



THE PACIFIC REGION



HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN EMERGENCIES: TOWARDS A PREDICTABLE MODEL

2026 EDITION



Australian Government
Australian Civil-Military Centre



OCHA



Pacific Community
Communauté du Pacifique



HUMANITARIAN
ADVISORY GROUP



FOREWORD

This publication presents the Pacific Edition of *Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model*, developed under the guidance of the Regional Consultative Group (RCG) on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for Asia and the Pacific. As co-secretariat members of the RCG, the Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC), the Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM), and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) offer this document as a practical resource to strengthen predictable, effective and appropriate disaster response in the Pacific.

Grounded in the experience of five highly disaster-exposed countries: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, this Pacific Edition maps key civil-military coordination mechanisms at regional and national levels. It complements earlier guidance developed for Asia, while responding to calls from Pacific partners for a context-specific resource that reflects the region's geography, governance arrangements, and deep traditions of community-led response.

The publication is intended for civilian and military actors engaged in preparedness, response and early recovery across international, regional and national spheres. This includes governments, security actors, regional bodies, UN agencies, Red Cross and Red Crescent partners, non-governmental and civil society organisations, donors, academia and the private sector who support or operate in Pacific Island Countries and Territories. By presenting existing mechanisms, good practice, lessons from recent emergencies and emerging regional initiatives, it aims to promote a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and coordination approaches before, during and after crises.

In a region on the frontline of the climate crisis, where the impact of cyclones, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, floods, droughts and health emergencies are frequent and intensifying, the way civilian and military actors work together has direct consequences for the safety, dignity and recovery of affected communities. This publication seeks to inform timely, principled and locally led responses by clarifying how regional and national systems connect, how foreign assistance can best support national authorities, and how new mechanisms such as PResCoM, the Pacific Response Group and other regional capabilities can be leveraged in a coherent way.

Above all, the co-secretariat hopes this resource will support Pacific-led decision-making and partnerships that respect humanitarian principles, reinforce national and local systems, and place communities at the centre of disaster response. By offering a predictable model for humanitarian civil-military coordination tailored to Pacific realities, the publication is intended to help all actors operate in solidarity and complementarity when the next disaster strikes.

Co-Secretariat of the RCG



Australian Government
Australian Civil-Military Centre



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Front cover photo: Top-down shot of a small island in the Solomon Islands. There are boat tracks in the shallow waters of the reef surrounding the island.

Vicki Garside ([@maketimetoseetheworld.com](https://www.instagram.com/maketimetoseetheworld.com)) / Unsplash

The Regional Consultative Group would like to thank all the people who gave their time to be interviewed for this publication. Your expertise, knowledge and generosity have made this publication possible. We truly hope this publication will support your work and the provision of support to communities throughout the region during times of disaster.

Humanitarian Advisory Group would like to express gratitude to the members of the Steering Committee who provided guidance, peer review and recommendations throughout the development of this publication. The Steering Group members include: Eileen Turare (SPC), Angus Lambkin (UN-OCHA through Australia Assists), Emily Cooper (ACMC), Peter Giugni (ACMC), Jessica Liddle-Boh (ACMC), Natalie McLean (ACMC), Olga Prorovskaya (UN-OCHA), and Andrea Ciletti (CFE-DM).

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE PUBLICATION

This publication, *Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards A Predictable Model (Pacific Edition)*, was commissioned by the Regional Consultative Group (RCG) on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for Asia and the Pacific to strengthen the predictability, effectiveness, and appropriateness of disaster response efforts in the Pacific region. It aims to map and analyse key civil-military coordination mechanisms at both regional and national levels, with a focus on five Pacific countries—Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu—selected for their frequent exposure to natural hazards.

The publication was developed in response to growing calls from regional stakeholders for a Pacific-specific resource to promote a common understanding of civil-military coordination mechanisms in the region. It parallels the 2017 *Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination in Emergencies: Towards a Predictable Model* publication,

and its 2020 update in collaboration with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), which focused on five disaster-prone countries in Asia.

This Pacific Edition was developed with the support of the Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC) and guided by representatives from the Steering Committee organisations: Pacific Community (SPC), Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) and ACMC. The research was led by the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG), in partnership with local consultants in each of the five focus countries. These consultants conducted desk reviews and key informant interviews with civilian and military actors and led the development of the country chapters and case studies, ensuring the publication reflects local perspectives and operational realities.

WHAT IS THE RCG?

 **Established:** 2014

 **Secretariat:** UN-OCHA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), ACMC, CFE-DM



 **Participation and membership:** This multi-stakeholder group includes representatives from member states, armed forces, regional organisations, UN and international organisations, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (RCRC), donors, academia and think tanks, international, national and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs), and the private sector.

 **Chairing:** The RCG is co-chaired by one of the participating Member States or organisations, selected on a rotational basis.

 **Topics discussed:** Civil-military coordination, logistics, information sharing, activation of coordination structures, preparedness, response and recovery phases, emerging policy issues, review of guidance documents, lessons learned and good practice, linkages with other relevant forums



GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS FOR THIS PUBLICATION



Fiji



Papua New Guinea



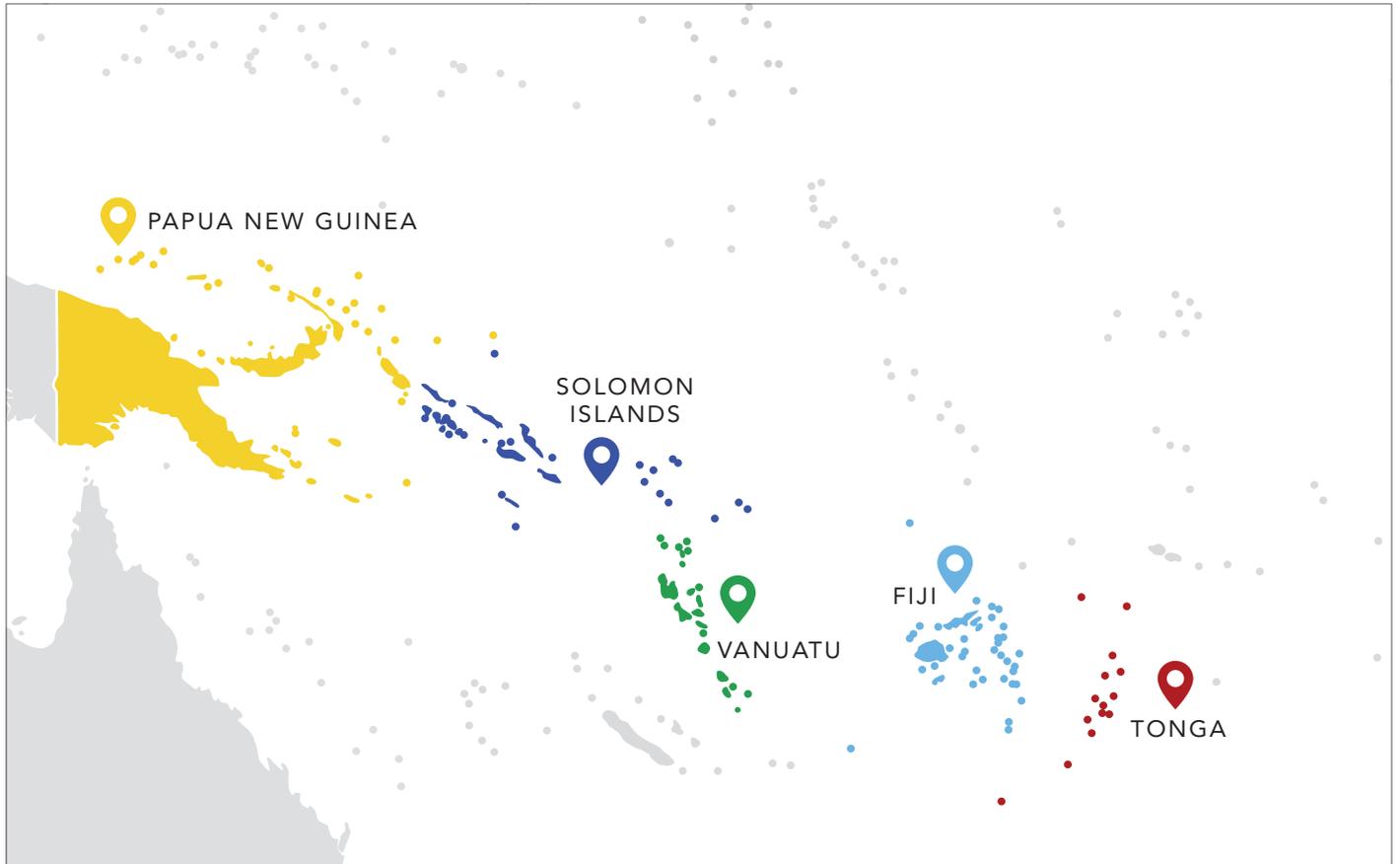
Solomon Islands



Tonga



Vanuatu



WHO IS THIS PUBLICATION FOR?

This publication is designed for civilian and military organisations and agencies who are involved in crisis response in the Pacific region. It is relevant to actors operating at international, regional, and national levels, including:

 INTERNATIONAL	 REGIONAL	 NATIONAL
Organisations and governments that support or operate in the Pacific region, particularly those involved in humanitarian action, such as partner governments, International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (RCRC), UN agencies, funds, and programs.	Organisations involved in regional response to disaster, such as Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the Pacific Community (SPC), Micronesian Islands Forum (MIF), Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), and Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO).	Government and civil society actors within Pacific Island countries who play key roles in disaster preparedness and response, such as National Disaster Management Organisations (NDMOs), police, military, fire and rescue services, local civil society, faith-based networks, and private sector partners.

PACIFIC REGION



HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN EMERGENCIES

Aerial view of Solomon Islands. Vicki Garside ([@maketimetoseetheworld.com](https://www.instagram.com/maketimetoseetheworld.com)) / Unsplash

HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN THE PACIFIC

Humanitarian civil-military coordination in the Pacific is shaped by the regional geographic diversity, vulnerability to disasters, and diverse political and cultural landscapes. The frequency of disasters, such as earthquakes, tropical cyclones, flooding, drought, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions, reinforces the need for coordinated efforts between civilian and military agencies to provide timely and effective assistance. Environmental factors, including rising sea levels and the impacts of climate change, further exacerbate these risks, requiring comprehensive and adaptive response strategies.

Whilst disaster response is civilian-led, the response to large-scale emergencies can require military support.

This can include aerial reconnaissance, delivery of relief supplies, and the transport of personnel, both into affected countries and within them, including inter-island movements. The capabilities of civilian agencies, including NDMOs, varies across the Pacific and within nations themselves. Given these dynamics, it is critical for international and regional actors to understand the structure and mechanisms of coordination to ensure they can work in support of national governments when they are requested to do so.

In addition to climate and disaster risk, there are key thematic priorities and trends that impact humanitarian civil-military coordination in the Pacific region. They include:



LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS

The Pacific has a long tradition of community-based leadership, and external actors often overlook existing capabilities.



CLIMATE AND DISASTER RISK FINANCING

The Pacific is on the frontline of the climate crisis. Sea level rise, cyclones and droughts are not future risks, they are current, lived realities.



PROTECTION, GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

Gender-based violence remains prevalent, and women are often underrepresented in formal humanitarian leadership.



HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS

Protracted climate impacts and social and political unrest blur the lines between response and development.

What is civil-military coordination?

Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) formalises essential dialogue and interaction between humanitarian organisations and militaries to enhance responses and generate better outcomes for affected communities.

In this publication, the 'civilian' element includes humanitarian agencies, government agencies such as NDMOs, fire and rescue services and police; international, national and local NGOs; the RCRC, donor governments and intergovernmental organisations such as SPC and the PIF; UN funds, programs and agencies, and the private sector.

The 'military' element refers to the national militaries of governments.

Civil-military coordination aims to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimise inconsistencies and, when appropriate, pursue common goals. The ways civilian and military actors work together can vary—sometimes they fully cooperate, other times they simply operate side by side without direct interaction. Coordination is a shared responsibility facilitated by liaison and common training.

[Adapted from UN Civil-Military Coordination definition, UN-OCHA]

KEY EVENTS IN THE EVOLUTION OF HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN THE PACIFIC

Over the past two decades, the Pacific region has developed guidance, agreements and mechanisms in response to multiple major disaster events.



KEY REGIONAL POLICIES SHAPING HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN THE PACIFIC

This section outlines the key regional policy frameworks that influence civil-military coordination and broader response and resilience.



2050 STRATEGY FOR THE BLUE PACIFIC CONTINENT

Endorsed by PIF Leaders in July 2022, the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent* sets out a unified long-term vision to advance the security, resilience and wellbeing of Pacific peoples. It places disaster response and resilience at the heart of sustainable development and regional security.

The Strategy calls for strengthened collective action across early warning systems, preparedness and response. It prioritises Pacific-led coordination that reflects cultural values and local knowledge, while enabling partnerships with international humanitarian actors. It also links disaster risk management to economic resilience, social protection and sovereignty, emphasising that effective response is essential to safeguard the long-term future of the Blue Pacific.



BOE DECLARATION ON REGIONAL SECURITY

Endorsed by PIF Leaders on 5 September 2018 in Nauru, the *Boe Declaration on Regional Security* reaffirms the region's collective commitment to peace, resilience and collaboration in the face of growing and complex security challenges.

The Declaration expands the concept of security to include human, environmental and cyber dimensions, and recognises climate change as the single greatest threat to the Pacific. It explicitly calls for regional cooperation in disaster preparedness and response. To support implementation, the *Boe Declaration Action Plan* (2019) provides a roadmap with clear priorities and performance indicators aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and regional resilience frameworks. The Declaration reinforces a people-centred approach to security, placing the safety and wellbeing of Pacific communities at the centre of regional policy.



FRAMEWORK FOR RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE PACIFIC 2017 – 2030

Agreed in 2016 and endorsed by Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), the *Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific* (FRDP) is the region's principal guide for addressing climate and disaster risks through integrated and inclusive approaches. It is voluntary and non-political, offering practical guidance for local, national and regional actors.

The FRDP advocates for mainstreaming climate resilience and DRR into development planning and programming across sectors. It complements national strategies and encourages collaboration among governments, communities, the private sector and international partners. In the humanitarian space, it underscores the importance of preparedness, risk-informed development and localised response systems, while also supporting Pacific advocacy in global climate and disaster policy forums.



PACIFIC RESILIENCE FACILITY

Endorsed by PIF Leaders in 2020, the *Pacific Resilience Facility* (PRF) is a Pacific-owned and Pacific-led financing initiative designed to support climate and disaster resilience.

The PRF addresses barriers to accessing global climate finance by providing predictable, grant-based funding for small-scale, high-impact community projects across key areas such as disaster preparedness, climate adaptation, loss and damage, and social protection. It is governed by a regional model that includes a council of finance ministers and an independent board, with Tonga selected as its host country. Programming is expected to scale up from 2026 and it will offer a practical mechanism to strengthen local capacity and reduce future humanitarian needs through community-driven resilience-building.

RELEVANT GUIDANCE FOR HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN THE PACIFIC

A range of guidance that exists to support the interaction and coordination of civil and military actors operating in shared environments during disaster response. This guidance is regularly applied in exercises and simulations to provide predictable relationships, clarify roles and responsibilities, and establish modes of working during crises.

At the global level, there are recent civil-military guidance documents that can be contextualised to the Pacific region. These frameworks help ensure that humanitarian principles are upheld while enabling efficient and respectful collaboration between diverse actors.



UPDATED UN CIVIL- MILITARY COORDINATION HANDBOOK- V2.1

The *UNCMCoord Handbook v2.1* (2025) offers a refined set of principles and operational guidance that are relevant to Pacific disaster contexts, where state militaries and police often serve as first responders and foreign military assets may be mobilised. In the Pacific, geography complicates response and the humanitarian–military interface can be tightly interwoven. In light of this, the handbook’s emphasis on principled dialogue, context specific coordination mechanisms and interoperability helps ensure that civil-military engagements reinforce humanitarian space rather than erode it. The updated edition’s inclusion of new case studies and lessons learned strengthens its applicability in Pacific settings. It provides guidance on information sharing, liaison roles and managing military support in humanitarian operations in ways that respect sovereignty, neutrality and the capacities of small island states.



GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF FOREIGN MILITARY AND CIVIL DEFENCE ASSETS IN DISASTER RELIEF (THE ‘OSLO’ GUIDELINES) – UPDATED 2007

The *Oslo Guidelines* offer essential guardrails for integrating foreign military and civil defence assets into disaster response in a way that respects sovereignty, humanitarian principles and local capacity. The Oslo Guidelines stipulate that such assets be deployed only as a last resort – when no comparable civilian alternative exists – and always with the consent of the affected state and under civilian coordination. The guidelines emphasise that military or civil defence contributions should complement, not substitute, national and humanitarian efforts. In practice, applying the Oslo approach in Pacific settings means establishing pre-agreed status agreements, clearly defining liaison arrangements, setting explicit exit criteria and maintaining strict demarcation between military support and humanitarian roles. This ensures that militaries augment capacity without undermining humanitarian space, preserving trust and accountability in small island states that are particularly sensitive to external presence and intervention.



ADDITIONAL REGIONAL GUIDANCE

Additional regional guidance is intended primarily for military use:

Asia-Pacific Regional Guidelines for the Use of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response Operations (APC-MADRO)

Asia-Pacific Intelligence Chiefs Conference (APICC), *Multinational Guidelines for Information Support to Military Disaster Relief Operations*

Multinational Standing Force – Standard Operating Procedures (MNF-SOP)

KEY PACIFIC REGIONAL BODIES FOCUSED ON DISASTER RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

This section outlines the regional and subregional bodies that work to implement the regional policies and frameworks mentioned in the section above.

Regional bodies negotiate agreements, develop guidance, host mechanisms, facilitate exercises and make decisions about the deployment of resources. Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies, such as PIF and SPC, play a key role in supporting coordinated, Pacific-led disaster responses. CROP agencies bring specialised technical expertise, regional networks and policy leadership to preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

REGIONAL BODIES



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM (PIF)

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), founded in 1971, brings together 18 member countries and territories to address pressing regional challenges and promote collaboration in achieving shared goals. The Forum aims to foster cooperation in areas such as peace, security, social inclusion and prosperity, and it sets the political and strategic frameworks such as the Boe Declaration on Regional Security and the 2025 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.



THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY (SPC)

The Pacific Community (SPC) is the principal scientific and technical organisation in the Pacific region, providing dedicated support to sustainable development since 1947. As an international development organisation, SPC is owned and governed by its 27 member countries and territories. Under SPC, the Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance (PIEMA) serves as a regional mechanism to enhance emergency and disaster management capabilities across Pacific Island countries and territories.



UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC (USP)

The University of the South Pacific (USP), created in 1968, plays a pivotal role in HADR across the Pacific by providing education, applied research and capacity development rooted in regional expertise. Its Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCESD) delivers key modules and training on subjects such as post disaster needs assessment, humanitarian response and 'build back better' principles all of which integrate disaster risk management, climatology and resilience planning into practical curricula.



PACIFIC ISLANDS ASSOCIATION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (PIANGO)

The Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) is the regional network of national umbrella NGOs – known as National Liaison Units (NLUs) – across 28 Pacific Island countries and territories. Established in 1991, PIANGO acts as a convening and capacity building body, amplifying civil society voices, facilitating information sharing, and supporting the NLUs to engage meaningfully in regional and national policy processes.



SOUTH PACIFIC DEFENCE MINISTER'S MEETING (SPDMM)

The SPDMM, established in 2013, is the annual defence ministerial dialogue in the region that shapes Pacific-led responses to security challenges. Members include Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga, with observers including Japan, the UK and the USA. The SPDMM promotes regional cooperation and initiatives such as the Future Leaders' Summit that promotes good practice in civil-military coordination during humanitarian crises.



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS PACIFIC (UN-OCHA PACIFIC)

In 1999, UN-OCHA established the Office of the Pacific (OoP) to lead and coordinate timely, effective and principled humanitarian responses in collaboration with both national and international stakeholders. Located in Fiji, the office oversees humanitarian coordination across 14 Pacific Island countries and territories: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

SUBREGIONAL BODIES



MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP (MSG)

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) plays an evolving role in advancing disaster management and resilience across the Melanesian subregion. Comprising Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) of New Caledonia, the MSG provides a political and technical platform to strengthen collaboration on DRR, climate adaptation and emergency response. The MSG supports regional coordination through shared early warning systems, humanitarian surge planning and capacity-building initiatives tailored to Melanesian contexts.



MICRONESIAN ISLANDS FORUM (MIF)

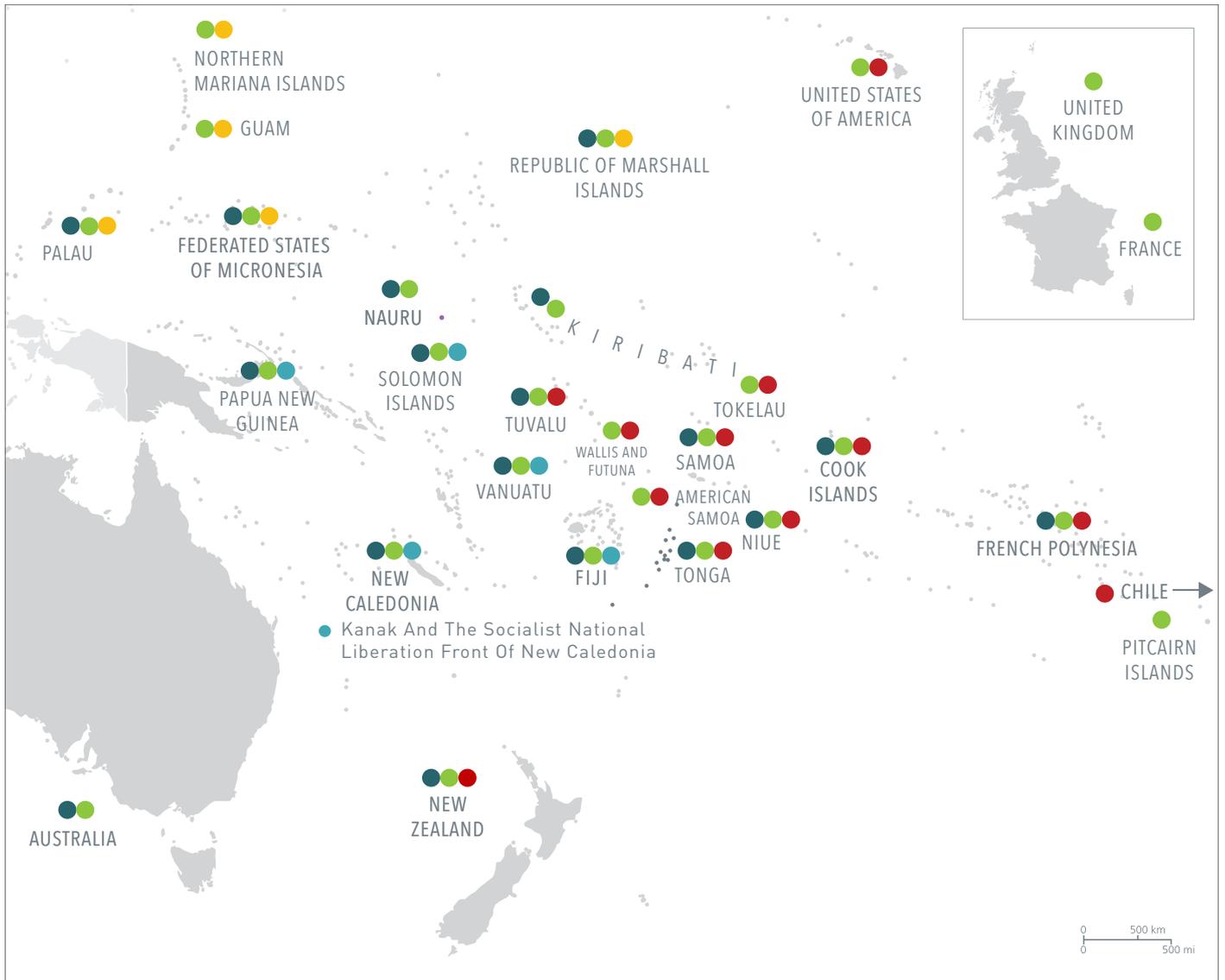
The Micronesian Islands Forum (MIF) plays an increasingly important role in shaping disaster management efforts across the North Pacific. Bringing together leaders from FSM, Palau, RMI, Nauru, Kiribati, Guam and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the MIF provides a strategic platform for regional collaboration on shared priorities, including climate resilience, DRR and emergency response coordination. The MIF offers a space for countries to align policies, pool resources and advocate collectively for tailored support from international partners. It also strengthens subregional leadership by enabling Pacific voices to shape disaster governance in ways that reflect local systems, sovereignty and traditional knowledge.



POLYNESIAN LEADERS GROUP (PLG)

The Polynesian Leaders Group (PLG) was established to strengthen cooperation across the region. It is an intergovernmental coalition of independent countries and other territories in Polynesia; members include American Samoa, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Hawai'i, New Zealand, Niue, Rapa Nui, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Wallis and Futuna.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM (PIF), THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY (SPC), MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP (MSG), THE MICRONESIAN ISLANDS FORUM (MIF) AND THE POLYNESIAN LEADERS GROUP (PLG)



- Pacific Islands Forum**
PIF:
 18 members: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
- The Pacific Community**
SPC:
 27 members: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United States of America (USA), Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna.
- Melanesian Spearhead Group**
MSG:
 5 members: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and the Kanak and the Socialist National Liberation Front of New Caledonia.
- Micronesian Islands Forum**
MIF:
 All states in the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap), the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru and the two US territories of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.
- Polynesian Leaders Group**
PLG:
 12 members: American Samoa, Chile, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, and USA.

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION MECHANISMS IN THE PACIFIC REGION

There are a range of international organisations who provide surge support for disaster assessment, coordination and information management from organisations like the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), who can deploy Field Assessment and Coordination Teams (FACTs) and UN-OCHA, who can deploy UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC teams).

This section outlines the mechanisms where coordination takes place in the Pacific region, considering the capabilities that can be deployed and the guidance under which organisations work.

PACIFIC HUMANITARIAN TEAM (PHT)

The Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) was established in 2008 by UN-OCHA's OoP to enhance the timeliness,

effectiveness and predictability of humanitarian response across the region. It is a coordinated network of humanitarian organisations that work collaboratively to support 14 PICTs. Endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in 2012 as a formal coordination body, the PHT supports nationally led disaster responses in support of Pacific governments and partners to ensure preparedness systems are in place. During emergencies, the PHT provides rapid, effective and appropriate support to governments, NGOs and communities. In non-emergency periods, the PHT focuses on strengthening disaster preparedness and enabling coordinated international support. Guided by humanitarian principles and a strong commitment to gender equality, the PHT prioritises accountability and inclusive participation to ensure the needs and rights of all disaster-affected people in the Pacific, especially the most vulnerable, are addressed.

PHT PRINCIPALS

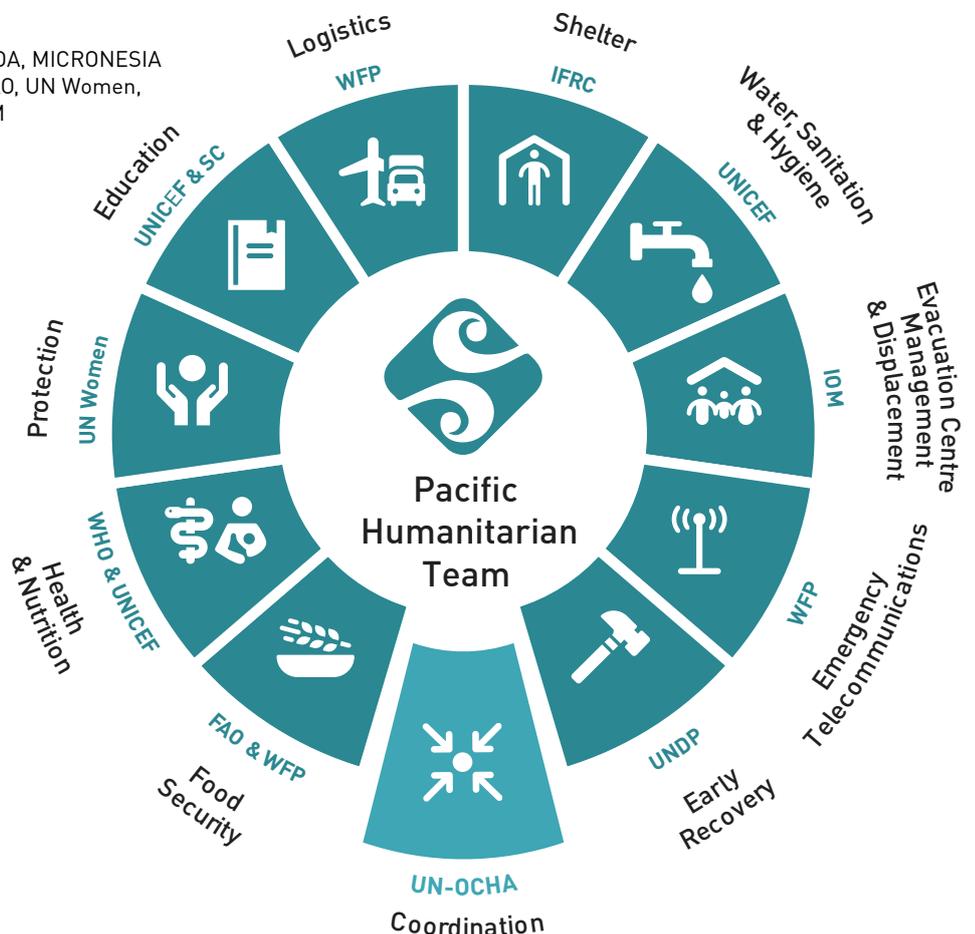


RESIDENT COORDINATORS MCOs FIJI, SAMOA, MICRONESIA
OCHA, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, IOM, UNFPA, FAO, UN Women,
UNDP, OHCHR, IFRC, OXFAM



Pacific Regional Cash Working Group

PHT CLUSTER COORDINATION GROUP



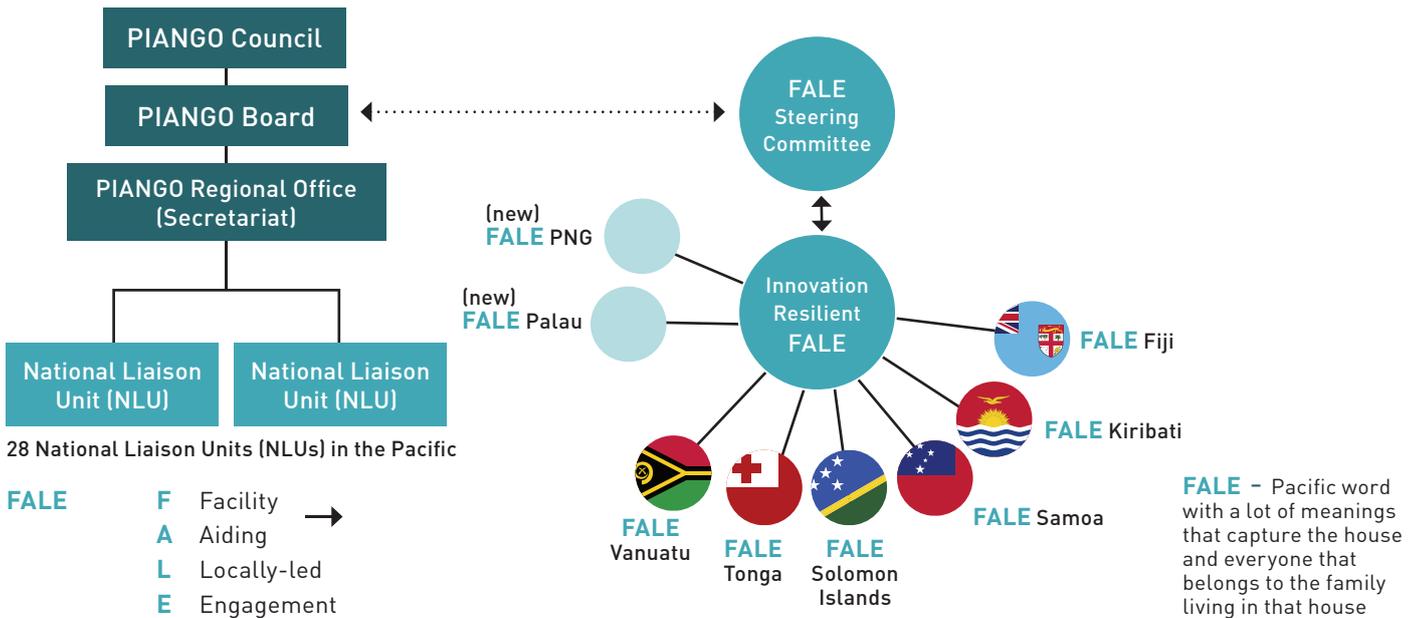
Source: UN-OCHA. Adapted from reliefweb.int

FACILITY AIDING LOCALLY-LED ENGAGEMENT (FALE) PACIFIC

PIANGO has been a key driver of developing the FALE Pacific. The FALE Pacific was created to strengthen locally led humanitarian action across the Pacific. FALE Pacific supports local actors to lead crisis response and shape humanitarian strategies that reflect their own priorities and contexts. With national FALE hubs established in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, the initiative provides a collaborative platform that brings

together local and national responders, governments, the private sector, academia, UN agencies and international partners. Through this inclusive model, FALE Pacific is helping to build a more effective, equitable and coordinated humanitarian system – one that puts Pacific leadership and solutions at the forefront.

