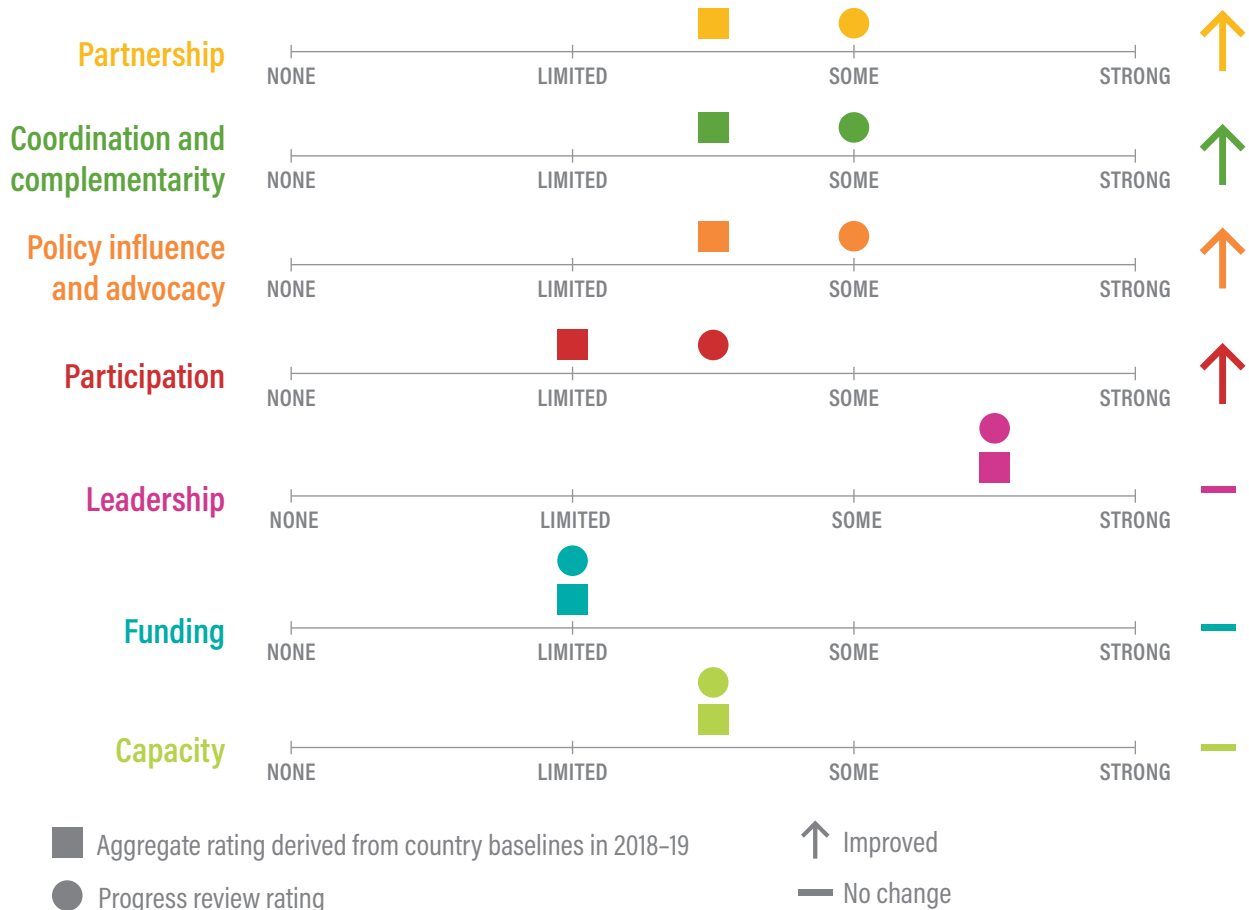
This progress review shows a mixed picture of change, with important shifts in certain domains and less evidence of change in others. In domains such as partnership, coordination, participation and policy influence, there has been noticeable progress in operational and response-level activities, but more strategic shifts are still required. In three domains – leadership, funding

and capacity – there has been less progress at both operational and strategic levels.

It appears that operational areas have experienced stronger progress from baseline levels. There is less evidence of change in strategic areas that require a more fundamental shift and are intended to create change at a goal or outcome level. For example, although there has been progress in embedding better actions and approaches to partnership, the research found little evidence of transition of power within partnerships to local actors.

There also continues to be discrepancies in the perceptions of international and local actors on many issues, in general pointing towards a more favourable view of progress on localisation from international actors as compared to local actors. Figure 4 below provides an overview of the rating in each of the domains for the baselines conducted in 2018–19 and the rating from this progress review.

Figure 4: Comparisons of aggregate rating derived from baselines and ratings from progress review



Impacts of COVID on locally led response

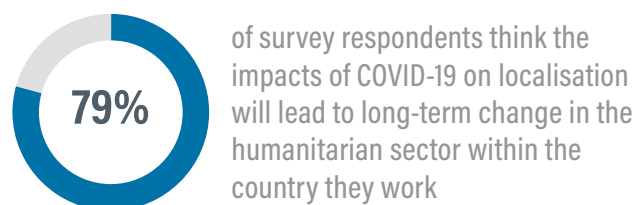
Progress on locally led response is heavily shaped by the impacts of COVID-19 across the region. However, there are disparate views on the extent to which COVID-19 has been a catalyst for change in individual country contexts. There is also an interesting difference between international and national actor perceptions, with international actors thinking that the COVID context has strengthened locally led response to a greater degree than local actors (Figure 5). There are a range of potential reasons for this, which are explored in relation to multiple areas below.

Figure 5: How do you think COVID-19 has impacted locally led response in the country you work?



“Expatriate specialists no longer come into the country so INGOs must now liaise with local actors to carry out work; COVID-19 has changed the international actors’ full-on leading activities to just funding local actors to do work. The approach has changed, the international actors help but [it] is led by the government.” (NDMO representative)

Figure 6: Will the impact of COVID-19 localisation lead to long-term change?



Most participants (both national and international actors) surveyed felt that the impacts of COVID will lead to long-term change in the humanitarian sector (Figure 6), but interviewees expressed uncertainty about how significant these changes will be. Some expressed a perception that things will return to normal without changes being embedded structurally, and that the desire for ways of working to return to “normal” will be a far stronger motivator than embedding structural changes in a system that is not motivated to shift.

Photo: Adli Wahid on Unsplash





PARTNERSHIPS

Fiji: *Veitokani* is the Fijian term for partnership. The term is derived from the word *tokani* which means “to partner”; the prefix *vei* refers to partnership between people or organisations. Another term linked to *veitokani* is *duavata*, which literally translates as oneness or unity. Within the humanitarian context, the partnership (*veitokani*) should bring about *duavata*, which refers to genuine and mutual partnership.

Solomon Islands: *Tinavete vari mekae* (Marovo language – Western Province)

Tonga: Hoa Ngaue: Ko e ngaue fakataha ‘i he femahino’aki ‘a e taumu’a ngaue mo e faitu’utu’uni ‘a e ongo fa’ahi ‘o ‘ikai fakatefito he mafai.

Vanuatu: *Bulgaituva – Gida dulvai tam bulgaituva*: Everyone in the community comes together to put forward a plan or set up a plan to help someone or the community as a whole (from the island of Pentecost)



Impact indicator: There are equitable and complementary partnerships between local, national and international actors.



Key finding: There is **SOME EVIDENCE** of equitable and ethical partnerships, demonstrating a shift from **LIMITED TO SOME EVIDENCE** measured during the baselines.

Improving partnerships has been a primary focus of strengthening locally led response over recent years. A range of positive steps have been taken to strengthen partnership approaches, with an increase in the perceived quality of partnerships since the original baseline studies were conducted. Prior to COVID-19, there was an intentional focus on improving international agency partnership approaches, in particular for INGOs and UN agencies. This was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in improved opportunities and terms for local and national organisations and a greater focus on building stronger partnerships, in particular by INGOs.¹⁹ Within this picture of overall progress, there are still several key areas where equitable partnerships need much greater investment. This section explores the number, quality and types of partnership approaches.²⁰

“Yes, our partnership has changed, in particular we have a better and more effective way of communicating ... with COVID-19, it has also encouraged local actors to work more together as well.” (National actor respondent)

There are more partnerships, but not for everyone

As Figure 7 shows, COVID-19 has resulted in more partnership opportunities for international and local actors. This has enabled local partners to respond to COVID-19 and impacts of other recent disasters more effectively, and allowed for channelling more funding from donors that would otherwise be difficult for local actors to access. For example, international actors are making more effort to partner with local disability and inclusion actors, recognising the increased vulnerability and

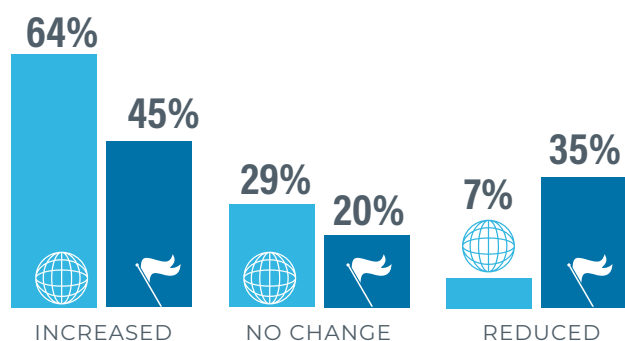
19 Interviews 1, 10, 38, 55

20 Interview 7

marginalisation due to the pandemic.²¹ Several international actors operating in the Pacific have taken up this opportunity, while the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) in particular, has encouraged greater engagement and partnership with disability and inclusion local partners.

However, many local actors, predominantly CSOs, are reporting a reduction in partnership opportunities due to COVID. This may be due to international agencies increasingly partnering with governments that are leading on delivering health responses (as noted further in Policy Influence and Advocacy).