The structure of the FALE Pacific is summarised below:



INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS THAT SUPPORT DISASTER RESPONSE IN THE PACIFIC

FRANZ TRILATERAL COOPERATION ARRANGEMENT

The FRANZ Arrangement, established on 22 December 1992 between France, Australia and New Zealand, is a key mechanism for coordinating disaster response and relief assistance in the Pacific. FRANZ provides a coordinated response when the scale of a disaster exceeds a country’s capacity to respond and the affected country requests assistance. This civilian-led arrangement, supported by defence forces, places strong emphasis on respecting the sovereignty and leadership of affected countries. Leadership under the arrangement is provided by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

QUAD PARTNERSHIP FOR HADR IN THE INDOPACIFIC

In 2022, the foreign ministers of Australia, India, Japan and the USA formally activated the Quad Guidelines for HADR, establishing a dedicated framework for coordinated humanitarian response across the IndoPacific. The partnership is designed to enhance collective capacity, interoperability and operational synergy during crises. Quad partners commit to responding only when requested by the affected state, coordinating through joint or individual support in phases spanning preparedness, response and postcrisis reviews. The Quad Guidelines further emphasise respect for sovereignty, inclusion of vulnerable groups (including women, persons with disabilities and minorities) and zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH). The Quad convenes biannual meetings and runs at least one scenario-based tabletop exercise annually to enhance readiness and coordination among partners.

KEY PACIFIC REGIONAL CAPABILITIES DEPLOYED TO DISASTERS IN THE PACIFIC

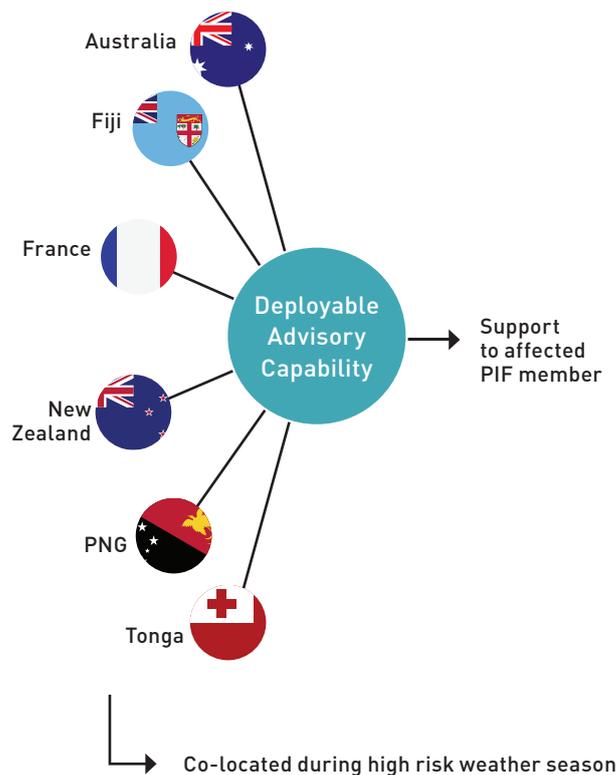
PACIFIC POLICE SUPPORT GROUP (PPSG)

The Pacific Police Support Group (PPSG), which falls under the Pacific Policing Initiative (PPI), is a multinational, deployable policing capability designed to provide coordinated law enforcement support across the Pacific in times of crisis. Drawing together police personnel from Pacific Island countries and Australia, the PPSG can be rapidly deployed to assist with public order, community safety and humanitarian operations – often in the aftermath of natural disasters or civil unrest. The PPSG operates under a principle of supporting, not supplanting, local police services and emphasises culturally appropriate, community-focused engagement. In practice, the PPSG enhances regional security cooperation while respecting Pacific sovereignty and leadership. As climate and disaster risks increase, the PPSG’s ability to provide scalable, collaborative support to national police forces is becoming a key asset in regional preparedness and response. The PPSG reflects a broader shift toward Pacific-led, Pacific-partnered approaches to security and resilience.

PACIFIC RESPONSE GROUP (PRG)

The Pacific Response Group (PRG) was formally endorsed at the SPDDM meeting in October 2024. The PRG is a regional deployable military capability that is ready to assist PIF members in their response to disasters, working in support of civilian authorities. The PRG is a rapidly deployable military unit designed to assist civilian authorities in disaster-affected states. The PRG is permanently co-located during high-risk weather season and capable of supporting preparedness planning, and if requested, can rapidly deploy a Forward Planning Team to support military liaison, operational planning, and the identification of potential military support tasks. As a regional asset, the PRG aims to strengthen coordinated military deployments across the Pacific, supporting civilian-led HADR efforts.

The PRG will be deployed if requested by a member of the Pacific Island Forum and will have a rotating command structure. The PRG is composed of personnel from SPDDM member countries, Australia, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga. Chile is also an SPDDM member and supportive of the unit but is not contributing personnel at this time.



NATIONAL LEVEL CAPABILITIES DEPLOYED TO DISASTERS IN THE PACIFIC

Key capabilities at the national level can be requested by disaster-affected countries to support disaster response. Not all PICTs have response teams as outlined below, hence intra-regional deployments are becoming more common.

URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAMS (USAR)

Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams are highly specialised emergency response units trained to locate, rescue and provide immediate medical assistance to people trapped in collapsed buildings or other urban disaster environments. Globally coordinated through the [International Search and Rescue Advisory Group \(INSARAG\)](#), these teams are critical in the aftermath of earthquakes, cyclones and other complex emergencies. In the Pacific, where remoteness, limited infrastructure and frequent natural hazards present unique challenges, USAR capacities are increasingly being adapted to suit island contexts. There are USAR focal points in most Pacific countries.

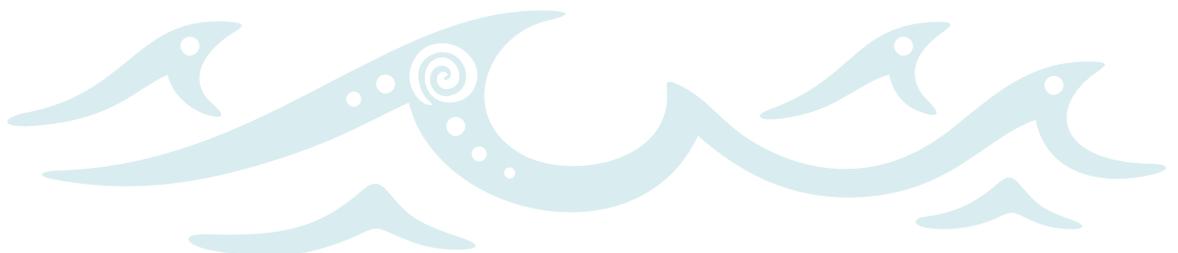
EMERGENCY MEDICAL TEAMS (EMTS)

[Emergency Medical Teams \(EMTs\)](#) are specialised groups of health professionals trained to provide rapid, high-

quality medical care during disasters and public health emergencies. In the Pacific region, where communities are particularly vulnerable to natural hazards and the impacts of climate change, the development of national EMTs has become a cornerstone of health emergency preparedness. There are different levels of EMTs with certification through [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#). [EMTs](#) have been instrumental in responding to events like the 2022 Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai volcanic eruption and the 2019 measles outbreak in Samoa. EMTs undergo rigorous training and simulations to ensure readiness. Their establishment not only enhances immediate response capabilities but also strengthens long-term resilience by building local expertise and fostering regional collaboration.

ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY SPECIALISTS

The [UN Environment Programme \(UNEP\)/UN-OCHA Joint Environment Unit](#) has trained a cohort of Pacific-based professionals who can be deployed to ensure that environmental concerns are integrated into disaster response, including conducting environmental assessments and providing recommendations. This work is supported by the [Environmental Emergencies Centre](#).



REGIONAL EXERCISES AND SIMULATIONS

There are various military led exercises in the region that involve strengthening civil-military coordination mechanisms. In addition the exercises listed below, [POVAI ENDEAVOUR](#) Cooperative Operations and Exercises Framework is designed to strengthen interoperability among Pacific defence forces and improve coordination across the region. Initially endorsed at the 2013 SPDMM, the Framework supports the SPDMM community by enabling more effective collaboration through joint operations and exercises, organised around three key thematic areas: maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and peacekeeping and stabilisation operations.

 EXERCISE	 OBJECTIVE	 STATES INVOLVED	 FREQUENCY
Exercise Tropic Twilight	This exercise is led by New Zealand and regional partners to build capability for HADR operations in the Pacific.	New Zealand and regional partners.	Once per year
Regional Exercise Longreach	This exercise aims to strengthen Pacific military cooperation, coordination and contributions to regional humanitarian assistance and disaster relief responses. Civil society actors and NGOs are also involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPDMM members (Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga) • 3 observer countries (Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) • other regional partners 	Once per year
Exercise Pacific Partnership	<p>This exercise brings together military, civilian, government and NGO actors from host and partner nations to conduct medical, engineering, disaster management and community engagement activities, with the goal of strengthening interoperability, capacity and regional relationships.</p> <p>Pacific Partnership also functions as a platform for advancing civilmilitary coordination norms, testing response modalities, building interoperability and enabling host nations to deepen their national disaster response systems in cooperation with external partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United States Pacific Fleet • Participating nations: Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea (ROK), Singapore, and the United Kingdom • Recent visits and mission stops in the Pacific: Fiji, Tonga, Papua New Guinea 	Once per year, multiple locations
Exercise Croix du Sud	This exercise is the South Pacific's largest HADR exercise which also involves civil-society actors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Defence Force • French Armed Forces of New Caledonia (FANC) • His Majesty's Armed Forces of Tonga • Papua New Guinea Defence Force • New Zealand Defence Force • United States Armed Forces 	Every two years

WHAT ELSE IS ON THE HORIZON?

There are a range of new regional initiatives that are relevant to civil-military coordination during emergencies. Some of these are about to become operational from 2026 onwards.

PACIFIC HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE COORDINATION MECHANISM (PResCoM)

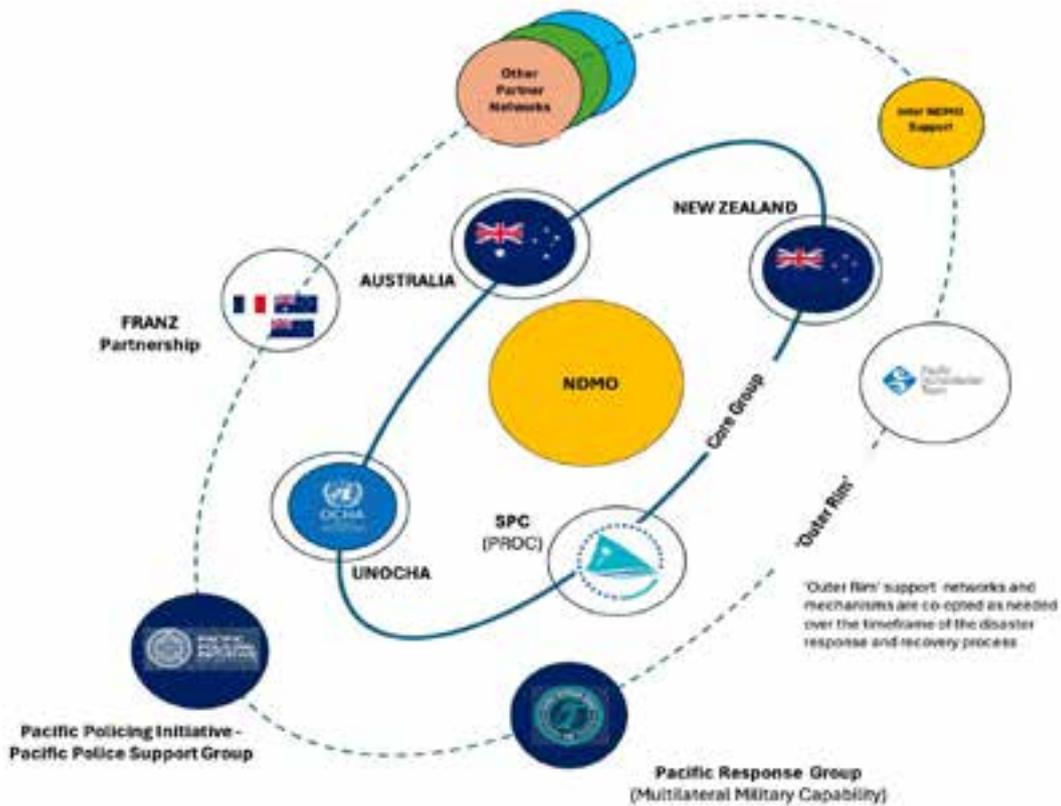
Pacific Humanitarian Response Coordination Mechanism (PResCoM) is a new regional approach designed to strengthen collective preparedness and enable a timely, coordinated humanitarian response to disasters in the Pacific. The concept for a PResCoM was first outlined in the 2019 *Boe Declaration Action Plan*, endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders. Since then, momentum has built through a series of regional discussions, including the inaugural Meeting of Pacific DRR Ministers in September 2022, the Pacific Regional Disaster Managers Meetings (PRDMM) in 2023, and the 2024 Forum Officials Sub-Committee on Regional Security.

These discussions have reaffirmed a collective commitment to strengthening national and regional humanitarian response capabilities. In line with the Boe

Declaration, Leaders have called for the development of a regional mechanism that supports cross-border assistance, enhances coordination with the international community and establishes key components such as a Pacific-wide incident management system, competency-based training, peer-to-peer learning and shared resourcing. Governance arrangements to support this mechanism are set for further discussion in 2026.

Convened under the leadership of the SPC and guided by Pacific-led principles, PResCoM brings together national governments, UN agencies, regional organisations, NGOs, donors and other partners to align efforts before, during and after emergencies. Its primary function is to facilitate decision-making, surge coordination and resource mobilisation during large-scale crises – particularly when national capacities are overwhelmed. Built on lessons from past responses such as TC Winston and the COVID-19 pandemic, PResCoM reinforces Pacific leadership in humanitarian coordination while promoting interoperability, localisation and respect for humanitarian principles.