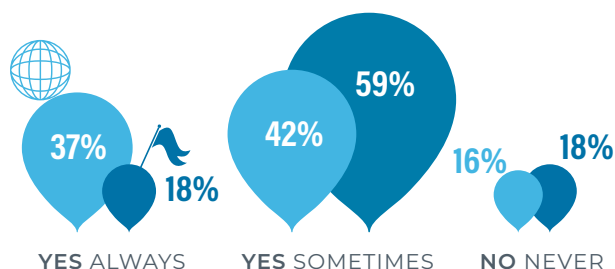
Figure 7: How has COVID-19 [impacted] on Partnership opportunities for your organisation?



The preliminary data on this increase in new partnerships raises additional questions about their accessibility and sustainability. Those that did report new partnerships with international actors also highlighted that it was unclear whether relationships established as a result of the COVID-19 context or to respond to its specific impacts will endure once international travel resumes. There are also concerns that short-term partnerships being established to mitigate COVID-19 impacts are taking focus away from sectors that require long-term partnership approaches.²²

Partnership quality and models are shifting

Figure 8: Do partnerships fund overhead costs not linked to project?



The quality of partnerships between international and national actors seems to be improving through an increased focus on equitable and ethical practices. COVID-19 and ensuing restrictions have accelerated this process, especially in looking at new partnership models and alternative ways of working.²³ For example, large proportions of both local and international actors indicated that partnerships sometimes or always fund overhead costs not linked to projects (Figure 8). This is a shift from the baselines, at which 30% of local and national actors reported that overhead costs not linked to projects were never covered (a figure that dropped to 18% in the most recent survey). Among the respondents to the progress review survey, a further 80% also indicated that partnerships now fund training for partner staff that is not related to projects. Despite this progress, covering overhead costs is not standardised across partnerships, nor is it always sufficient.²⁴ Indeed, in the review, a smaller proportion of local and national actors reported that partnerships always funded overhead costs than in the baseline study (18% in the progress review compared to 38% in the baseline). By far the largest group answered “sometimes”. While this may reflect the sampling

21 Interviews 39, 6, 59, 43, 49, 17, Australia Pacific Security College, 2021

22 Interviews 51, 42, 53

23 Interviews 45, 10; HAG and VANGO, No Turning Back: Local Leadership in Vanuatu's Response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, 2020

24 Interviews 4, 5, 15, 17, 35

of respondents, it nonetheless highlights the need for further improvement and standardising of how international actors partner with their local and national counterparts.

While decision-making power in partnerships remains primarily with international actors, some are showing more nuanced thinking on how they should approach decision-making with their local partners. Donors are also increasingly requiring robust partnership approaches to receive funding, such as through MFAT's Negotiated Partnerships funding mechanism.²⁵ Other evaluations, such as for the AHP Disaster Ready program, have recommended DFAT includes localisation criteria in its assessments, and requiring partners to report against localisation criteria.²⁶ Some international actors in the Pacific have explored or are exploring reducing their in-country presence and working predominantly through local actors, including in recent responses such as TC Harold and TC Yasa.²⁷ This model moves away from an implementation role to a technical advisory and intermediary role.

"In parts of the Pacific we're working in, some of the work is exclusively through partners. That approach to humanitarian work in the Pacific is very much about scaling up a network of local actors – taking a networked response approach. It is of course a work in progress." (International actor respondent)

Local partners are also increasingly exploring and advocating for different types of partnership

models. For example, some are exploring new partnership models at the national level, such as local actor consortiums to resolve issues such as competition for funding, to increase the number of partners that can receive international funding and support greater complementarity. Some local actors are reporting more partnerships with other local actors, including with the private sector.

Despite some positive signs, progress towards rectifying power imbalances in partnerships remains slow and insufficient – essentially the same finding as in our baseline studies three years ago. National actors consistently report practices that do not support their agency, priorities or decision-making.²⁸ Building trust-based relationships continues to be critical, and this continues to be a challenge for Pacific and international actors with different ways of working and values.²⁹ This is in part because contractual agreements that define (mostly project-based) partnerships between international and local actors are linked to compliance, reporting and risk management rather than partnership principles (see Box 1). These factors shape the perceived feasibility of power shifts at the strategic level. Developing these partnership models requires investment in building trust, supporting local actors to set up the necessary procedures to meet compliance requirements and a commitment to ongoing collaboration and engagement. For some international actors, who are increasingly reflecting on their value add as intermediaries, this also creates the challenge that their technical expertise may not match the areas in which their local partners want to work.³⁰

25 Interviews 1, 11; this is reflected in broader shifts outlined in evidence such as a recent literature review on localisation: Barbelet et al., Interrogating the evidence base on humanitarian localisation: A literature study, 2021, available from <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/interrogating-the-evidence-base-on-humanitarian-localisation-a-literature-study/>

26 Kelly, L., and Roche, A., Australian Humanitarian Partnership Mid Term Evaluation, 2020.

27 Interviews 2, 10, 43, 45

28 Interviews 24, 26, 28, 41, 49, 51, 57

29 As outlined in Roche et al., The Characteristics of Locally Led Development in the Pacific, Politics and Governance, 2020, Vol 8, Issue 4, pp.136-146. See also Pacific Community Led Localisation Summit Report, AHP Disaster READY Plan International Australia Consortium, 2020.

30 Interviews 6, 10, 13, 39

Box 1: Partnership design – localisation objectives and indicators

International partners in the Pacific are working to integrate localisation considerations into their partnership designs and monitoring and evaluation processes. For example, an increasing number of international actors are embedding localisation indicators from adapted versions of existing frameworks within their partnerships in Fiji and Vanuatu.³¹ This is a substantial shift from two years ago, when this was the exception rather than an emerging norm. Whether driven by values or donor requirements, or a combination of both, the effectiveness of this approach is dependent on how international actors approach localisation in partnership. Some actors report that the focus on indicators alone has resulted in a focus on the amount of funding, rather than the quality of funding and partnership.³² Some of the organisations that have made more progress in this process have agreed on contextualised localisation indicators with their partners (especially since the COVID-19 response), and have built localisation considerations into their program theory of change.³³

Partnering more with government

International actors, including donors, have also been investing to strengthen their partnerships with central and provincial governments.³⁴ These partnerships are often linked to NDMOs or their

equivalents, but also relevant line ministries and departments. At a decentralised level, partnerships with provincial governments, island councils and local response structures such as Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees (CDCCC) are increasingly common. Familiarity and longstanding relationships have also meant that government counterparts are more comfortable in reaching out to international actors with specific partnership opportunities.³⁵

While support provided to NDMOs (or equivalent) through various technical deployments and policy and process development remains a key component of these partnerships, more opportunities to fund central or local government structures are being taken up by partners. The pandemic context contributed to a greater shift in partnering with governments during cyclone responses that took place in 2020 and 2021. The Government of Vanuatu's decision to ask donors to match their aid contributions to non-state actors with a similar contribution to the government is an interesting model that other governments could consider.³⁶

“Our operation model is shifting from a traditional direct service approach where we receive funding, directly design programs for communities, [and] we directly deliver ... towards a model of working through government. We use our international capabilities and accreditations to secure funding from global multilateral and bilateral

31 Interviews 7, 17; The Church Agency Network for Disaster Operations in their church consortium partnerships have explored this in Fiji and Vanuatu. For overview of their localisation focus see Belinda Lauria et al., Church networks and localisation in the Pacific, Working Paper 004, The Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, 2019, <https://ojs.deakin.edu.au/index.php/thl/article/view/1037/1024>

32 Interviews 7, 10, 17, 42

33 Interview 7

34 Interviews 1, 9, 16, 43, 45, and in strategies such as DFAT's Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response, 2020, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/aid/partnerships-recovery-australias-covid-19-development-response>

35 Interviews 9, 22, 59

36 HAG and VANGO, No Turning Back: Local Leadership in Vanuatu's Response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, 2020

donors, and we pass that funding with technical assistance to local government, so they are in the driving seat when it comes to delivering programs.” (International actor respondent)

Directly funding governments to implement work can have implications for how CSOs and local NGOs engage in design, decision-making

and implementation processes. In contexts where there is a strained relationship between government and CSOs and NGO actors, this can lead to complete exclusion from activities. However, domestic power dynamics should not be considered a blanket obstacle to local leadership (by both state and non-state actors), but rather – like all politics influencing humanitarian response – understood and, where necessary, factored in.

Photo: Gilly Tanabose on Unsplash





COORDINATION AND COMPLEMENTARITY

Fiji: *Veiliutaki/vakatulewataki:* These terms mean “working together”. The concept in a Fijian village setting refers to the different roles played by the various clans in a village which complement each other in the upkeep of the village. When contextualised to humanitarian action, it refers to how actors have different but complementary roles in disaster response.


Veitokonitaki/cakacakavata: These two Fijian vernacular terms refer to complementing one another (*veitokonitaki*) through working together (*cakacakavata*)


Solomon Islands: *Variomini tinavete – varihamo* (Marovo Western Province language)

Tonga: *Fakafehokotaki mo fepoupouaki: Ke fakafehokotaki 'e he Pule'anga 'a e ngaahi sekitoa 'ikai fakapule'anga pea fepoupou'aki kenau kau he talanoa mo e faitu'utu'uni ki he ngaahi ngaue tokoni ki he fakatamaki*

Vanuatu: *Coordination – Kaitopo – Na bolokiana:* Someone that instructs and delegates work – making plans and giving direction to do it (from Ambae Island).

Complementarity – Hango Hango: Many things that are brought together or combined to fulfil or complete a need

 **Impact indicator:** There is application of and respect for commonly agreed approaches to be “as local as possible and as international as necessary”.

 **Key finding:** There is **SOME EVIDENCE** of equitable and ethical partnerships, demonstrating a shift from **LIMITED EVIDENCE** measured during the baselines.

Progress in this area has occurred since the baseline process. There has been ongoing progress in the areas of strengthening local leadership in coordination and working out what complementarity looks like in different contexts. This increased further as a result of COVID-19, with more local actors coming together to coordinate their responses – for example, FCOSS and the District Council of Social Services (DCOSS) offices continue to play a significant role in COVID-19 response work in Fiji, backed by a government mandate. A combination of reduced presence of international staff and increased use of different platforms for communication has created more opportunities for local and national organisations,

as well as for local staff of international organisations.