PResCoM 'PLANETARY SYSTEM'



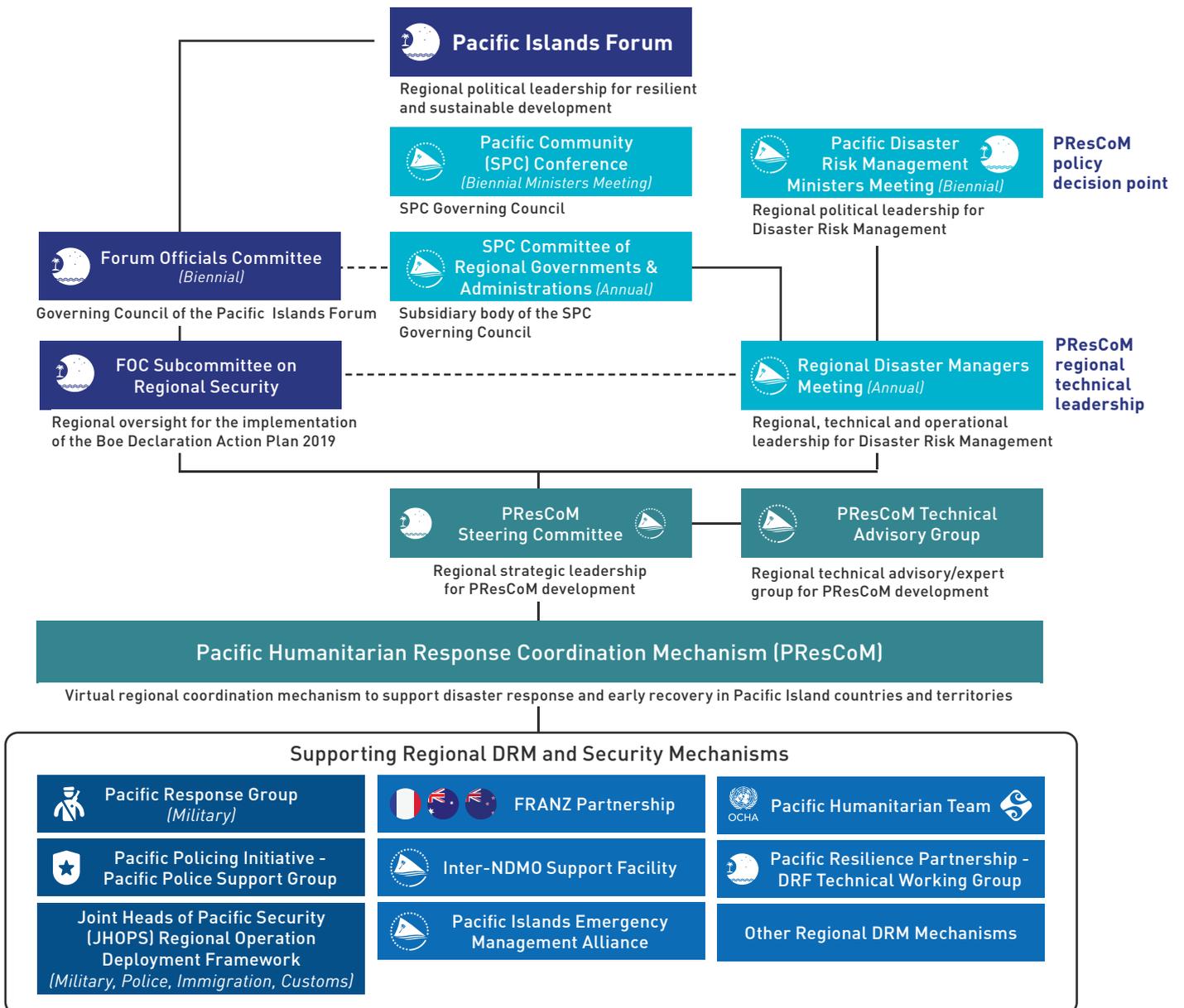
Source: Pacific Humanitarian Response Coordination Mechanism (PResCoM) Policy & Operating Guideline October 2025, p. 24

The PResCoM will be a virtual mechanism that will provide coordination for both regional and international disaster response surge support. Whilst not an operational agency itself, the PResCoM will be a civilian-led platform to facilitate requests for and offers of assistance.

The PResCoM’s operational responsibilities are:

- Provide shared situational awareness before, during and after crises
- Convene to consider requests for humanitarian response and early recovery support from NDMOs
- Liaise with affiliated humanitarian and other organisations on the provision of requested support
- Monitor and review surge support capacity with NDMO and relevant organisations and revise or adjust as may be needed
- Support the undertaking of ‘after action reviews’

PResCoM REGIONAL GOVERNANCE AND SUPPORT STRUCTURE



Source: Adapted from Pacific Humanitarian Response Coordination Mechanism (PResCoM) Policy & Operating Guideline October 2025, p. 13

JOINT HEADS OF PACIFIC SECURITY (JHOPS) – REGIONAL OPERATIONS DEPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK

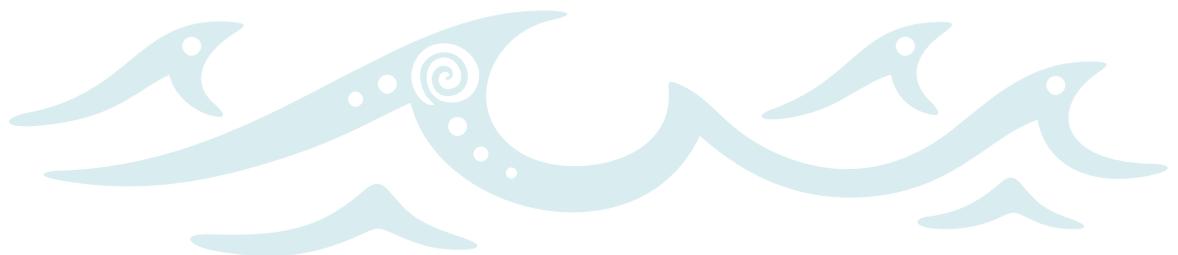
The proposed JHoPS framework will look to establish a regional governance mechanism to coordinate civilian, military and police deployments, filling a key gap in the current regional architecture. Building on the strategic direction of the *2000 Biketawa Declaration* and the *2018 Boe Declaration*, it would provide a common, Pacific-led mechanism to guide responses to regional security challenges, including through deployment of the PPSG and the PRG. Such a framework would meet regional needs by streamlining both bilateral and regional deployments during crises, demonstrating the strength of the JHoPS in turning Pacific Leaders’ strategic guidance into operational outcomes. Members agreed that the negotiation of any framework must ultimately be led by Pacific Leaders and committed to briefing relevant domestic agencies – such as foreign ministries, legal offices and national security agencies – on its potential value to secure political endorsement for future negotiations. The Secretariat was tasked, through the Intersessional Working Group (IWG), to compile a register of issues and concerns, including legal considerations, to inform ongoing discussions. Members will report back on progress to the JHoPS meeting in 2026.

REVIEW OF REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE

A review of the regional architecture is currently underway and is examining political groupings, institutional processes and mechanisms, governance mechanisms, and engagements and partnerships. It is possible that the findings and recommendations of the review will have an ongoing impact on how civilian and military actors engage during times of crisis.

OCEANS OF PEACE DECLARATION

The *Oceans of Peace Declaration* is a Pacific-led initiative endorsed by Pacific Leaders in 2025. It seeks to establish the Blue Pacific as a zone of peace, security and cooperation. The initiative emphasises respect for sovereignty, non-militarisation and regional autonomy, while reinforcing commitments to maritime security, climate resilience and rule-based governance of the ocean space. A component of this initiative is the PPI, which aims to establish regional training centres, a code of conduct and a standing deployable police capability, thereby strengthening regional mechanisms for crisis and security cooperation. The Oceans of Peace framework builds on earlier security and development norms such as the Boe Declaration and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific.



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAWG	Anticipatory Action Working Group
ACMC	Australian Civil-Military Centre
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AHA Centre	ASEAN Coordination Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management
APC-MADRO	Asia-Pacific Conference on Military Assistance to Disaster Relief Operations
APICC	Asia-Pacific Intelligence Chiefs Conference
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUSMAT	Australian Medical Assistance Team
CCAAG	Crisis Communication and Advocacy Working Group
CFE-DM	Centre for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance
CIMIC	Civil-Military Cooperation
CMCS	Civil-Military Coordination Section
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific
CSF	Centre for Sustainable Futures
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCRP	Disaster and Community Resilience Program
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EMT	Emergency Medical Team
FACT	Field Assessment and Coordination Team
FALE	Facility Aiding Locally-Led Engagement
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEMAT	Fiji Emergency Medical Assistance Team
FLNKS	Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front
FMA	Foreign Military Assets
FPF	Fiji Police Force
FRANZ	France, Australia, and New Zealand Arrangement
FRDP	Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific
FRSC	Pacific Islands Forum Regional Security Committee
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
HADR	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response
HAG	Humanitarian Advisory Group
HERS	Humanitarian Emergency Relief Supplies
HMI	Humanitarian Military Interaction
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IMWG	Information Management Working Group
INDOPACOM	US Indo Pacific Command
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation

INSARAG	International Search and Rescue Advisory Group
ISU	Infrastructure Specialists Unit
IWG	Intersessional Working Group
JHoPS	Joint Heads of Pacific Security
MIF	Micronesia Islands Forum
MNF-SOP	Multinational Standing Force – Standard Operating Procedures
MPAT	Multinational Planning and Augmentation Team
MSG	Melanesian Spearhead Group
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLU	National Liaison Unit
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PaCESD	Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development
PCRIC	Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Company
PHT	Pacific Humanitarian Team
PHWP	Pacific Humanitarian Warehousing Program
PIANGO	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
PIC	Pacific Islands Country
PICTs	Pacific Island Countries and Territories
PIDP	Pacific Islands Development Program
PIEMA	Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariate
PLG	Polynesian Leaders Group
PPI	Pacific Policing Initiative
PPSG	Pacific Police Support Group
PRCWG	Pacific Regional Cash Working Group
PRDMM	Pacific Regional Disaster Managers Meeting
PResCoM	Pacific Humanitarian Response Coordination Mechanism
PRF	Pacific Resilience Facility
PRG	Pacific Response Group
PRP	Pacific Resilience Partnership
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCG	Regional Consultative Group
RCRC	Red Cross/Red Crescent
RFMF	Republic of Fiji Military Forces

RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UN-OCHA)
RPIL	Resilient Pacific Islands Leaders
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SIDS	Small Island Developing State
SPC	Pacific Community
SPDMM	South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting
SREM	Strategic Roadmap for Emergency Management
TC	Tropical Cyclone
UN	United Nations
UN MCO	United Nations Multi-Country Office
UN OoP	United Nations Office of the Pacific
UN-CMCoord	United Nations Civil-Military Coordination
UN-OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs
UNDAC	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue
USP	University of the South Pacific
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

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FJI



HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN EMERGENCIES

Leleuvia Island, Fiji. Photo: Josaia Cakacaka / Unsplash





Fiji was ranked 72nd out of 193 countries in the 2025 World Risk Report. Fiji’s main hazards are climate-related and geological, including tropical cyclones, flooding, storm surges, and droughts. It is also vulnerable to earthquakes and tsunamis and has active volcanoes. These hazards are exacerbated by climate change and pose significant risks to its population, environment, and economy, emphasising the need for effective coordination across all stakeholders in disaster response.

Fiji has developed a robust disaster response framework, shaped by its frequent exposure to tropical cyclones (TCs) and other climate-related hazards. Disaster governance is guided by the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024 and the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2018–2030. The National Disaster Management Council (NDMC) provides strategic oversight, while the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) coordinates preparedness, response and recovery operations across national and subnational levels.

The Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) and Fiji Police Force (FPF) play key roles in national disaster response, particularly during rapid-onset emergencies. The RFMF supports logistics, engineering and relief operations, while the FPF ensures public order and safety. Coordination is facilitated through the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) and Fiji Cluster System.

Fiji’s participation in regional exercises and its experience managing responses to events such as TC Winston (2016) and the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) have strengthened its civil–military coordination and contributed to broader regional disaster preparedness efforts. While the current humanitarian coordination is managed by the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) and follows a standard cluster system, the military plays a critical role in disaster and emergency response particularly in supporting the logistic aspect, managing and moving supplies.

KEY EVENTS IN THE RECENT EVOLUTION OF HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN FIJI

2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fiji’s Emergency Medical Assistance Team (FEMAT) was launched. FEMAT was established to enhance the country’s capacity to deliver rapid medical assistance during disasters and emergencies. Fiji’s largest recorded TC Winston response catalysed significant improvements in civil–military coordination, particularly involving the RFMF and international defence actors. It highlighted the importance of interoperability and prompted policy development to formalise response roles.
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet approval of the National Humanitarian Policy for Disaster Risk Management. This institutionalised humanitarian practices and promoted proactive disaster management, with emphasis on civil–military coordination.
2017-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The FPF Annual Report referenced police responsibilities in disaster response, including crowd control, security for aid distribution, and support for community resilience after a disaster.
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy (2018–2030). The policy provides a 12-year framework that explicitly supports a multi-agency approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR), including structured coordination between civilian and military actors.
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fiji Inter-Cluster System was formalised as the key national mechanism for coordination among sectoral and subnational actors, with engagement from military and police actors embedded in humanitarian operations. FEMAT achieved its first World Health Organization (WHO) certification as a Type 1 Fixed Emergency Medical Team (EMT), making it ready for international deployment. This milestone established FEMAT as the first team in the Pacific Islands region with this capability.
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enactment of the Climate Change Act 2021 which introduced legally binding climate resilience and adaptation measures, including planned relocation, which intersects with disaster response coordination.
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening of Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Camp (Blackrock Camp). This regional training and operational hub was purpose-built to support rapid, coordinated responses to disasters across the Pacific, particularly through mobilisation of humanitarian personnel and relief supplies.
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of the National Emergency Response Team (NERT).
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Enactment of the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024. This expands and clarifies disaster risk management (DRM) architecture, creating multiple tiers of responsible officers and mechanisms. The Pacific Community (SPC) included Fiji in its Mapping of Disaster Risk Management Legislation Policy and Organisational Responsibility Across the Pacific Region, providing external validation of its evolving approach to joint disaster response.
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operationalisation of the National Disaster Risk Management Act. This Act further institutionalises coordination roles, including for the RFMF and FPF. This aligns with Fiji’s forward-leaning environmental policy and ongoing efforts to strengthen response systems in light of increasing climate risks.

DISASTER RISK PROFILE

KEY FACTS

- Official name:** The Republic of Fiji
- Area:** 18,270 km²
- Population:** 931, 024 (SPC 2025)
- Capital:** Suva
- Official language:** English, Fijian, Fiji Hindi
- Disaster focal point:** National Disaster Risk Management Office
- Military:** The Republic of Fiji Military Forces
- Police:** Fiji Police Force



Map source: Adapted from <https://reliefweb.int/map/fiji/fiji-location-map-2025>

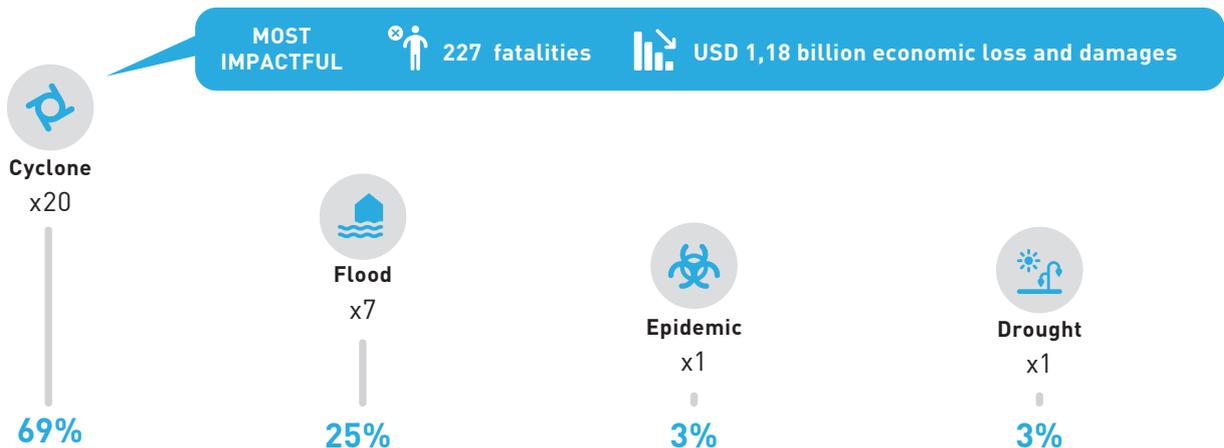
GENERAL INFORMATION

Fiji faces high exposure to TCs, often experiencing multiple events each year. TCs typically occur during the wet season from November–April and are less frequent during El Niño periods. They cause loss of life and significant economic damage, hindering the country’s economic growth. Intensifying cyclones, as well as rising sea levels and increasingly frequent floods and landslides, highlight Fiji’s vulnerability to climate change.