Stronger local and national participation in some forums

While starting points varied, in general opportunities for local and national voices in humanitarian forums have increased. In Fiji, Vanuatu and Tonga, government ministry and department officials were already chairing cluster groups and coordination meetings.³⁷ In some contexts, functionality of clusters has been irregular, depending on their relevance and use – highlighting the challenges of trying to transpose a standard cluster approach to different contexts.³⁸

³⁷ Interviews 13, 29, 37, 39, 42, 43

³⁸ Interviews 3, 13, 29, 43, 45

However, in functioning clusters, COVID-19 increased the opportunities for local staff and government focal points to lead the discussions. The reduced presence of international staff allowed some conversations to take place in local languages, and for local actors and local staff of international organisations to be more engaged in the discussion and decision-making process.³⁹

“Yes. National actors now have more influence (in coordination forums). Starting from community to national level, all are part of the response.” (National actor)⁴⁰

“There is definitely a shift particularly in referring to cluster meetings. Local staff are leading the meeting and there would less expats compared to Tropical Cyclone Pam. The meetings are conducted now in Bislama and government institutions such as the Department of Women’s Affairs would take the lead in chairing the meeting for the gender and protection clusters. More and more national staff are influencing the decision making.” (International actor)⁴¹

However, beyond increased space for local voice created by the pandemic context, there are few examples of intentional steps to increase local and national CSO engagement in coordination forums.⁴² More engagement does not always mean more influence. For example, local and national NGOs/CSOs still lack a strategic role in clusters (although government leadership has allowed more space to be heard in some countries), and AHP country committees (CCs) continue to operate in the challenging space of coordinating an Australian-led consortium of partners in Pacific

country contexts with ad hoc representation of local partners (see Box 2).

Box 2: AHP Country Committees

AHP CCs were originally established to promote coordination and collaboration among AHP Australian NGOs in-country partners for the delivery of the AHP Disaster READY program. However, over time their use has evolved to also help coordinate AHP-funded humanitarian responses. These AHP CCs provide a program-specific coordination function in addition to official UN and government led coordination mechanisms, and are operational in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu among the countries covered under this research.

The AHP Australian NGOs operating in the each country form the membership of each AHP CC. Each AHP CC also has a mandatory place reserved for the local disabled people’s organisation with dedicated funding to support their participation. However, the participation of other local partners (as members of consortiums) in AHP CCs is inconsistent between countries but remains mostly insufficient, partly because it is subject to local arrangements, and conditional on invitation in some countries.

Other barriers include the availability of time and resources to meaningfully engage in the extensive coordination processes of AHP, which can present a challenge for local and national non-state actors.

39 HAG and VANGO, No Turning Back: Local Leadership in Vanuatu’s Response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, 2020

40 Interview 42

41 Interview 39

42 Also reflected in Keen M, Sanderson D, Osborne K, Deo R, Faith J, and Ride A, Putting People First: Area Based Approaches to Disaster Response in The Pacific, Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands Regional Synthesis, Australia Pacific Security College, Australian National University, Canberra, 2021

Box 2 continued...

The varied inclusion of local partners means the benefits of the AHPCC mechanism are not always evenly shared. Regular meetings have fostered strong coordination and collaboration opportunities at a senior level among AHP CC members, which is not necessarily the case at implementation and local actor level.⁴³ It also limits the opportunities for local partners to influence the AHP. As the AHP reviews its model for future operation, it provides a great opportunity to consider how it can engage local actors more meaningfully and resource them appropriately to increase their contribution.

“There has been some shift in how local and national actors participate in humanitarian and disaster coordination mechanisms, and in their ability to contribute to and influence decision-making. INGOs still have a tight stranglehold on country committees but some discussions have taken place for more local members [to join]. But there are questions when it comes to coordination for example ‘who has the expertise and the capacity, credibility?’ or ‘Are the AHP country committee legitimate in the national mechanism?’” (International actor respondent)

Remote working leading to stronger complementarity

With the onset of COVID-19, online coordination processes have become relied on more heavily as international staff who repatriated to their home countries continue to work with their counterparts in-country. In some ways this has supported greater complementarity, because local and international partners are required to work out how to better leverage each other’s strengths, and to identify how international support can best support local actor priorities and fill gaps.⁴⁴

Lockdown restrictions and travel limitations have also meant that local coordination networks are being increasingly relied on to engage with communities and identify needs.⁴⁵ This has potential positive impacts on accountability to affected populations.

“Due to COVID-19 local actors have shifted their strategies to getting the community focal points more involved, which influences the way they plan their response as well as coordinate. Since COVID-19 struck, national and local actors have started to reach out more to individual groups, especially those that are partners in projects. International partners have also shifted to constantly check in with projects that they are funding and are getting frequent updates.” (National actor respondent)

43 Also captured in HAG, IHSSC, CoLAB; Early Findings Report: Evaluation of the COVID-19 Pacific and Timor-Leste preparedness and recovery NGO partnership (August 2021 – unpublished)

44 Interviews 7, 23, 45, 49, 54

45 Interviews 10, 13, 55, 58, 60



POLICY INFLUENCE AND ADVOCACY

Fiji: *Yavutu/ituvatuva:* In Fiji, *tuvatuva*, which means “arrangements”, is more commonly used when referring to policy because it is synonymous with “a set of guidelines or arrangements” about something. The term *yavutu* also means a set of laws, principles or guidelines

Solomon Islands: *Binabana – vina teteini hinua leadi* (Marovo Western Province language)

Tonga: *Taukave'i mo teke ha tu'utu'uni ngaue ke liliu: Ko e kau fakataha 'a e Pule'anga, ngaahi Kulupu 'ikai fakapule'anga fakalotofonua mo e Ngaahi kautaha Tokoni hono talanoa'i 'a e ngaahi taumu'a ngaue ke tokoni'i fakapa'anga.*

Vanuatu: *Silon Vanuanda:* The rules and how things should happen; set up by the chief for the community people (from the island of Pentecost).

 **Impact indicator:** Humanitarian action reflects the priorities of affected communities and national actors.

 **Key finding:** There is **SOME EVIDENCE** that policies better reflect the priorities of national and local civil society actors, demonstrating a shift from **LIMITED TO SOME EVIDENCE** measured during the baselines.

There has been some progress on policy influence and advocacy over the past two years. Local and national actors are participating and engaging in forums and advocacy platforms to influence national and international policy debates and outcomes. Despite this, strategic-level policy influence for local and national non-state actors remains low, a situation that the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened.

bringing partners into areas where there is more opportunity to advocate and influence.

“The planning and writing are done here [in country] with minor edits from overseas partners. The Australian Humanitarian Partnership’s cyclones responses to TC Harold and TC Yasa [responses in Fiji] are good examples.” (International actor respondent)

Capitalising on opportunities for influence

In the area of disaster response and humanitarian assistance, local organisations have built relationships with government focal points in NDMOs and equivalents. This has enabled them to influence more response planning over the years, especially for disaster and humanitarian response. Greater participation of local staff in coordination meetings and engagement with government also opens more opportunities for them to be involved in informing policy and advocating for more impactful response approaches. Some international NGOs have been intentional about

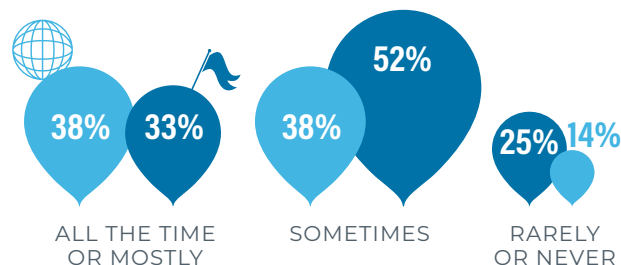
The national civil society coordination platforms are playing a greater role in ensuring inputs of key local civil society actors are reaching governments and informing decision-making. This includes bringing in the voices of NGOs and CSOs who represent people with disabilities and gender diversity. Coordination platforms, such as FCOSS and VANGO – which have been given strong mandates by their respective governments – have more opportunities to engage with both government and international actors to influence decision-making. As outlined in the *Walking Together in Partnership* paper, the NLU have

used the localisation baselines in a variety of ways to influence policy and practice.⁴⁶ FCOSS has also been collaborating with Plan International through the AHP program to bring actors together through webinars and produce reports outlining advocacy priorities.⁴⁷ Similarly, DSE has recently used the localisation baseline report for advocacy with government and other humanitarian actors in the Solomon Islands.

“In Fiji, an example of multi-sectoral collaboration was provided whereby FCOSS advocated for us to participate in a joint assessment in Kadavu with the Fijian Government post TC Harold. This was our first time collaborating in a multi-sectoral assessment with the Fijian government, having previously conducted their own assessments through community networks.” (National actor respondent)

Eighty-five per cent of national actors reported being able to influence and feed ideas into policies and planning processes for the COVID-19 response always or sometimes (see Figure 9). DSE in Solomon Islands, FCOSS in Fiji and to some extent CSFT in Tonga have all provided input into their government’s pandemic response planning, with processes of engagement varying across contexts. However, this does not guarantee their input will be fully integrated into final decisions, a challenge noted particularly in Tonga. International actors (particularly donors) still have more ability to shape final outcomes.

Figure 9: How much were you or your organisation involved in influencing/feeding ideas into the development of humanitarian policies and planning processes for COVID-19?



Disrupted channels

The response to COVID-19 (especially in Fiji, where there has been an outbreak) has disrupted some existing channels of engagement. As countries have tried to adapt their disaster management frameworks to a pandemic context, actors such as Ministries of Health have assumed leadership of responses. This initially created more challenges for local NGOs and CSOs, whose established relationship with NDMOs or their equivalents could not be leveraged easily. UN agencies and INGOs, which have a wider range of development projects and partnerships, were better placed to build on existing relationships with government ministries. CSOs and their networks are continuing to explore opportunities to influence policy and decision-making around the pandemic, especially in strengthening the role of CSOs in response.⁴⁸ For example, in the Solomon Islands, DSE has been coordinating with its members to influence government legislation on pandemic management.

46 HAG and PIANGO, *Walking Together in Partnership*, 2020.

47 See AHP Disaster READY and Plan International Australia Consortium, *Pacific Community Led Localisation Summit Report*, 2020.

48 Interview 28



PARTICIPATION

Fiji: *Vakaitavi:* The Fijian term for participation is ‘*vakaitavi* or *vakaitavitaki*’, meaning having a share or duty. The concept of ‘*vakaitavi*’ means that you are able to partake or have a duty in any activity or work. This is applicable in terms of measuring how local communities are able to participate in humanitarian action consultations

Solomon Islands: *Rinaku pa ria inene* (Marovo Western Province language)

Tonga: *Kau he fakahoko ngaue: Ko e kau ‘a e kakai he faitu’utu’uni ko e mahino ia kuo lava ke onгона honau ngaahi le’o.*

Vanuatu: *Wojwojan nga kete majinen:* when the community engage and participates in work identified as important and directed by traditional leadership. (From the island of Atchin in Malekula)

 **Impact indicator:** Communities lead and participate in humanitarian response.

 **Key finding:** There is **LIMITED TO SOME EVIDENCE** of changed practice in relation to community participation, demonstrating a shift from **LIMITED EVIDENCE** measured during the baselines.

There has been progress on community engagement in disaster responses since the baseline studies, yet there continues to be insufficient meaningful engagement of communities in culturally appropriate ways and understanding the impact of this on response effectiveness.

More community roles in responses and emerging initiatives

With COVID-19 restricting movement – especially in Fiji, with its outbreak – community members have become more important in the response processes. Even in countries where there has been no community COVID-19 transmission, community members have been relied on more to support awareness programs that require considerable community involvement and engagement.⁴⁹

“Yes, COVID-19 has raised the ability of local communities and organisations to involve and contribute to the humanitarian response

processes in their local communities and families in ways that are relevant with available resources and capacities.” (National actor respondent)

The Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network and Ground Truth Solutions have been working with national actors in Fiji and Vanuatu to establish communication and community engagement platforms to embed two-way communication in national disaster response systems. This has involved strengthening how community information and communication needs are included within damage assessments, training with the NDMO on community engagement practices and establishing communications working groups.⁵⁰ The impact of these initiatives on community engagement more broadly is yet to be understood at scale.

49 Interviews 19, 21, 50, 60

50 CDAC and GTS, The journey to build Fiji’s national communication platform, 2020, <https://groundtruthsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/FijiCCEPlatformCaseStudy.pdf> and CDAC and GTS, Practical experiences building a government-led CCE platform in Vanuatu, 2020, <https://groundtruthsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/VanuatuCCEPlatformCaseStudy.pdf>

Space for affected people to influence programs

Whether some of this increased engagement will continue is questionable, given the generally limited role of affected people in shaping humanitarian programs, as found in the baseline studies. Actors, both local and international, continue to indicate that they take opinions of affected people into account, with local and national actors giving it more priority. Ninety per cent of surveyed local and national actors stated that they take the opinions of affected people into the design and implementation of programs, and 69% of international actors (Figure 10) – comparable to the baseline figures of 87% for local and national actors and 72% of international actors. This is positive, but as research continually points out, there is a gap between statements and action in the Pacific and globally, and there is little data at scale about the perceptions of community member themselves.⁵¹

Figure 10: Does your organisation take opinions of affected people into account during design and implementation of programs?



As noted in the leadership section, local and national non-state actors themselves face challenges in meeting directly with donors, and therefore it only becomes more difficult

for communities to directly influence donors' decision making and support for programs. Most often donors expect and rely on international organisations (the main organisations they fund directly) to manage community engagement. Donors also manage the engagement with the national governments and work around their priorities.

"It took us a while to get MFAT and DFAT comfortable so that they would talk to community groups without speaking to officials." (International actor respondent)

Globally, while there is greater focus and discussion on accountability mechanisms, participation of affected communities in decision-making has been low. As the Grand Bargain independent review (2021) indicates, "there has evidently been a lot of activity at institutional and to some degree at collective level. But much of this seems to have focused on engaging with affected populations for information purposes ... and to solicit their feedback" (p. 7). The report goes on to say that there has been little or no progress towards a system-wide shift to a needs-driven approach in which affected and local communities define priorities, and that agencies and donors still define responses as per their own priorities.⁵² These findings are also widely applicable to the Pacific – and more pronounced among international actors.

51 <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/accountability-affected-populations-analytical-paper-whs-self-reporting-agenda-humanity> and <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/21/humanitarian-failing-crisis-un-aid-relief> and <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2021/4/27/then-and-now-25-years-of-aid-accountability> and https://odi.org/en/insights/five-years-on-from-the-world-humanitarian-summit-lots-of-talk-no-revolution/?utm_content=buffer1bde and <https://odihpn.org/blog/an-independent-commission-for-voices-in-crisis-changing-the-referee-instead-of-changing-the-game/> and CDA, Danish Red Cross and IFRC, All the Evidence We Need. It's Time to Act, 2019, p. 6

52 Humanitarian Policy Group, The Grand Bargain at five years: an independent review, 2021, <https://odi.org/en/publications/the-grand-bargain-at-five-years-an-independent-review/>

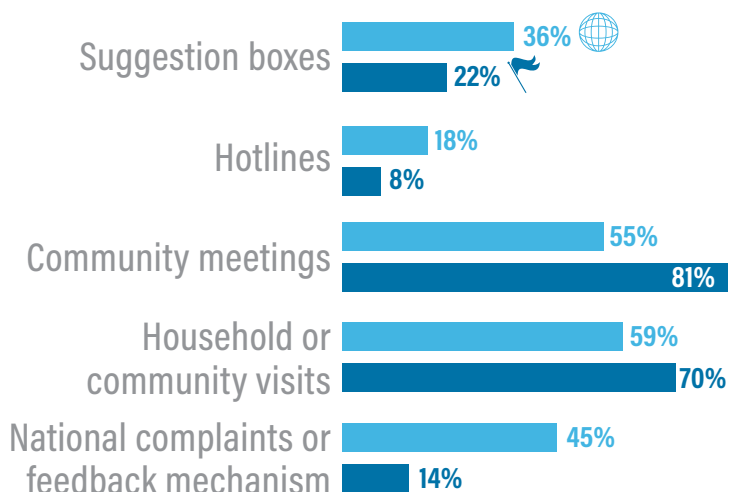
Persistence of low investment and less culturally appropriate forms of engagement

The approaches used by international and local actors to capture community feedback also provide an insight into how these groups engage with communities, and how they value this process. Donors rarely engaged directly with communities to listen to their needs and understand if donor support is appropriate and timely; they rely heavily on their international partners and relations with national governments for this information.⁵³ The PRP-LTWG mapping survey showed that local and national actors rely more frequently on community meetings and household or community visits for feedback (Figure 11) – which reflects a more personal and community focused approach to engagement. For INGOs and UN agencies the choice of mechanisms was more diverse, with greater use of complaints mechanisms and suggestions boxes than their local and national counterparts, indicating a preference for more formal practices.

This difference in approach is important, considering the cultural dynamics and practices of Pacific communities. In communities where *Talanoa* and interpersonal engagement is critical to earn trust and share information, community meetings and household visits offer a more personal approach that suits the Pacific way of working. This also raises the question of how community participation and engagement is approached – if it is seen as a compliance requirement or an established element of the way organisations operate. Community engagement for local and national non-state actors is a more innate practice; because they often are a part of communities themselves, the engagement processes is perceived to be more authentic and culturally appropriate.⁵⁴

“Definitely, [there is] more participation due to pressure to receive international assistance. Whether it is appropriate to the context of leadership in communities and respectful of traditional practices is another question.”
(Local actor respondent)

Figure 11: What community feedback or engagement mechanisms does your organisation use?



(Source: PRP-LTWG, *Humanitarian Action in the Pacific: Towards Strengthening Local Action in the Pacific*, 2021)

53 Interviews 11, 21

54 Interviews 11, 55, 58



LEADERSHIP

Fiji: *Liutaka*: This means to be “in charge of” something. *Liutaka* is derived from the word *liu*, meaning “to lead”. In the context of humanitarian action, the concept of *liutaka* is used because we are measuring the level of ownership by local and national actors during humanitarian response. Being “in charge of” means that they take charge in designing programs that are contextualised to their priorities. An extension of the word is *veiliutaki*, meaning “the ability to take a leading role in commanding/directing something or someone”

Solomon Islands: *Binangara* (Marovo Western Province Language)

Tonga: *Taki Lelei: Ko e Taki Lelei ‘i he fengaue’aki ‘a e Pule’anga mo e ngaahi Kolo ke makatu’unga ‘i he takitaha ‘ilo lelei hono fatongia*

Vanuatu: *Saleana*: When leadership is good, people will live in peace (from the island of Ambae)

 **Impact indicator:** National actors define and lead on humanitarian action.

 **Key finding:** There is **SOME TO STRONG EVIDENCE** that national actors define and lead on humanitarian action, with insufficient evidence to have a measurable shift from the baseline rating.

There continues to be some to strong evidence of local leadership in operational areas, a positive trend that continues on from the evidence found in the baselines. The travel limitations for international staff and the unique circumstances presented by the multidimensional response have presented increased opportunities for operational leadership from local and national actors, including increased prominence and leadership opportunities for local staff within international organisations. Nonetheless, international agencies, not national and local agencies, remain much more prominent in strategic spaces and donor conversations.