Fiji has been affected by 29 natural disasters over the last 25 years. Fiji is ranked the 72nd most at-risk country for natural disasters due to its geographical location in a high-risk area of the South Pacific.

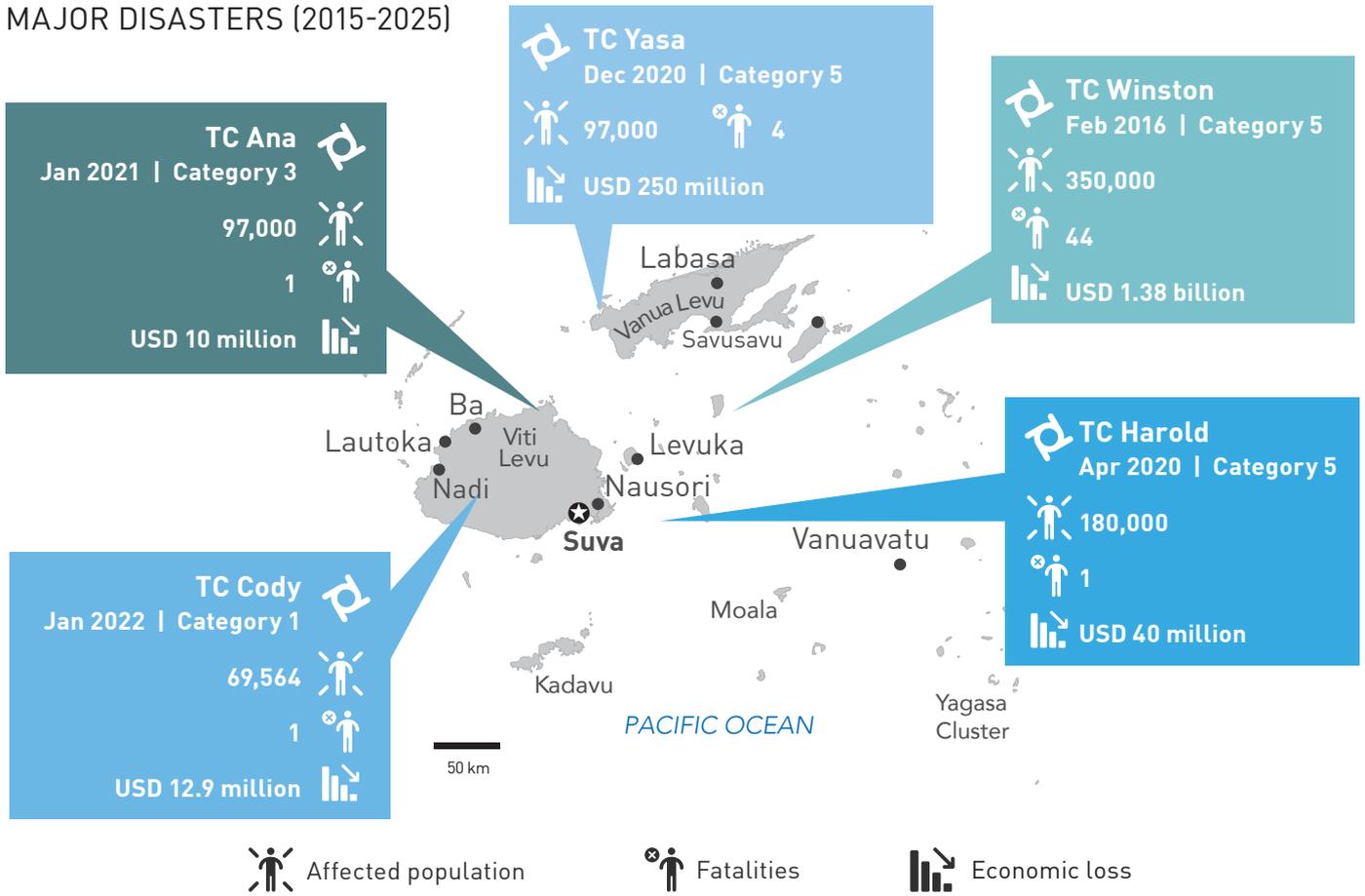
The graph below orders the natural disasters by type according to their frequency, with the most to least frequent moving left to right and the percentage frequency illustrated. The most impactful disaster type is identified but not ranked. Since 2000, cyclones (69%) have been the most frequent disaster to affect Fiji, followed by floods (25%). Cyclones were also the most impactful, causing a significant number of fatalities and economic loss.

FREQUENCY AND PROPORTION OF DISASTERS BY TYPE FROM 2000 TO 2025



Source: <https://public.emdat.be/data>

MAJOR DISASTERS (2015-2025)



INFORM Risk is an open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters. INFORM Risk gives each country a risk score of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest) for each of the dimensions, categories, and components of risk, as well as an overall risk score. The higher the score, the more at risk a country is to disasters.

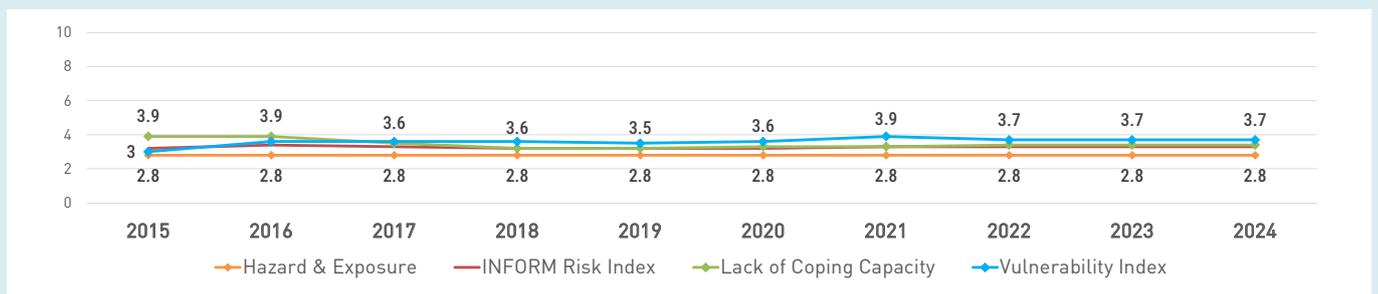
INFORM RISK VALUE AND RANKING 2025

Fiji has moderate values for hazards and exposure, and vulnerability, and an average value for lack of coping capacity. Fiji is medium risk.

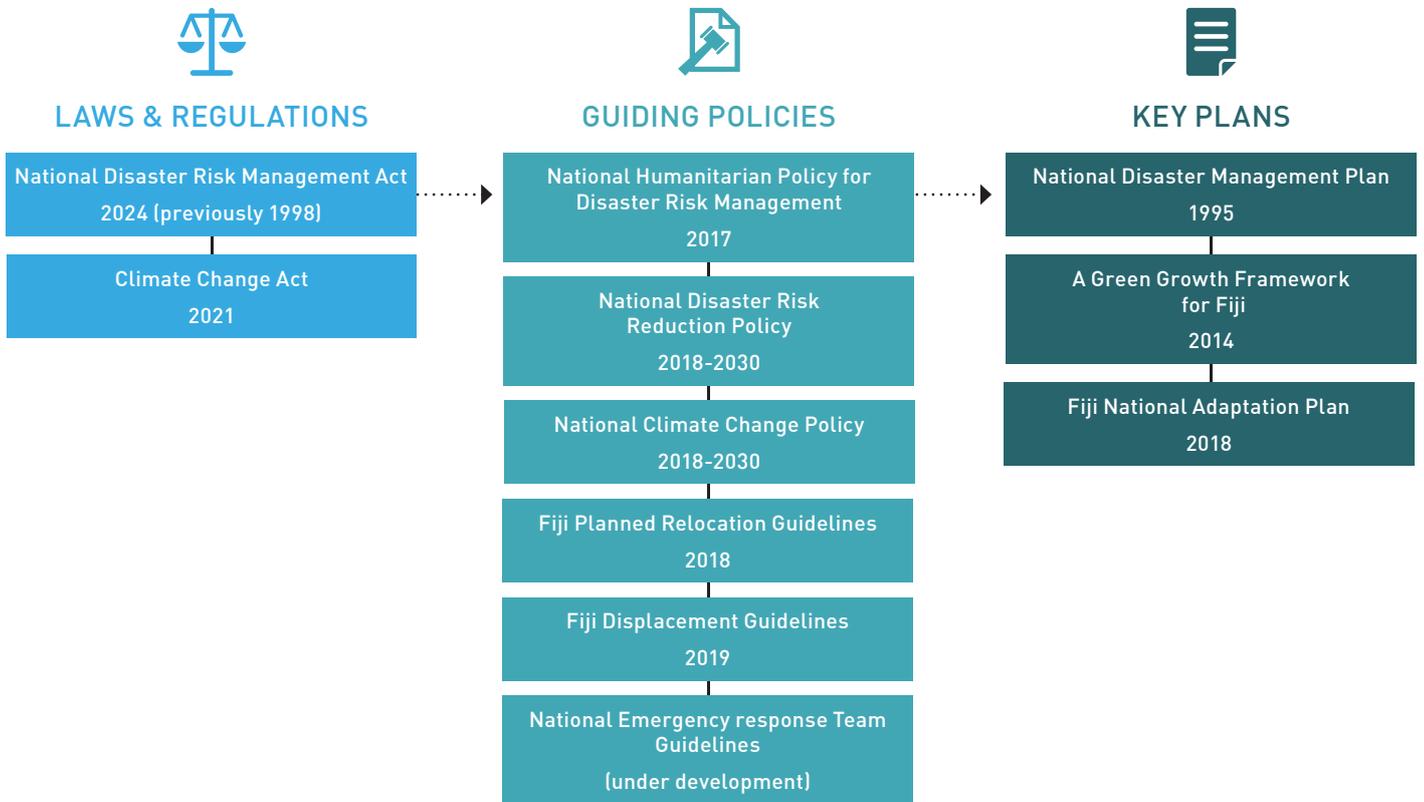
INFORM Risk and dimensions of risk	VALUE (10 as the highest)	WORLD RANK (out of 191 countries)
INFORM Risk	3.3	103
Hazard & Exposure	2.8	104
Vulnerability	3.3	98
Lack of coping capacity	3.4	128

INFORM RISK TEN-YEAR TREND (2015-2024)

While hazards and exposure have remained relatively stable, Fiji has demonstrated improvements in coping capacity and a modest reduction in vulnerability following a previous peak. The country's overall INFORM Risk Index has shown only minor fluctuations since 2015 and remains at medium.



KEY POLICIES, PLANS AND FRAMEWORKS FOR CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION



Natural Disaster Management Act No. 21 of 1998

The Natural Disaster Management Act 1998 is the cornerstone of Fiji’s disaster risk governance framework. It established the NDMC as the principal body responsible for disaster policy and coordination, supported by the NDRMO and the NEOC. The act delineates the roles of key officials, including the National Disaster Controller (NDC) and Divisional Commissioners, and outlines procedures for declaring natural disasters, coordinating emergency operations, and mobilising resources across national and subnational levels. It also mandates the development of disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery plans, and provides for the integration of non-governmental organisations and international assistance into the national disaster management system.

It also redefines the responsibilities of key officials including the Minister responsible for DRM, the NDC, and Divisional Commissioners, and updates procedures for declaring disasters arising from natural, biological and environmental hazards.

It is worth noting that Fiji is particularly focused on reducing climate change risks and enhancing resilience, which generates disaster prevention activities as well as informing disaster planning and response. The Climate Change Act 2021 and National Climate Change Policy 2018-2030 formulate Fiji’s comprehensive legislative framework on climate change, reflecting its commitment to sustainable development and international climate obligations. As neither legislation is specific to civilian-military coordination they are not detailed here.

National Disaster Risk Management Act No. 14 of 2024

The National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024 builds on and modernises Fiji’s disaster risk governance framework. It replaces Fiji’s earlier disaster governance framework established under the 1998 Act. This iteration strengthens the role of NDRMO as the principal body for national disaster risk policy and coordination.

National Disaster Management Plan 1995

The National Disaster Management Plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of agencies and ministries in all aspects of disaster management, including mitigation, preparedness, emergency response, relief, and recovery. It serves as operational guidance, providing arrangement for coordination of all disaster activities in Fiji.

National Humanitarian Policy for Disaster Management 2017

[Fiji's National Humanitarian Policy for Disaster Risk Management](#), approved by Cabinet in August 2017, establishes guidance for humanitarian action across the disaster management cycle. Developed in response to the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, such as TC Winston in 2016, the policy aims to institutionalise humanitarian practices and promote a shift from reactive to proactive disaster management. The policy emphasises the importance of coordinated efforts among government agencies, civil society and international partners to enhance disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Key thematic priorities outlined in the policy include the development of national guidelines for humanitarian coordination, strengthening information management and communication systems, building national and local capacities, and establishing robust financial monitoring mechanisms. The policy also advocates for the integration of vulnerable groups, such as women, children and persons with disabilities, into DRM processes.

National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy for 2018-2030

The [National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2018-2030](#) provides a framework aimed at minimising disaster risks and enhancing resilience across the nation. Aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the policy emphasises a proactive, whole-of-society approach to DRM. It integrates DRR into national and local development planning, budgeting, and decision-making processes, ensuring that risk considerations are embedded across all sectors. The Policy outlines strategic objectives focusing on strengthening disaster risk governance, investing in risk reduction for resilience, and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and recovery.

Fiji Planned Relocation Guidelines 2018

[This document](#) provides strategic guidance on integrating planned relocation into climate adaptation efforts, particularly in response to disasters and slow-onset climate impacts. Central to its approach is a commitment to inclusivity, gender, responsiveness, and active community participation.

Fiji Displacement Guidelines 2019

[This document](#) provides the Fijian Government and all other stakeholders within Fiji with guidance on reducing vulnerabilities associated with displacement. It offers sustainable strategies to prevent the root causes of displacement, particularly those arising from climate change and disaster-related events. Furthermore, it aims to support the alignment of human mobility policies through robust financial mechanisms, in accordance with Fijian legislation such as the Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund.

National Emergency Response Team Guideline (Under Development)

The Guideline will establish a unified operational structure under the NDC, through which all government agencies – including the FPF, the RFMF and the National Fire Authority (NFA), operate under a single chain of command during declared disasters. This ensures coherence between the disaster management frameworks and the statutory mandates of these institutions.