Greater role for local staff

One of the key areas where there is a noticeable improvement has been local staff in international organisations taking on greater responsibilities, including key decision-making roles. As travel restrictions have remained in place across the Pacific, international staff who repatriated in the

early stages of the pandemic have mostly adapted to remote technical support and management. This saw local staff taking a leading role within their organisations to lead the response activities and take on increased workloads. Tropical cyclone responses in 2020 and 2021 have highlighted these increased roles, but this has also placed additional pressures on local staff without a corresponding scale-up in available resources (as outlined in the funding section).⁵⁵

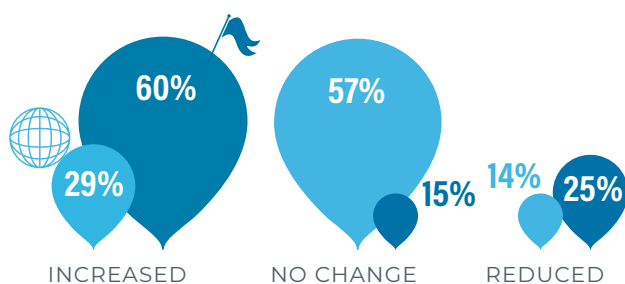
“National staff have been locally leading the humanitarian response compared to previous disasters. When COVID-19 struck, we had to rely mostly on local staff and resources. There were huge pressures and high demands on local staff.” (International actor respondent)

55 Interviews 1, 9, 11, 16, 39, 58; HAG and VANGO, No Turning Back: Local Leadership in Vanuatu’s Response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, 2020; HAG, PIANGO, IHSSC, ARC, PRP LTWG, A Window of Opportunity: Learning from COVID-19 to Progress Locally Led Response and Development, 2020.

Leading and influencing decision-making

The reduction in the number of international staff present on the ground and reduced deployment of international surge teams has opened up more opportunities for local and national actors to lead and influence decision-making in humanitarian response activities. As shown in Figure 12, national actors in particular have reported that COVID-19 has helped to increase their ability to influence strategic decisions in their countries. This may be partly due to the increased leading role played by government focal points over time in the Pacific, which includes more ministry officials assuming leadership roles in humanitarian coordination mechanisms such as clusters (particularly in Vanuatu and Tonga), and more directly engaging with donors.⁵⁶ As highlighted during the TC Harold response in Vanuatu, affirmative government leadership in clusters enables the ability for national organisations and staff to engage meaningfully in key forums such as clusters.⁵⁷

Figure 12: How has COVID-19 impacted on opportunities to lead and influence the strategic decisions on humanitarian work in your country?



⁵⁶ Interviews 5, 10, 16, 45, 55

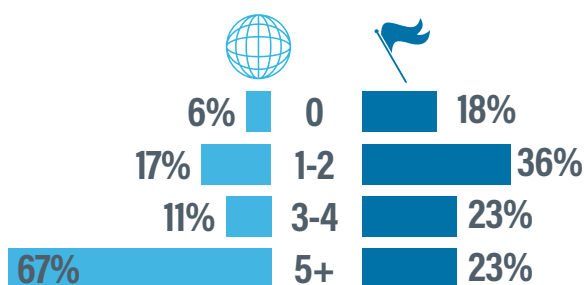
⁵⁷ HAG and VANGO, No Turning Back: Local Leadership in Vanuatu's Response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, 2020

⁵⁸ Interviews 5, 9, 15, 45, 48; Survey respondents

International actors monopolising donor channels

While local and national actors have more opportunities to lead and influence decision-making in their country contexts, this has not translated into more opportunities to engage directly with donors (see Figure 13). International organisations continue to have more frequent engagement with donors outside of reporting processes than national organisations. Despite regional donors such as DFAT and MFAT making greater efforts to engage more with local and national non-state actors in various forums, the difference in the reported frequency with which survey respondents from the two groups have directly engaged with donors indicates that donors still heavily prioritise their direct relationships with international actors.⁵⁸ During the baselines, 62% of international organisations reported they met with donors more than five times in the preceding six months, versus 37% of local and national actors. While both groups have seen a reduction in the frequency of meetings since then – likely due to COVID-19 restrictions – the much higher reduction for local and national actors shows the disparity in how partners are engaged.

Figure 13: How many times in the last six months has your organisation directly engaged with an international donor (not related to formal reporting)?



Visible and strategic leadership roles

While local leadership on humanitarian response in the Pacific has progressed from an operational perspective, challenges remain in local actors assuming more visible and strategic leadership roles within international response structures, such as some clusters and other committees established by international actors, and in donor engagement. This difference could be seen during the response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Fiji, where local CSOs and NGOs were leading operational response work in their communities (with movement restrictions in place) but were less involved in overall decision-making processes than international actors.⁵⁹ Opportunities for local leadership also vary across government and non-government forums. As outlined in the partnership section, in some countries, like Fiji, government-led health responses have not used the same structures and mechanisms as for rapid onset responses. Together with a heavily securitised response during lockdowns, this has meant less space and opportunity for local civil society to take a leadership role at a national level. This is not the case at the local or community levels: CSOs and communities themselves are taking a strong role in leading the response.

Box 3: Localising or nationalising – strengthening or undermining leadership?

Some international organisations have locally registered their country offices in the Pacific, and others are planning to do so. Nationalising (or decentralisation) is not unique to the Pacific – it has been ongoing for years and has accelerated due to the COVID-19 context. The practice is captured in the HAG and VANGO research on Vanuatu's response to TC Harold (2020) and has been highlighted in other contexts such as Myanmar, Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁶⁰

Whilst it offers some opportunities on local leadership, overall nationalising presents several key issues. It can create benefits on localisation, including opening leadership roles in these organisations to national staff, who in turn are able to shape more context-specific response activities and take part in coordination, planning and decision-making. However, this process also has the potential to further reduce the already limited voice, funding and leadership opportunities that are afforded to local and national non-state actors that are not affiliated in any way with international networks or federations. For example, nationalised country offices can access funding that was previously only open to local organisations with roots in their respective countries. This process of nationalising also enables international actors to artificially improve their reporting on localisation, especially in relation to funding allocations.⁶¹

59 Interviews 10, 15, 22

60 HAG and VANGO, No Turning Back: Local Leadership in Vanuatu's Response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, 2020. HAG and MDN; Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: Assessing the Implications of COVID-19 on Locally-Led Humanitarian Response in Myanmar, 2020; HAG and GLOW, [Local and National Organisations Doing More for Less: COVID-19 and Localisation in Afghanistan and Pakistan](#), 2021.

61 <https://charter4change.org/2016/12/05/localisation-and-ngos-different-interpretations-different-outcomes/>




FUNDING

Fiji: *Vakailavotaki:* The Fijian term for funding is *vakailavotaki*, which means to give funds for something or someone. The term is derived from *lavo*, which means “money”. In this context, *vakailavotaki* may refer to funds allocated for a project or program by a donor

Solomon Islands: *Poata tinoka* (Marovo Western Province language)

Tonga: *Fakapa’anga: Ko hono fakapa’anga ‘o e ngaahi ngaue tokoni ki he fakatamaki ke fakafaingofua pea malava ‘a e ngaahi kulupu ‘ikai fakapule’anga ke ngaue’aki ke a’u ‘a e tokoni ki he kakai ‘i he taimi fiema’u vivili.*

Vanuatu: *Boluiana:* meaning we give help to each other in financial and other forms (from the island of Pentecost)

 **Impact indicator:** An increased number of national/local organisations are describing financial independence that allows them to respond more efficiently to humanitarian needs.

 **Key finding:** There is **LIMITED EVIDENCE** of action to localise funding, with insufficient evidence to have a measurable shift from the baseline rating.

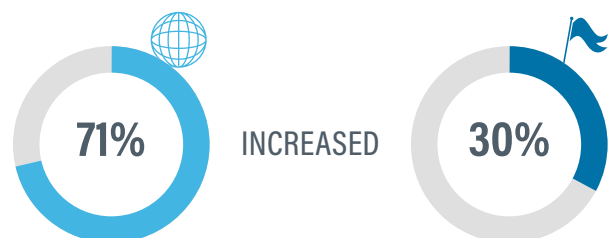
Quality funding and equitable sharing of resources remains a challenge. While there have been some improvements, donors in the region are still relying primarily on international intermediaries to channel their funds. Most of the direct funding going into the case study countries, in particular for COVID-19, is through national governments. Local partners have expressed concerns that little or no money from those donor contributions to national governments is coming through to local CSOs and NGOs who are working with the communities themselves.⁶² Some concerns also relate to how this funding is allocated and utilised.

actors indicated they had seen an increase in the funding they received. A few local non-government actors (including disability organisations) indicated there had been an increase in funding with COVID-19, including some longer-term funding, which enabled them to expand operations or respond to needs on the ground more appropriately.⁶³ Most other research in the COVID-19 context has found that funding to local and national non-state actors has not increased (see Box 4).

Insufficient funding for local and national actors

Based on participants’ reported experiences, the impacts of COVID-19 have increased funding inequalities. Only 30% of local or national survey respondents indicated funding had increased (Figure 14). In comparison, 71% of international

Figure 14: How has COVID-19 impacted funding availability for your organisation?



62 Interviews 25, 30, 34, 35, 49, 50

63 Interviews 4, 20, 26, 35, 37, 45, 46, 47, 49

Box 4: Research on funding perceptions during the pandemic

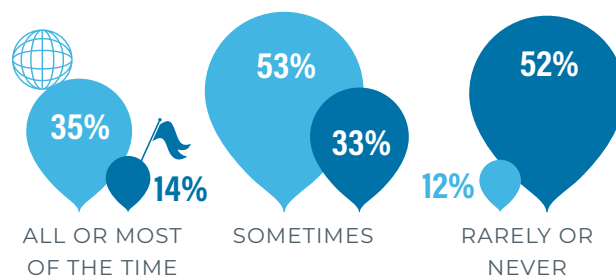
Data gathered in April–June 2021 for this review contrasts with that from the PRP-LTWG mapping survey conducted in July 2020, in which 66% of respondents indicated that their funding had increased.⁶⁴ However, the survey related to Vanuatu’s response to TC Harold delivered similar responses to those in the current study. Seventy-one per cent of national actors in that survey said they believed funding to national actors had not increased, compared to 53% international actors who felt the same.⁶⁵

The recent findings may reflect the relative lack of funding for local and national non-state actors’ increased operational roles. While the PRP-LTWG survey also had a much wider geographic coverage than the survey conducted for this study and more government participants (which affects the comparison), its data was collected only several months into the pandemic, while the survey in Vanuatu was conducted during a humanitarian response, and the survey for this research took place in May 2021 after responses to multiple cyclones, flooding and prolonged COVID-19 restrictions. Similar studies conducted in Myanmar and Afghanistan and Pakistan showed that while the absolute value of funding increased overall, these increases were insufficient to meet the needs on the ground.⁶⁶ In the survey conducted for this research, 71% of respondents reported an increase in workload, and local actors indicated they needed more funding to meet the needs.⁶⁷

Continued differences between the experiences of local and national non-state actors and their international counterparts are reflected in the

persistence of a major gap in perceived funding fairness (Figure 15). While most local or national actors who contributed to the survey believe they do not receive a fair portion of funding for their response work, an overwhelming majority of international actors believe it is fair all the time or sometimes. When compared with the baseline data, which shows that 63% of local and actors felt they did not receive a fair portion of funding (versus 31% of international actors), the survey conducted for this review shows a slight improvement – possibly linked to the COVID-19 context, with some contribution from structural changes. As noted in the partnership section above, increases in funding to local actors (from donors or their intermediaries) are not necessarily accompanied by an improvement in the quality of funds, including consistently or sufficiently covering overheads. This may also be affecting perceptions of fairness.

Figure 15: Do you feel that local and national actors receive a fair proportion of funding compared to international actors in humanitarian response?



Limited funding reform

While more international actors have shifted their partnership and funding approaches, only a few have looked to transform their approach to an institutional funding strategy that gives local actors the flexibility to utilise the funding for priorities

64 See PRP TWG on Localisation, Humanitarian action in the Pacific: Towards strengthening local action in the Pacific, 2020, <https://prp.visualmetrics.io/en/media/167>

65 HAG and VANGO, No Turning Back: Local Leadership in Vanuatu’s Response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, 2020.

66 HAG and MDN, [Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: Assessing the Implications of COVID-19 on Locally-Led Humanitarian Response in Myanmar](#), 2020; HAG and GLOW, [COVID-19 Implications for localisation: A case study of Afghanistan and Pakistan](#), 2021

67 Survey responses

they define. This fundamental shift is something international actors continue to struggle with as they still rely primarily on project-based funding models.⁶⁸ With local NGOs and CSOs relying more on donors and their intermediaries for funding in the context of COVID-19, they continue to face challenges in accessing sufficient, flexible funding to plan for long-term operations.⁶⁹

Most INGOs are limited by how donors commit funding, and actual or perceived restrictions from the donor that limit the flexibility INGOs can transfer to their local actors.⁷⁰ Donors have provided more flexibility to repurpose, delay and realign funding to respond to pandemic conditions.⁷¹ However, given the unprecedented nature of the crisis and context change, this flexibility was almost inevitable and is not an indication of permanent long-term funding transformation.⁷²

“You could also say there’s a lot of money that stays in Australia. Still a lot of decision-making is happening at the international level instead of local organisation. There’s still a long way to go.” (International actor respondent)

“Local NGOs [still] have less funding support. Local NGOs need to lobby more to be recognised by international donors however there are a lot of strings attached where donor partner fund activities within their own priority and local NGOs do not fit in that space.” (National actor respondent)

Regional donors like DFAT and MFAT support local organisations through mechanisms such as DFAT’s Fiji Program Support Facility, and MFAT’s new approaches to direct funding during emergency response. However, direct funding is not the first preference, nor is it used regularly across multiple countries. Both DFAT and MFAT opt to use their existing humanitarian partnership models with international actors (AHP and similar) as their preferred choice for funnelling most of the funds.⁷³ Direct funding to local actors is mostly reliant on the interest and capacity of in-country post staff (which is often stretched during response periods) to take the initiative.

Box 5: MFAT in Suva – testing approaches to direct partnerships with local and national organisations

In the major cyclone responses that occurred after the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, MFAT in Suva significantly shifted its funding approach by increasing partnerships and funding opportunities for local and national non-state actors through smaller grants administered by the High Commission. The High Commission Emergency Fund (HEF) is a dedicated fund managed by Suva Post, with decision-making delegated to the High Commissioner. Prior to the onset of COVID-19 the fund amount was NZD 50,000 per response. It was increased substantially after the onset of COVID-19, to NZD 500,000 in the response to TC Ana (2021) and reached FJD 1 million (approximately NZD 680,000) during the COVID-19 outbreak response in 2021.

68 Interviews 5, 10, 28

69 Interviews 50

70 Interviews 4, 10, 15, 16

71 Interviews 10, 11, 16, 20, 26, 58

72 See also HAG and MDN, [Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: Assessing the Implications of COVID-19 on Locally-Led Humanitarian Response in Myanmar](#), 2020; HAG and GLOW, [COVID-19 Implications for localisation: A case study of Afghanistan and Pakistan](#), 2021.

73 Interviews 3, 13

Box 5 continued...

MFAT in Suva and humanitarian staff in Wellington were able to campaign for increased funding to the HEF for more partnerships with local and national actors and local procurement of non-food items by building on the senior leadership commitment within MFAT. It also did this through continued advocacy related to the COVID-19 context and using evidence-based publications such as [Five ways to support locally led disaster response in the Pacific during COVID-19](#) (produced by HAG and PIANGO using findings from the localisation baselines).

This process involved building new relationships with local, smaller organisations and was a learning process for MFAT, which managed up to 30 smaller grants for local/national CSOs and local procurement for government in various responses:

- ▶ TC Harold (2020): NZD 300,000 for nine partnerships
- ▶ TC Yasa (2020): NZD 300,000 for six partnerships
- ▶ TC Ana (2021): NZD 500,000 for six partnerships

Recognising that most local and national CSOs were partnering with them for the first time, MFAT in Suva took a pragmatic and flexible approach to engagement (mostly for grants under NZD 50,000, although for higher contributions, the process and information requested changed only slightly).

- ▶ Prospective partners were asked to submit a proposal (as short as two pages) in their own organisational format outlining the work proposed, outputs and cost breakdown. National staff from the High Commission worked with some of the partners to finalise the proposals if required. Proposal submission was followed by conversations with partners on what they had proposed and what was expected from MFAT.
- ▶ A simplified Grant Contribution Letter (two pages) was used to release the funding to partners. It avoided the complex terms and conditions seen in usual donor contracts (recognising that smaller organisations do not have legal advisors to review complex agreements).
- ▶ Partners were only asked to provide short reports that provided data for MFAT's own indicators and a financial acquittal at the end of work. The MFAT Suva team also commenced holding end of project meetings (before formal reporting) to have direct conversations on the delivered work and to share input on how to prepare their formal reports. While these began from an accountability and compliance angle, they morphed into a relationship management and engagement step. It has also enabled the team to identify and meet further funding needs – for example, based on needs identified during a post implementation discussion, a local NGO was given a further NZD 40,000 within a week.
- ▶ Including sufficient overhead costs (around 10%) and support costs (around 20%) was encouraged, for investing sufficiently to focus on staff health and safety, and capacity strengthening.
- ▶ A strong element of trust and relationship building with local/national actors was included in the process, including commitment from involved staff to work with and support local and national organisations.

Following this grant process in the TC Harold response, MFAT organised a lessons workshop for local partners to discuss it, as well as key successes and challenges. Since then, the High Commission has invited local partners to submit proposals for an NZD 5 million COVID-19 response fund launched in Fiji.

Box 5 continued...

This approach has not sought to replace partnerships with New Zealand humanitarian actors, INGOs, and UN agencies with which MFAT works. Instead, it highlights that there are pragmatic approaches that donors in the region (especially MFAT and DFAT) should consider adapting and replicating more broadly across the Pacific to work directly with and support local actors as first responders on the ground.

Photo: Meritt Thomas on Unsplash




Fiji: *Rawaka:* The Fijian term for capacity is *rawaka*, which means ‘ability’ of a person or organisation to do something. In humanitarian contexts, the term is extended as in *vakatagedegede ni rawaka*, which relates to the degree or extent of the capacity of an organisation to carry out something

Solomon Islands: *Ginura* (Marovo Western Province language)

Tonga: *Ivi Malava: Ke ngaue’aki ‘a e ivi malava ‘oku ma’u ‘e he fonua pea fakalahi mai ‘a e ngaahi ‘ilo fakatekinikale fakatatau ki he fiema’u*

Vanuatu: *Gu Ve Lei:* Often relevant to formal meetings and custom events, *gu ve laei* refers to self-reliance, resilience and communal solidarity (from the island of Ambae)

 **Impact indicator:** Local and national organisations can respond effectively and efficiently, and have appropriate, targeted support from international actors.

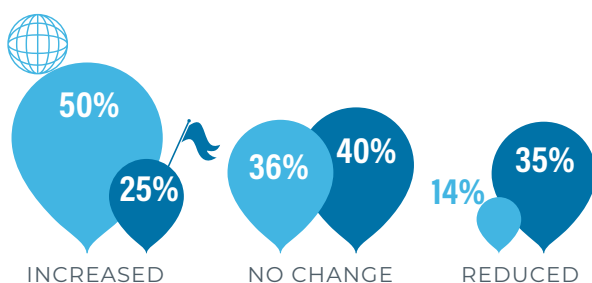
 **Key finding:** There is **LIMITED TO SOME EVIDENCE** of international actors providing appropriate and targeted capacity-strengthening support to local and national organisations, with insufficient evidence to have a measurable shift from the baseline rating.