A Green Growth Framework Fiji 2014

[The Green Growth Framework for Fiji: Restoring the Balance in Development that is Sustainable for Our Future \(2014\)](#) is a strategic blueprint aimed at hybridising economic development with environmental sustainability and social inclusion. It supports and complements national development plans, such as the Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress and the 2010-2014 Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development. The framework is structured around three pillars – environmental, social and economic – and identifies 10 thematic areas to guide sustainable development. It emphasises the need for integrated and inclusive approaches, encouraging participation from government, the private sector, civil society, and communities to collectively address development challenges and promote resilience, particularly in the face of climate change and natural disasters. The most relevant aspect of this policy for humanitarian civil-military coordination is on building resilience to climate change and disasters. Central to this effort is strengthening the roles and coordination of key agencies such as the NDRMO within the National Climate Change Policy.

Fiji National Adaptation Plan 2018

[Fiji's National Adaptation Plan](#), launched in 2018, is designed to enhance the nation's resilience to climate change, with a significant focus on disaster response. Recognising the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, particularly TCs, the Plan outlines 160 prioritised adaptation actions across various sectors to be implemented over a five-year period.

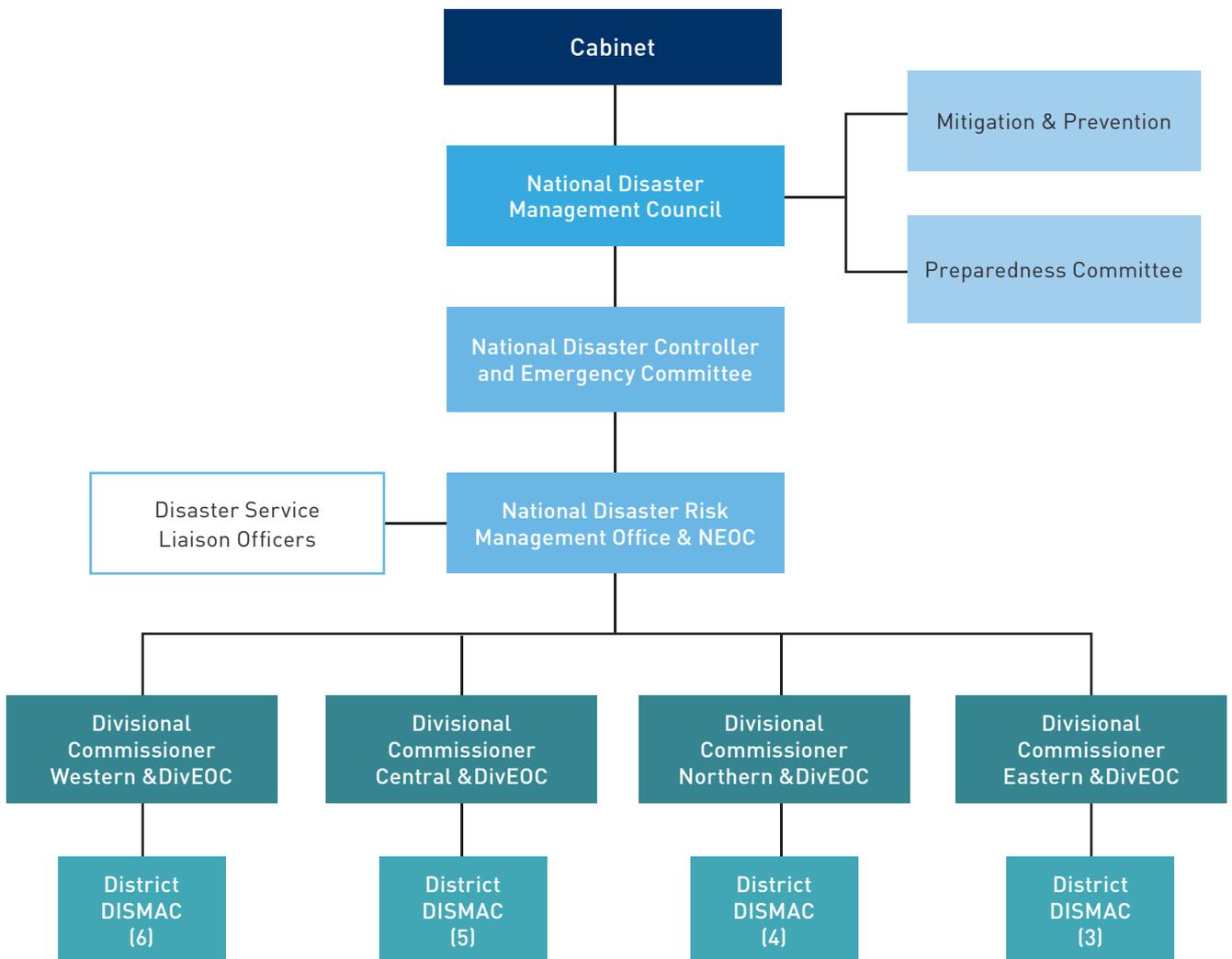
KEY CIVILIAN RESPONSIBILITIES IN DISASTERS

NATIONAL DISASTER FOCAL POINT

In Fiji, the NDMC is the central decision-making body responsible for overseeing DRM policy and strategy. It is supported operationally by the NDRMO, which leads the coordination and implementation of preparedness, response and recovery activities across national and subnational levels.

The Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management plays a critical administrative role, ensuring that sectoral agencies and humanitarian actors are aligned through structures such as the NEOC and the Fiji Cluster System.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT COUNCIL (NDMC)

The NDMC is the government body responsible for formulating policies and strategies aligned with the objectives of the National Adaptation Plan. The Emergency Committee of the NDMC coordinates emergency response activities.

 **Established by:** Natural Disaster Management Act 1998 and reinforced by the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024

 **Leadership:** Minister of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management (chair)

 **Key functions:**

- Undertaking community awareness activities
- Initiating and coordinating the implementation of disaster mitigation activities
- Coordinating emergency operations
- Advising cabinet on declarations of natural disasters.

 **Composition:** Representatives from each Ministry, Directors of other key agencies (including state-owned enterprises), and civil society represented by the Director of the Fiji Red Cross Society and the Fiji Council of Social Services.

NATIONAL DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT OFFICE (NDRMO)

The NDRMO serves as the central coordination hub for the Fijian Government during national disasters. Operating under the National Disaster Management Act, Fiji’s NDRMO carries out its work under the direction of the National Disaster Management Council. This is comprised of Permanent Secretaries from selected Government Ministries and agencies critical to DRM. It implements specific disaster management-related activities and advises the Cabinet, the NDC and the NDMC and other related government agencies on disaster management while formulating policy.

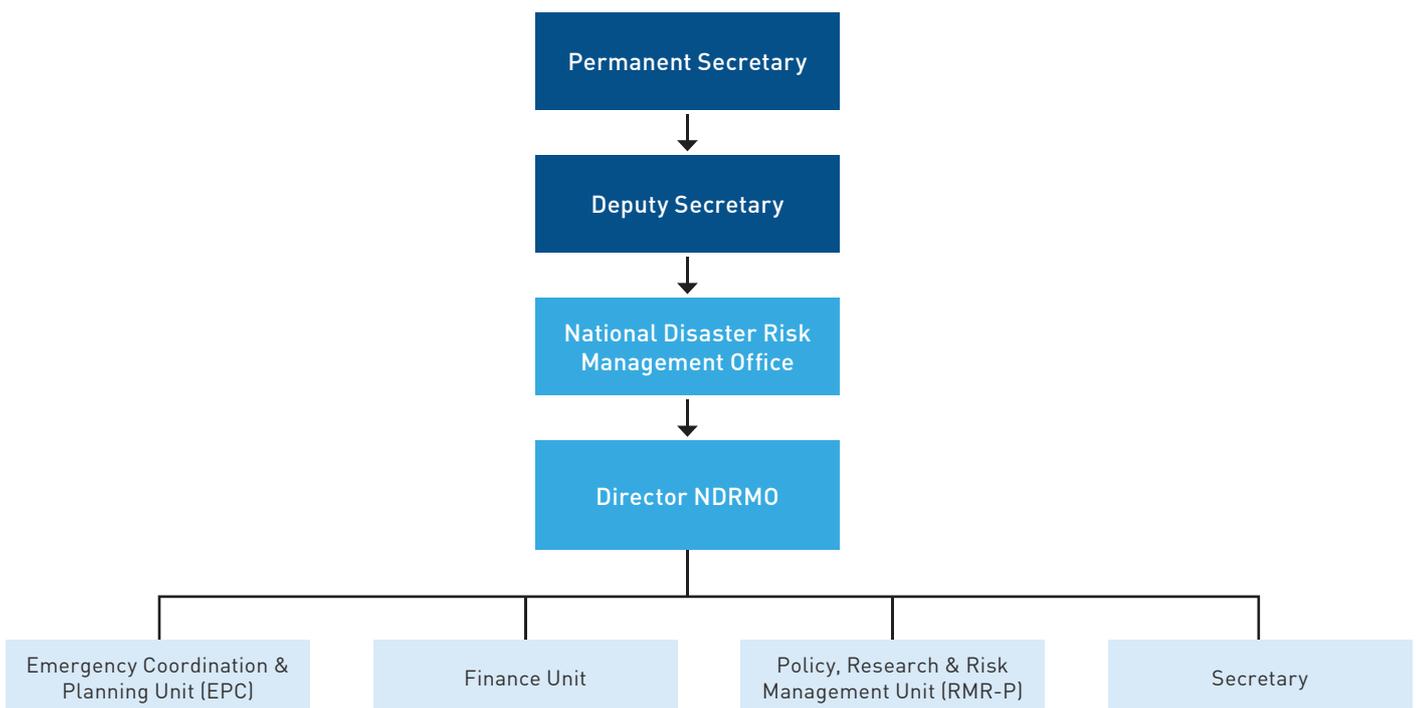
 **Established by:** National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024

 **Leadership:** Chaired by the Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management

 **Key functions:**

- Advise the Cabinet, the NDMC and the NDC
- Coordinate with relevant agencies, donors and other parties
- Issue warning information in the event of an emergency
- Set up and operate the NEOC as needed under the command of the NDC
- Oversee and supervise emergency operation centres at the provincial or district level.

NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT OFFICE

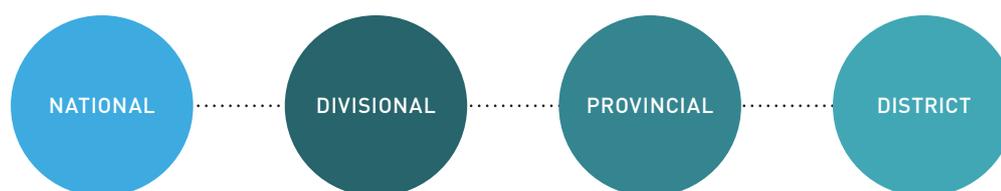


SUBNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT COUNCILS

Operating at both the Divisional and District levels, Subnational Disaster Management Councils comprise the heads of all relevant government agencies and NGOs operating within those jurisdictions. They are chaired by the Divisional Commissioner at the divisional level, by Provincial Administrator at the provincial level, and the District Officer at the district level, and are tasked with providing strategic guidance and operational support for DRR, mitigation and emergency response.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS IN FIJI

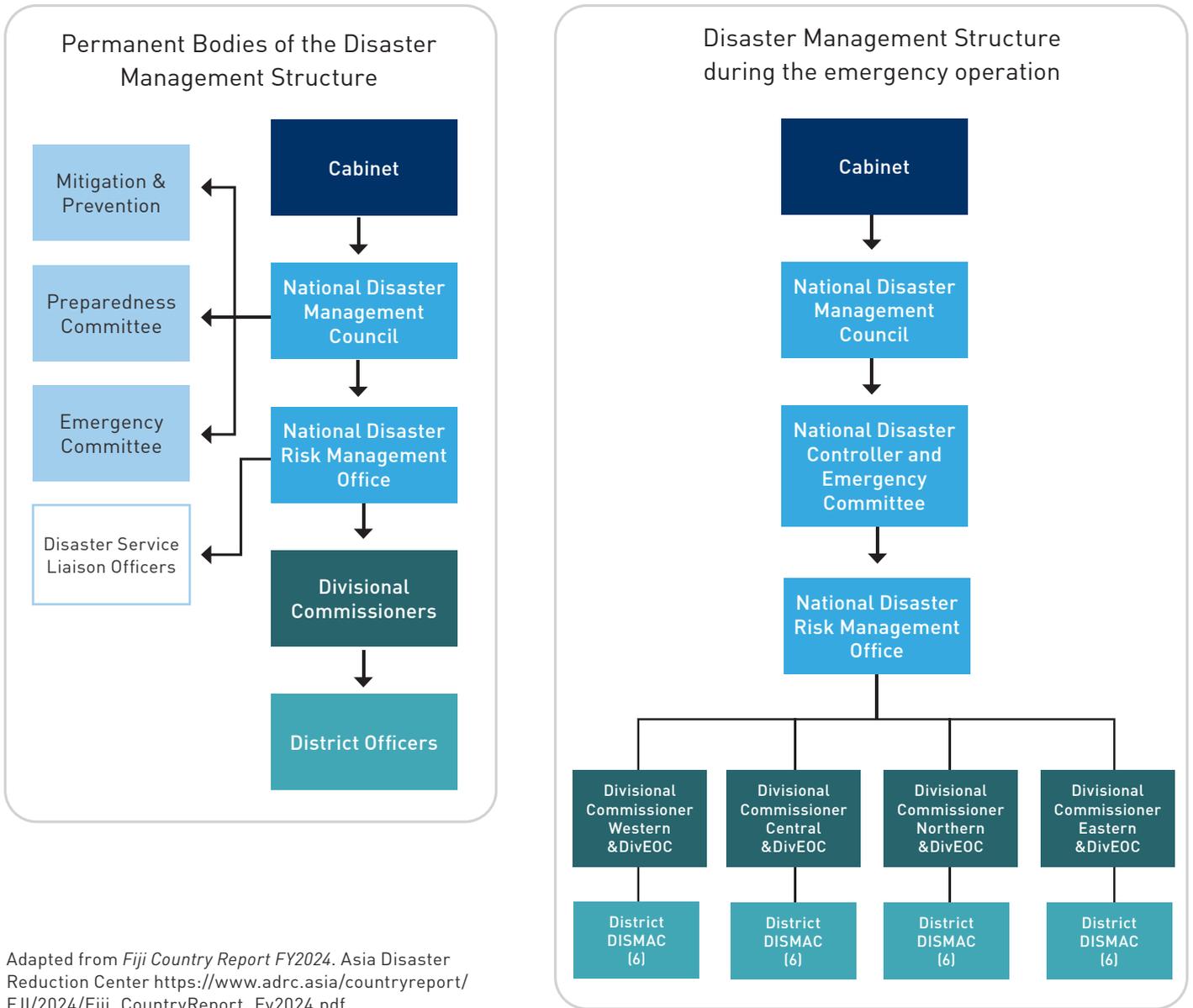
The administrative levels in Fiji are divisions, provinces, and districts and towns/cities. Each of these has a Disaster Management Council.



	NAME	LEAD AUTHORITY	NUMBER
FIRST LEVEL	National	NDMC NDRMO	1
SECOND LEVEL	Divisional	Divisional Commissioner's Office Divisional Disaster Management Council Divisional Emergency Operations Centre (DivEOC)	4
THIRD LEVEL	Provincial	Provincial Disaster Management Council Provincial EOC	15
FOURTH LEVEL	District	District Disaster Management Council District Emergency Operations Centre	17



SUBNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



Adapted from *Fiji Country Report FY2024*. Asia Disaster Reduction Center https://www.adrc.asia/countryreport/FJI/2024/Fiji_CountryReport_Fy2024.pdf

KEY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

MINISTRY OF RURAL AND MARITIME DEVELOPMENT AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT (MRMDDM)

The Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management plays a pivotal administrative role in aligning sectoral agencies and humanitarian actors through coordination structures such as the NEOC and the Fiji Cluster System. It is responsible for developing the National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP), which outlines the roles and responsibilities of all disaster management stakeholders. It coordinates national disaster activities through the Ministry's organisational structures, ensuring effective engagement at the national, divisional and local community levels. Regionally, disaster management is supported by Divisional Commissioners and a network of District Officers, with the Ministry's headquarters based in Suva and 33 stations operating across the Central, Northern, Eastern and Western Divisions.

MINISTRY OF POLICING

The Ministry of Policing is responsible for maintaining public safety, law and order and national security through the formulation and implementation of policies, programmes, and projects related to policing and internal security. It provides institutional and administrative oversight for FPF, ensuring that policing services are effective, transparent and aligned with national development priorities. The Ministry's role extends to the review of policing legislation, policy coordination with other government agencies and engagement in inter-agency operations related to national emergencies, crime prevention and public order management.

THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND VETERAN AFFAIRS (MDVA)

The MDVA provides strategic leadership, policy direction and administrative oversight on national defence and security matters. The Ministry advises the Government, sets defence policies, and coordinates international and inter-agency engagements. The RFMF works with the Ministry through the Military Liaison Cell to ensure communication, coordination and alignment of operations with national defence priorities, as well as participation in inter-agency planning, defence diplomacy, peacekeeping and international security activities. At the same time, the RFMF operates independently with its own constitutional mandate and operational command, carrying out defence and security operations in accordance with the Constitution and government policy.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES (MHMS)

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services coordinates health sector preparedness and emergency operations, ensuring that health facilities and staff are ready, issuing public health advisories, monitoring health risk and promoting climate-resilient healthcare systems. Through its National Health Emergency and Disaster Management Unit, the Ministry develops policies, conducts risk assessments and ensures that health facilities and personnel are trained and equipped for emergencies. An example of this capacity is the FEMAT, a World Health Organization-classified Type 1 Fixed Emergency Medical Assistance Team. FEMAT can deploy and run field clinics both within Fiji and internationally, providing emergency medical care during disasters. FEMAT also engages in civil-military collaboration and conducts two joint training exercises per year across health and non-health sectors, including the FPF, RFMF, Navy and NFA. These exercises include logistics and medical team training, such as Major Incident Medical Systems training.



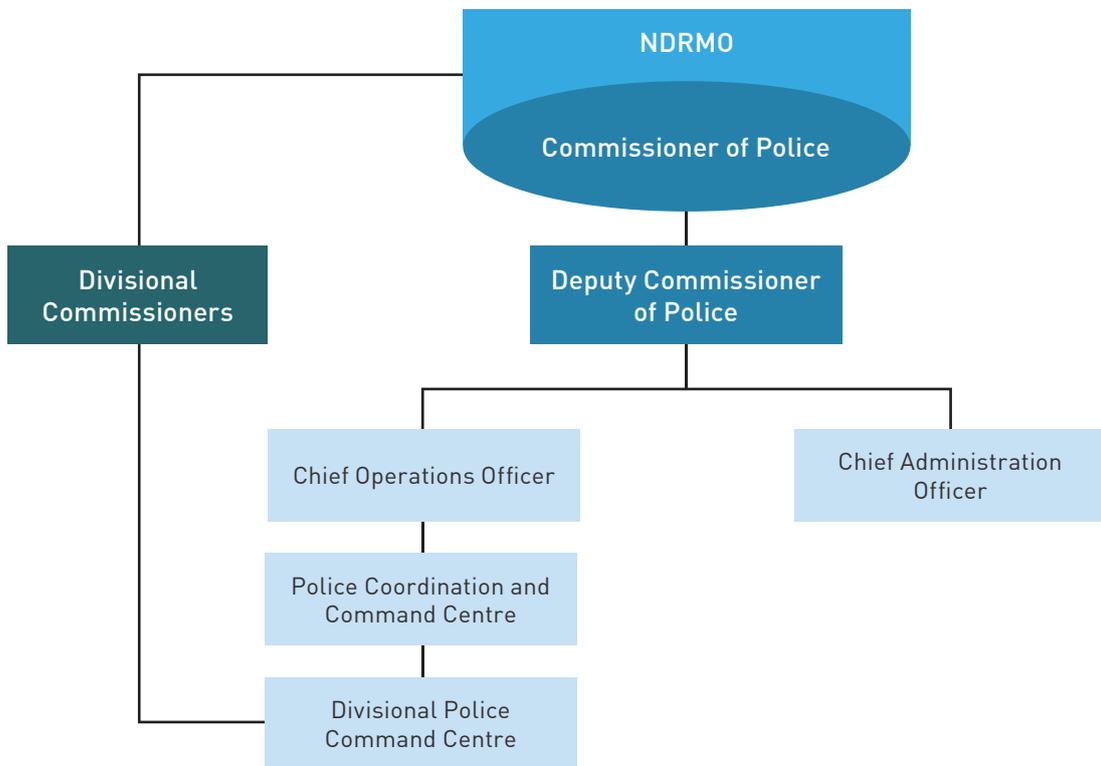
FIJI POLICE FORCE (FPF)

The FPF’s role in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief is articulated within the Police Act (CAP 85) and the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024. As the COVID-19 pandemic struck, FPF coordinated with the RFMF in enforcing lockdowns and other regulations and laws. Some other key responsibilities during disaster include management, allocation and prioritisation of police resources, services, and responsibilities during national disasters, and issuing warnings (Police Advisory to the People) upon the recommendation of the National Command Centre. Fiji has five divisions, each with its own Divisional Command Centre. These command centres function as coordination units at the subnational level between police stations and the National Command Centre, ensuring effective sharing information and implementation activities.

NATIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY (NFA)

The NFA was established under the National Fire Service Act of 1994. It has 44 branches across the country. The NFA works with related organisations to conduct rescue operations during disasters. It also carries out fire education activities as part of disaster education community initiatives targeted at young people.

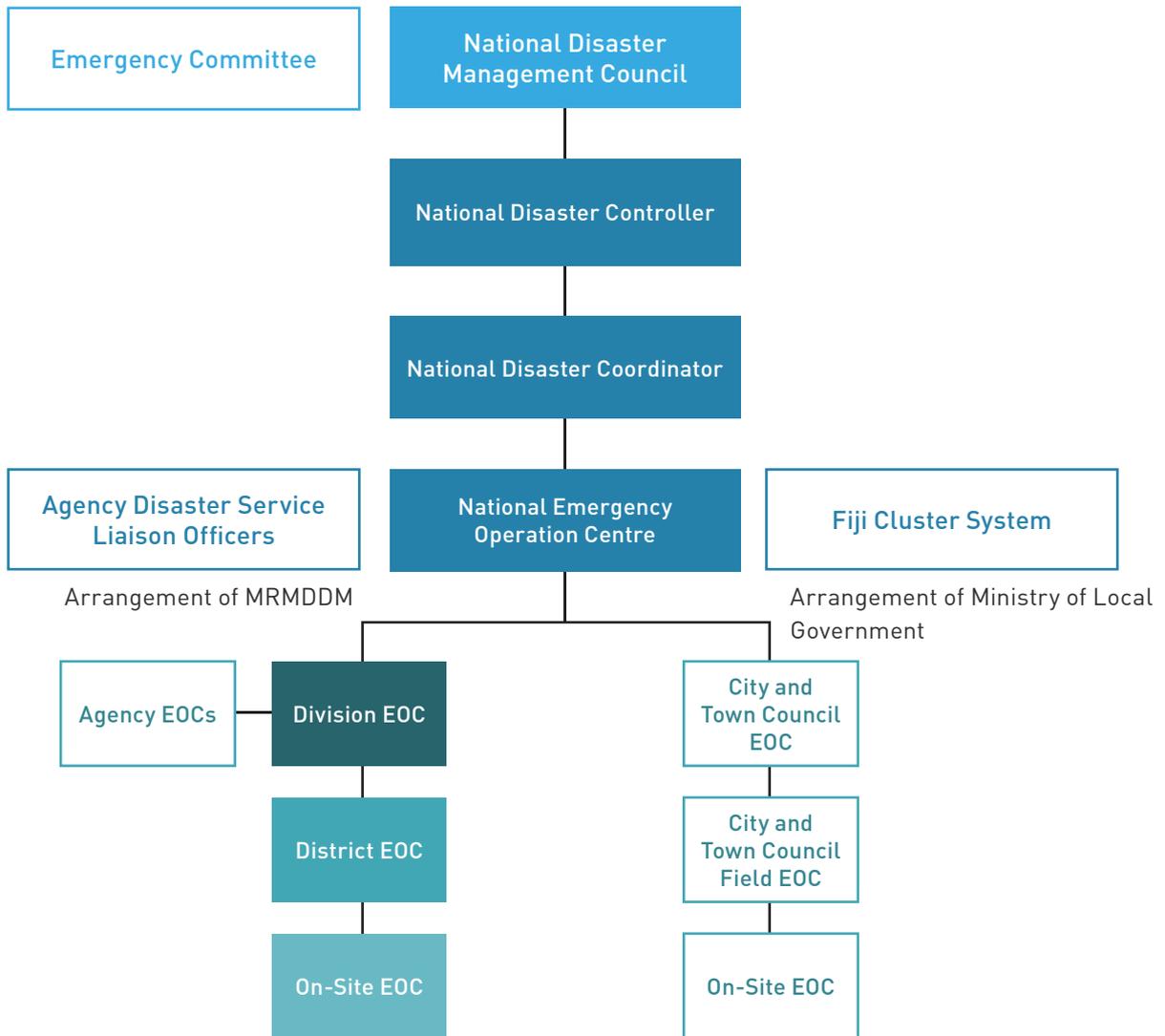
THE COMMAND STRUCTURE FOR THE FIJI POLICE FORCE DURING A STATE OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY



COORDINATION MECHANISMS

Fiji’s disaster response coordination structure operates across three levels. The NDMC leads at the strategic level. The coordination level is supported by three sub-committees: Mitigation and Prevention, Preparedness, and Emergency, chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and

Disaster Management, who also serves as the NDC. At the operational level, coordination is managed via the NEOC, which is overseen by the NDRMO. The National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024 provides guidance and the legal framework for this structure.

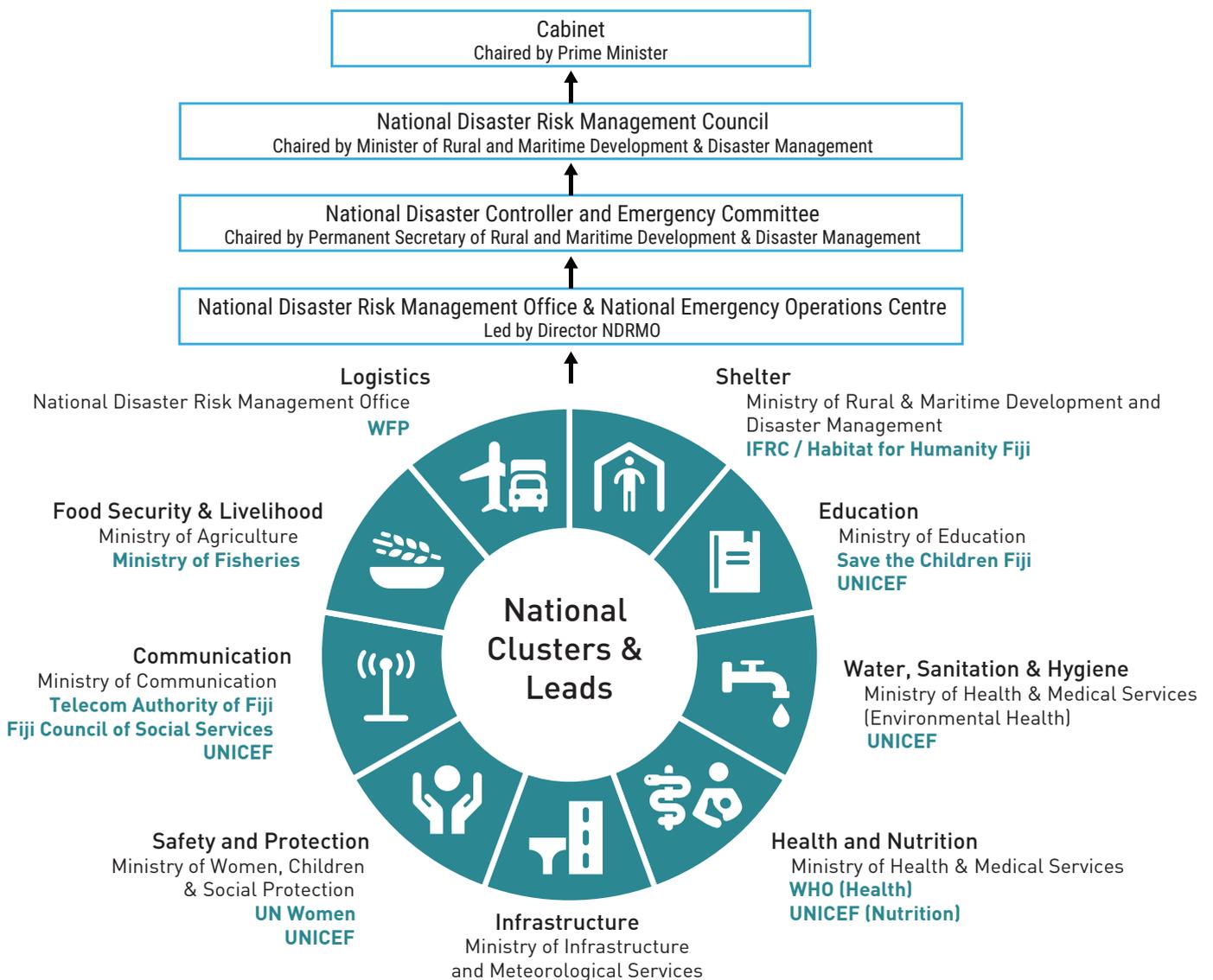


NATIONAL CLUSTER SYSTEM

The Fiji Cluster System is the overarching mechanism for humanitarian coordination in Fiji and is the forum for inter-operability between sectoral clusters, subnational humanitarian coordination and the Fijian Government. The Permanent Secretary for Disaster Management (the NDC under the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024) is the inter-cluster lead, and the NDRMO Director is the inter-cluster coordinator. There are currently nine clusters, each under the leadership of the Permanent Secretary of an appropriate ministry. Each sectoral cluster coordinates the activities of actors operating in that sector.

The Cluster System was first introduced in Fiji following TC Evans in 2012. It was initially led by United Nations (UN) agencies; Fiji later developed its own adapted structure known as the Fiji Cluster System. This government-led coordination mechanism currently operates across three disaster management phases: preparedness, response, and recovery & rehabilitation. The RFMF and FPF are particularly engaged under the Logistics Sector in the National Cluster System.

NATIONAL COORDINATION STRUCTURE



Source: Adapted from <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/fiji/fiji-humanitarian-coordination-structure-28-october-2025>

NATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE (NEOC)

During emergency operations, the NDRMO sets up the NEOC to coordinate disaster monitoring, warning and immediate post-disaster response, including disaster relief work.



Leadership: Director of NDRMO



Key Functions:

- Coordinating the activities of disaster monitoring, warning and immediate post-disaster response including disaster relief work
- Gathering, collating, assessing, and circulating information
- Providing operational and logistic support for the emergency operations.