Appropriate and targeted capacity support that is based on the priorities and needs of local actors continues to be in short supply across the four countries. As highlighted in Box 6, COVID-19 has reduced human resource capacity, with flow-on effects for the institutional capacities of many actors.

Box 6: Human resources – the impacts of COVID-19

As Figure 16 shows, at least 50% of international organisations saw an increase in human resource capacity, while more local/national organisations (35%) reported a reduction. This could be explained by the increase in funding directed to international actors versus local actors (detailed in the funding section) and the anecdotal increase in international organisations poaching local staff from national/local organisations by offering better pay and benefits. Loss of skilled and experienced staff is likely to have detrimental effects on local and national response structures.

Figure 16: How has COVID-19 impacted staff/ human resource capacity in your organisation?



Emerging positive practices

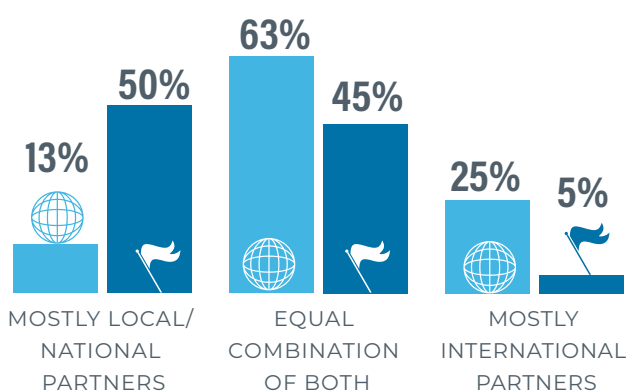
There are examples of good practices in capacity strengthening, including increased space and opportunities for local actors to define and implement their own approaches to strengthen

capacity during COVID, with various remote support approaches from international partners.⁷⁴ Survey responses indicate that local partners are playing an increasingly strong role in defining their capacity needs, as was the case at baseline. Figure 17 shows that international and national actors are working together to jointly identify the capacity needs of national actors, and half of national actors indicate that they determine their own capacity needs. However, 25% of international actors indicated that they determine the capacity needs of their national partners directly, compared to 10% in the baseline data.

countries, something that was less apparent a few years ago.⁷⁷ One international NGO reported that it was now pursuing two-way capacity assessments with its national partners, but this is not yet standard practice.

“We’ve got this agreement now globally, to do reverse partner capacity assessments, the partner does the assessment on us. That’s another way to shift some power and understand what value is there with us other than access to resources.” (International actor respondent)

Figure 17: Who defines the capacity needs of local/national actors?



There are also examples of strategic approaches to institutional strengthening, such as in the AHP Disaster Ready program, with local and national non-state actors reporting greater investment in organisational strategies and structures than in the baseline studies.⁷⁵ Prior to and during COVID-19, there was also an increased focus on supporting regional surge capacity from one Pacific country to another, with donors and INGOs investing more in these initiatives.⁷⁶ Supporting local partners to support the capacity needs of other local actors has also been identified as a priority in several

The PRP-LTWG survey of actors across the Pacific (conducted in July 2020) also showed that the most common area in which partners received capacity support was organisational policy and process development. This is important, because it highlights a more long-term capacity support approach. In the same survey, however, 46% of national actors completely agreed that the capacity support received was relevant and appropriate, while a further 35% believed it was somewhat relevant and appropriate, indicating that there is a way to go between jointly identifying needs and then actually implementing appropriate approaches.

Needs and priorities identified but not met

It appears that there is still a gap between discussion and planning around capacity strengthening priorities and implementing relevant, appropriate and targeted approaches that meet the needs of local partners. While local and international actors believe they identify areas of improvement together (Figure 17), when

74 Interviews 42, 45, 56, 58; HAG, PIANGO, IHSSC, ARC, PRP LTWG: [A Window of Opportunity: Learning from COVID-19 to progress locally led response and development](#), 2020.

75 Interviews 1, 14, 15, 17

76 Interviews 10, 37, 49, 55; also outlined in Roche et al., *The Characteristics of Locally Led Development in the Pacific*, Politics and Governance, 2020, Vol 8, Issue 4, pp. 136-146.

77 Interviews 6, 10, 17, 25, 42, 49

we asked whether international actors focus on the capacity strengthening requested by local actors, differing views emerged (Figure 18). This contrasts with the baseline, where a greater proportion (60%) of local and national actors felt their international counterparts were focusing on areas of capacity strengthening that local partners had identified. This shift in local and national actor perception is likely linked to a reduction in support from international actors for scaling up capacity, in order to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 19), whilst donors continue to present limitations in local actor capacity as a key reason for lack of increased funding.⁷⁸

Figure 18: Do international actors focus on the areas of capacity strengthening requested by local partners?



“There wasn’t that surge support [we usually have], [and] no one was allowed into the country. Everyone had to rely on who was on the ground in the country. Other departments in government basically seconded their staff to help the provincial governments. AHP partners drew on their own local teams, and recruited people in country to help with the extra numbers.” (International actor respondent)

and remote support, the benefits of this have been skewed in favour of international organisations. As Figure 19 shows, a higher proportion of respondents from local and national organisations reported a reduction in the opportunities due to COVID-19 than their international counterparts. Having international networks and internal training structures allows international organisations to provide more training and mentoring for their local staff. With reduced funding and more needs during the pandemic, local actors are less likely to have the option to increase their investment in training and support to their staff.⁷⁹

Figure 19: How has COVID-19 impacted capacity building opportunities?



Local actors in Tonga referred to the need to fund capacity-strengthening initiatives that can be led by national CSO platforms. This was particularly the case in recent months, with the impacts of COVID-19 and the need for additional human resources amongst civil society to respond.⁸⁰

“Sufficiently being supported by international actors to scale up and increase the services provided by local and national actors is the biggest desirability. However, that remains a desire [rather than a reality].” (National actor respondent)

While COVID-19 has certainly opened opportunities more broadly for online trainings

⁷⁸ Interviews 5, 24, 29, 32, 39, 42, 45, 48, 59

⁷⁹ Interviews 31, 53, 29; See also Humanitarian Advisory Group, Learning from COVID-19 to progress locally led response and development, 2020. Available from <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/a-window-of-opportunity/>.

⁸⁰ Interviews 29, 33, 37, 31

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

There are clear gains being made in strengthening locally led response in the Pacific, but the momentum is uneven and uncertain. Changes are more visible at the operational level than at a strategic or institutional level – meaning increasing recognition of local actors and local staff, greater use of their expertise and value, but continuing limits on their ability to contribute to key decisions about funding allocation, relevant capacity support and their own organisational growth. While the progress is pleasing, more ambitious changes are needed to make a real difference to the power dynamics that have underpinned humanitarian practices for so long.

Currently, there is scope for action in each of the key areas we have identified. Some countries and individual organisations are further along the journey towards local leadership than others, but all share a need to commit more to change at a strategic and systemic level. This requires more concerted action from powerholders, more collective pressure from those seeking to hold them to account, and more systematic sharing of what works and what doesn't.

Key steps in progressing change

1. **Focus on strategic change:** There needs to be greater focus on deepening and speeding up strategic change at a structural or broader level. It is time for powerful agencies to initiate braver reforms, and test and scale up effective approaches, challenging as this may be in the ongoing pandemic context.
2. **Formalise shifts that have occurred into localisation frameworks and plans at the national or regional level:** The research process has supported discussions and thinking about what success would look like at a country level. While steps have been taken across the four countries to progress localisation in some areas; there continues to be opportunity for nationally developed agendas with collective points of agreement on specific contextual issues to further support localisation. Pacific countries could learn from approaches being taken to develop national localisation frameworks in countries such as Nigeria.⁸¹
3. **Embed positive ways of working that have emerged over the last 18 months:** In many organisations and collaborations, positive shifts have enabled and supported local leadership and partnership. Those that were improvised because of the COVID-19 context need to be embedded and resourced within day-to-day practice, so that gains in the space and voice for national staff and local actors are not undermined once borders reopen and travel is permitted.
4. **Shift intermediary practices through both motivation and incentives:** International actors have taken steps to support the localisation agenda, both as a result of COVID-19 and for other reasons. This movement needs to be accelerated and deepened collectively. Donors, INGOs, UN agencies and other international actors – in partnership with local actors – need to agree on appropriate and fit-for-purpose intermediary models in the Pacific context, through which localisation practices can be incentivised and motivated.⁸²

81 Operational Framework for local and national NGOs in Nigeria, <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/nigerian-national-localization-framework>

82 For further information see HAG et al., Bridging the intention to action gap: the future role of intermediaries in supporting locally led humanitarian action, 2020, <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/bridging-the-intention-to-action-gap/>

5. **Catalyse conversations and agree on next steps appropriate to country context:** How recommendations 1–4 could be actioned needs to be contextualised to country level. The following focus pages provide insights into the four countries where the baseline and review processes were carried out; importantly, they include key opportunities for progress identified by in-country stakeholders. These summaries, combined with the broader findings and recommendations of this paper, can be used as the basis for conversations and agreements.


Where the journey will ultimately lead – and when – remains to be determined. Local leadership is not an end goal, but a pathway that will help realise the how we can deliver better responses to affected communities. Listening actively and responsively to how national and local actors experience the current dynamics, how they define the priorities for change, and what they see as the vision of the future are all essential first steps. Many have done so and begun to change their ways of working as a result. Now is the time for bolder action.

Photo: Rowan Heuvel on Unsplash




Key events


Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Harold (7-8 April 2020):

 180,000+ affected

 1 death⁸³


Tropical Cyclone Yasa (17 December 2020)


 93,000+ people affected

 four deaths⁸⁴

Category Tropical Cyclone Ana (30-31 January 2021):


 14,700+ people evacuated

 2 confirmed deaths

 3 missing⁸⁵

COVID-19:

 52,506 confirmed cases,

 696 deaths as of November 30, 2021⁸⁶

What has happened in Fiji since the baseline?

Fiji experienced a significant COVID-19 outbreak in 2021.⁸⁷ TC Harold and Yasa also impacted Fiji in December 2020, resulting in widespread damage to infrastructure and disruption of water and electricity supply.⁸⁸ As in the response to TC Harold in Vanuatu, delivery of international aid was largely determined by COVID restrictions.

Positive developments

► Localisation has greater prominence amongst local civil society and international actors: key actors are discussing and planning how to provide more support for locally led response.

- FCOSS has led key localisation-related initiatives. FCOSS has led discussions at the national level over the last two years (also working through DCOSS at the local level) and has increasingly been taking a coordination and support role in responses at the national and district levels. Plan International has been supporting FCOSS through the AHP, and several forums on localisation have been held across the sector.
- International actors are increasingly trying new ways of supporting localisation, including through funding, leading donors to test new approaches to funding local and national organisations for rapid onset disasters and adapting their reporting requirements (see Box 5).

83 <https://www.dfat.gov.au/crisis-hub/Pages/tropical-cyclone-harold>

84 OCHA Asia Pacific Update https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ROAP_Snapshot_210105.pdf

85 <https://reliefweb.int/report/fiji/fijipacific-tropical-cyclone-yasaana-operation-update-report-n-4-dref-n-mdrfj005>

86 John Hopkins University, Fiji overview, 2021, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/region/fiji>

87 Ruggiero, S, Hospitals in chaos as Fiji battles COVID-19 hell, Al Jazeera, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/30/patients-turned-away-as-fiji-battles-covid-19-hell>

88 DFAT, Tropical Cyclone Yasa, 2020, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/crisis-hub/tropical-cyclone-yasa>

Key challenges

- ▶ Civil society's role in the pandemic response. The government-led pandemic response has used coordination mechanisms and structures that differ from those used in previous disaster responses. This has resulted in a challenging environment for civil society actors in terms of being able to hold government accountable and advocate for meeting needs, but also in identifying how to work in a system that is unfamiliar and where the role for civil society actors that are not health organisations is unclear.
- ▶ Local civil society actors, especially smaller organisations, are not being resourced adequately.

Taking localisation forward in Fiji – key opportunities

- ▶ Pockets of emerging promising practices need to be scaled up now they have been tested.
- ▶ Greater investment needs to be made in strengthening civil society coordination and umbrella bodies; actors such as FCOSS can play a critical future role in supporting localisation plans, processes and supporting other CSOs.
- ▶ The sector needs to come together; government, international actors and local civil society must discuss what shifts, both strategic and operational, have been caused by COVID-19 and how to build on the positive impacts of these shifts.
- ▶ Enable strategic engagement of youth in response structures to support succession planning within community and CSO structures to ensure continued community resilience and response.

Photo: Josai Cakacaka on Unsplash



SOLOMON ISLANDS

Key events



Category 1 Tropical Cyclone Harold
(2-3 April 2020)



widespread damage to
agricultural land and buildings



27 lives lost in ferry accident⁸⁹



COVID-19 (March 2020 - ongoing)



20 COVID-19 cases⁹⁰

What has happened in the Solomon Islands since the baseline?

Since the localisation baseline study was conducted in the Solomon Islands, TC Harold struck resulting in damage to agricultural lands, schools and houses. Twenty-seven people lost their lives when they were swept off a ferry during the storm. Solomon Islands has relatively low COVID-19 case numbers, although the economic impact of COVID has been quite strong. The political unrest that began in November 2021 is likely to amplify these economic challenges.

Positive developments

- ▶ The government has noted an influx of organisations registered under the Charitable Act. However, there is no set policy to govern and regulate NGO operations in the country, including on how local and international NGOs can align their work to the National priorities. The government has been working closely with other key Ministries and stakeholders (including DSE) to formalise working arrangements on NGO operations and governance. As a member of the NGO policy task force under the Ministry of Home Affairs, DSE on behalf of the NGOs is advocating to ensure the policy is conducive for NGO operations and independence.
- ▶ Local actors are now working more closely to improve their collective advocacy, positioning and influence opportunities.

- ▶ Since the publication of the localisation baseline, there has been more engagement about and discussion of localisation.

Key challenges

- ▶ Despite more discussions around localisation, local actors are continuing to receive insufficient allocations of direct funding to implement their activities.
- ▶ The polarisation between international and national actors has been festering on the sidelines of the localisation discussion. It will be important to manage this dynamic to progress collective action on localisation in the sector.

Taking localisation forward in the Solomon Islands – key opportunities

- ▶ Strengthen DSE to play a conduit role between international actors and local and national non-state actors, especially in coordinating response activities, which will also provide a platform to bring together key actors to build a common commitment to localisation.
- ▶ Work with government to improve legislation on humanitarian response, including building in key elements of localisation, and ensuring a greater role for communities and accountability to them.

89 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SitRep3-TC-Harold_Impact-and-Response.pdf

90 <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

TONGA

Key events



Drought conditions
(September–November 2021)



nearly 80% of population affected⁹¹



Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Harold
(9 April 2020)



+430 houses damaged or destroyed



(approx. 1,500 people impacted)⁹²;



Measles outbreak
(October 2019 – February 2020)



659 confirmed cases⁹³



COVID-19
(March 2020 – ongoing)



1 COVID-19 case⁹⁴

What has happened in Tonga since the baseline?

Since the localisation baseline was completed, Tonga experienced an outbreak of measles in 2019–20 with over 650 cases recorded. The country has so far been able to avoid community transmission of COVID-19 through strict border controls, although the impact on the tourism sector has been severe. Tonga was also impacted by TC Harold in 2020, causing an estimated USD 111 million of damage.⁹⁵ Parts of the country also experienced drought in 2021.

Positive developments

- ▶ The government, including the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO), has been keen to have greater participation and collaboration with local and national organisations in planning and as first responders. In particular, the government has sought local and national organisations' input in discussions and decisions relating to community responses and activities.
- ▶ Local organisations are looking to work together to increase their influence through collective action, and focus on building community-led response models that can work with government.

Key challenges

- ▶ Local organisations lack clarity on how government and donors make decisions and

prioritise investment of resources. While local and national organisations are often invited to provide input, how this informs practice is unknown. Local organisations are seen as sources of information, with donors and international actors holding meetings to get input without any follow-up.

- ▶ Although they are joining cluster meetings (more regularly since TC Gita) led by government and attended by donors and international organisations, local CSOs and NGOs aren't given sufficient opportunities to influence decision-making.

Taking localisation forward in the Tonga – key opportunities

- ▶ Formalise working arrangements between local and national organisations and the government to ensure their roles are recognised and for continuity with staff changes.
- ▶ Increase support for disabled person's organisations to enable them to engage better and inform response practices.
- ▶ Enable CSFT to support their network of members and utilise their role to create greater collaboration between international actors, government and local and national organisations.

91 <https://reliefweb.int/report/tonga/drought-warnings-remain-force-niuafou-niuatoputapu-and-tongatapu-and-now-force-ha>

92 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SitRep3-TC-Harold_Impact-and-Response.pdf

93 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SITREP18_Measles_Tonga_13Feb2020_draft.pdf

94 <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

95 <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/415062/cyclone-harold-said-to-cost-tonga-more-than-us11m>

Key events



Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Harold (2-9 April 2020)



+160,000 people affected



3 fatalities



+17,000 homes damaged or destroyed⁹⁶



COVID-19 (March 2020 - ongoing)



6 COVID-19 cases



1 death⁹⁷

What has happened in Vanuatu since the baseline?

Since the baseline study was undertaken, Vanuatu faced several disasters that tested local humanitarian actors' capacity to respond in a context of restricted inter-island travel, closed borders, and reduced international presence. In 2020, TC Harold, a category 5 cyclone, struck Vanuatu. The Government of Vanuatu and humanitarian actors had to respond without the international surge supports that would normally occur.⁹⁸

Positive developments

- ▶ Local leadership and local and national actor involvement has shifted over recent years, and there is greater awareness of the need to support locally led response. International actors are testing new ways of working.
- ▶ Partnership approaches have been evolving, with one INGO interviewee describing how they support local actors to navigate funding from donors. Additionally, COVID-19 has encouraged some INGOs to develop disaster response policies with their local partners.

Key challenges

- ▶ More investment is needed to support local and national staff as they shoulder more responsibility and risks.
- ▶ With many islands spread out across a large area, accessibility and logistics also remain an area of concern.

Taking localisation forward in Vanuatu – key opportunities

- ▶ Recognise that local staff and capacity have been stretched due to TC Harold and the pandemic. Increased support for partnership and capacity building is central to continued localisation in Vanuatu.
- ▶ More funding is needed to meet community needs, especially since the pandemic and TC Harold. Actors focused on health and disaster risk reduction should be the priority.
- ▶ While borders remained closed and work continues remotely, strengthening coordination mechanisms and leadership roles is crucial for responding to future emergencies in Vanuatu.⁹⁹

96 Humanitarian Advisory Group, No Turning Back: Local Leadership in Vanuatu's Response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, 2020.

97 John Hopkins University, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>.

98 Humanitarian Advisory Group, No Turning Back: Local Leadership in Vanuatu's Response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, 2020.

99 Interviews 9, 16, 39, 42, 43, 45

ABBREVIATIONS

AHP	Australian Humanitarian Partnership
ARC	Australian Red Cross
CC	Country Committee
CDAC	Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Network
CSFT	Civil Society Forum of Tonga
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCOSS	District Council of Social Services
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DSE	Development Services Exchange (Solomon Islands)
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, United Kingdom
FCOSS	Fiji Council of Social Services
FJD	Fijian Dollars
HAG	Humanitarian Advisory Group
HCEF	High Commission Emergency Fund
IHSSC	Institute for Human Security and Social Change
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LTWG	Localisation Technical Working Group
MFAT	New Zealand Ministry for Foreign Affairs
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLU	National Liaison Unit
NZD	New Zealand dollars
PIANGO	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations
PRP	Pacific Resilience Partnership
VANGO	Vanuatu Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
TC	Tropical cyclone
UN	United Nations
USD	United States dollars