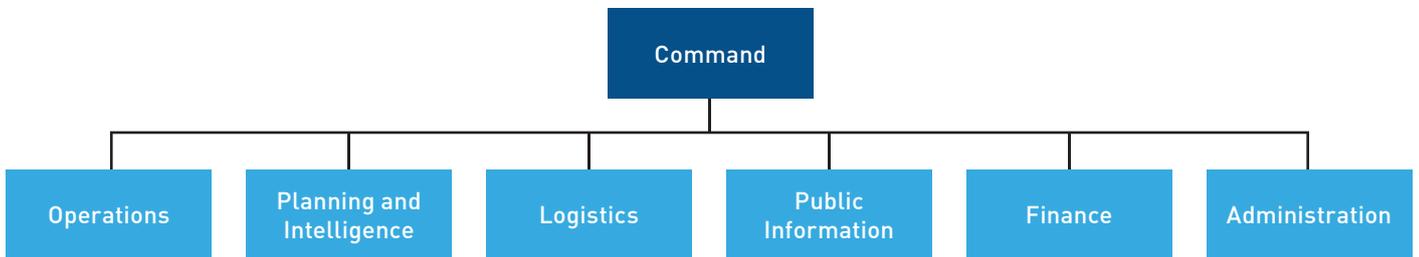


Composition: public servants from relevant agencies including RFMF, FPF, Fiji Posts and Telecommunications, and the Ministry of Information

SUBNATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATION CENTRES

The National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024 mandates the establishment of subnational Emergency Operation Centres (EOCs) to coordinate DRR, preparedness, response, and recovery. The Divisional Commissioner, in consultation with the National Coordinator, must establish EOCs at the divisional, provincial and district levels. Additional EOCs may be set up at the municipal and community levels by local authorities in coordination with the Divisional Commissioner and National Coordinator. The functions, activation protocols, funding, and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for these EOCs are determined collaboratively with subnational DRM committees. Operationally, the Divisional EOC serves as the central command for all disaster-related activities within the division, with all government resources and agencies at lower levels under the authority of the Divisional Commissioner. Similarly, Provincial and District EOCs operate under the leadership of Provincial Administrators and District Officers, respectively.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE



MOBILISATION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

The National Coordinator, in consultation with Divisional Commissioners and the Fiji Cluster System, assesses national response capacity and advises the NDC on whether external assistance is required. Offers of international assistance must be directed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which, after consultation with the NDC, may accept or decline the offer, either in full or part.

Registered humanitarian organisations must notify the National Coordinator of any accepted contributions from their affiliated international organisations or members. All international donations must be reviewed against a preapproved list of items before shipment to Fiji.

SINGLE WINDOW INTERNATIONAL FACILITATION TEAM (SWIFT)

The Disaster Management Council may establish a Single Window International Facilitation Team to be led by a focal point nominated by the Ministry responsible for trade in consultation with the National Coordinator.

 **Established by:** National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024

 **Leadership:** NDC

Co leads: The team comprises representatives from key national agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, Immigration Department, Biosecurity Authority, Airport Authority, Maritime Safety Authority, and the Telecommunications Authority. Additional members may be appointed by the Emergency Committee.

Key Functions:

- Consolidating and expediting the legal requirements concerning the entry of incoming international personnel, goods, equipment and transport of international relief in case of a disaster, emergency or international initial recovery
- Controlling and monitoring unsolicited bilateral donations
- Advising Ministers on available legal facilities
- Support DMCs at Subnational Level
- Support Management Committee at Subnational Level

 **Composition:** MFA, Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, Immigration Department, Biosecurity Authority, Airport Authority, Maritime Safety Authority, and the Telecommunications Authority. Additional members may be appointed by the NEOC.

 **Government-approved cluster(s):** Water Sanitation and Hygiene, Shelter, Education, Health & Nutrition, Logistics, Safety & Protection, Food Security & Livelihoods, Public Works & Utilities, and Communications

 **Supporting partners:** Supporting partners including Fiji Red Cross Society, Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS), and the Fiji Business Disaster Resilience Council. UN-OCHA plays an observer role.

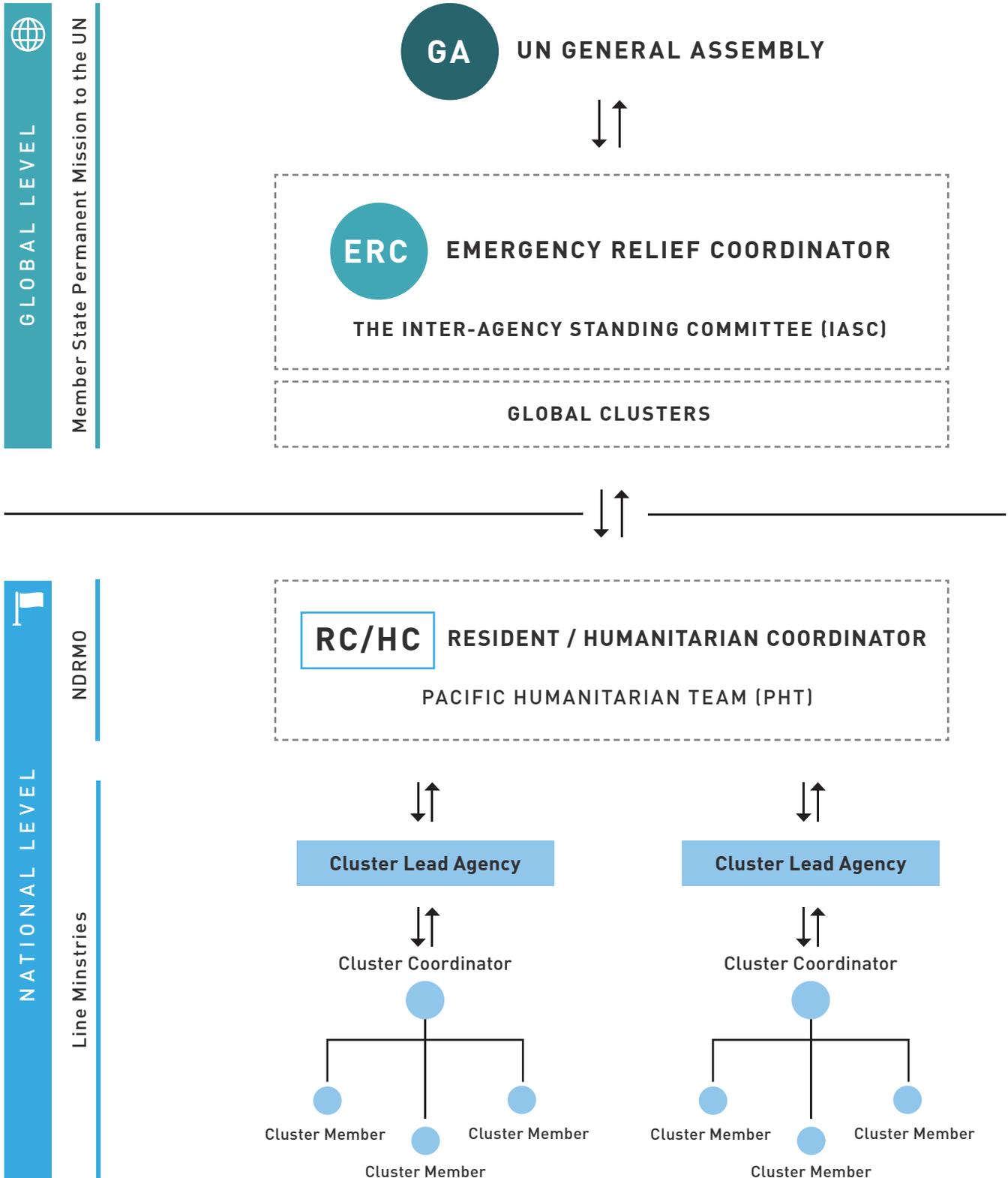
COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

During the emergency stage, all international assistance is requested through the Minister of Foreign Affairs and coordinated by the NDC. Within 72 hours of a disaster, the Government of Fiji, through the NDC, will hold an initial briefing for diplomatic missions, UN agencies, and regional organisations, based on early damage and needs assessments. If Fiji requests international assistance following a natural disaster, the NDC will arrange more frequent consultations with donor countries and organisations. These meetings will outline specific requirements for operational support, emergency relief and recovery efforts, enabling donors to coordinate their contributions and meet any outstanding needs. To support effective collaboration, a staff member from the NDC's office will be appointed as the main point of contact for international agencies, assisting with coordination and providing relevant updates as needed. The National Cluster System, set up by the Government of Fiji and relevant support agencies, is a civilian coordination mechanism for international humanitarian assistance. It is coordinated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) and co-led by key government agencies. When the Government of Fiji requests and/or accepts international assistance, coordination between the Pacific Humanitarian Team, the UN Resident Coordinator and national response systems and bodies, including NDMC and lead government agencies, is initiated.

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION SYSTEM

Fiji's government-led National Cluster System works in parallel with international humanitarian coordination. During emergencies, this dual-track system ensures that international assistance complements and strengthens nationally led disaster response, with coordination flowing through established government channels and the SWIFT for streamlined support.

GLOBAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL COORDINATION INTERFACE

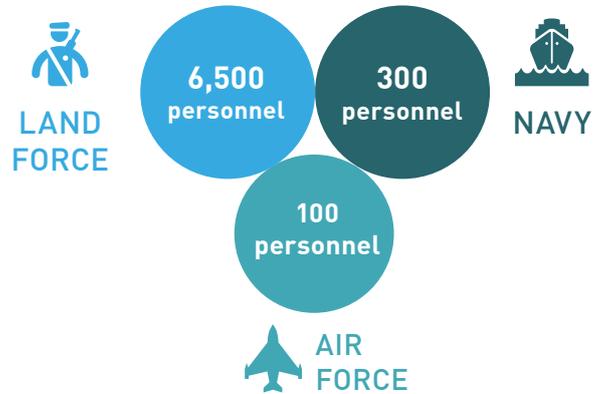


Source: Adapted from IASC Handbook for RCs and HCs on Emergency Preparedness and Response <https://eird.org/publicaciones/Handbook.pdf>

KEY MILITARY RESPONSIBILITIES IN DISASTERS

The RFMF, previously the Royal Fiji Military Forces until 1987, is the national military of Fiji. With total personnel of approximately 6900 it is one of the smallest militaries in the world. The RFMF as part of its constitutional role, maintains peace and security within the nation, and contributes to regional and global peace and stability. The most important international contribution that the RFMF makes is towards peacekeeping in the Middle East. It has provided significant support during Fiji disaster response and contributes to shaping national resilience strategies. The RFMF is engaged for major disaster events, alongside FPF and NFA services.

COMPONENTS OF THE MILITARY FORCES



REPUBLIC OF FIJI MILITARY FORCES

Established: 1987

Leadership: Commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (President is Commander in Chief)

Headquarters: Suva

Area of commands:

- Strategic Command: oversees high-level policy, welfare, and strategic planning
- Land Force Command: manages operational units including infantry, engineering, and logistics
- Joint Task Force Command (JTFC): based at Blackrock Camp; coordinates humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, regional training, and peacekeeping support

Key role of RFMF: The RFMF is activated during significant national emergencies to support humanitarian response. It provides essential logistics, evacuation capacity and technical support under a whole-of-government approach, collaborating closely with the NDRMO, FPF and NFA.

Key functions of the RFMF in emergency response:

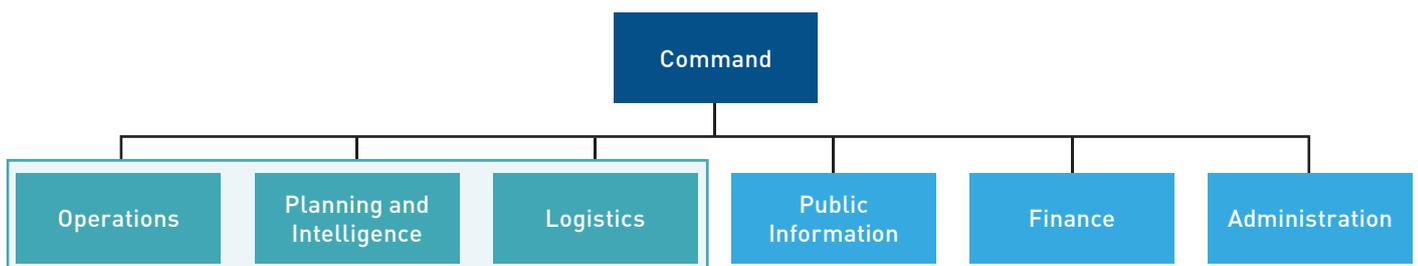
- Deploying personnel, vehicles and vessels for evacuation and relief operations
- Supporting the NEOC with coordination, communications and situational reporting
- Conducting damage assessments and relaying findings to government and humanitarian partners
- Facilitating regional disaster readiness and training, particularly through the JTFC at Blackrock Camp.

Composition:

- Land Forces: approx. 6,500 active personnel and 6,000 reservists, structured into six battalions (three regular, three reservist), plus engineering, logistics and training units
- Naval Forces: approx. 300 personnel operating multiple patrol vessels, including Australia-donated Guardian-class boats
- Air Force: approx. 100 personnel

Civil-military coordination mechanisms: JTFC

THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY AS PART OF THE NEOC SOPS



Source: Fiji Disaster Risk Management Arrangement p. 12.

FIJI MILITARY FORCES COORDINATION

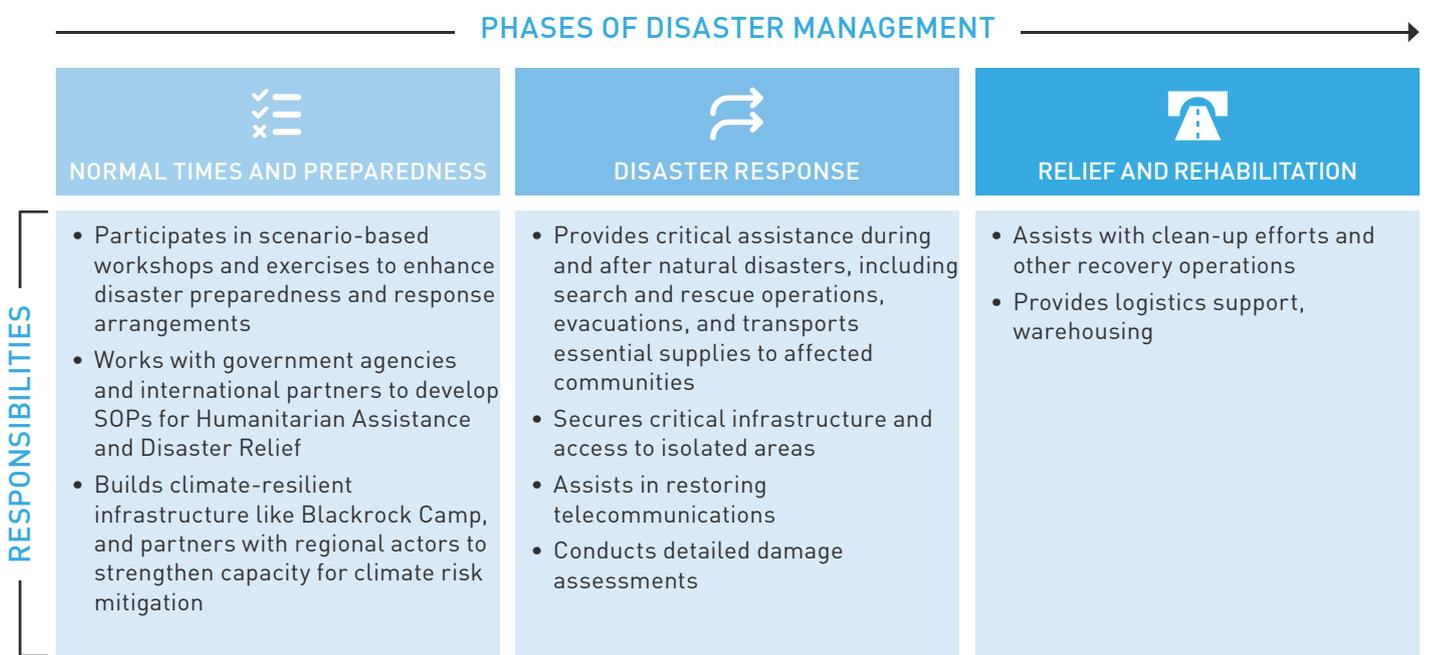
DISASTER MONITORING AND COORDINATION

The JTFC links national and international response mechanisms and connects with the NEOC through the Disaster Service Liaison Officers. RFMF supports the EOCs at divisional level, the Western, Northern, Central and Eastern Division EOCs, and On-Site Command Posts. The RFMF helps formulate the foreign military assets requests. It works closely with foreign military forces and collaborates across other international humanitarian actors, to support coordinated disaster response.

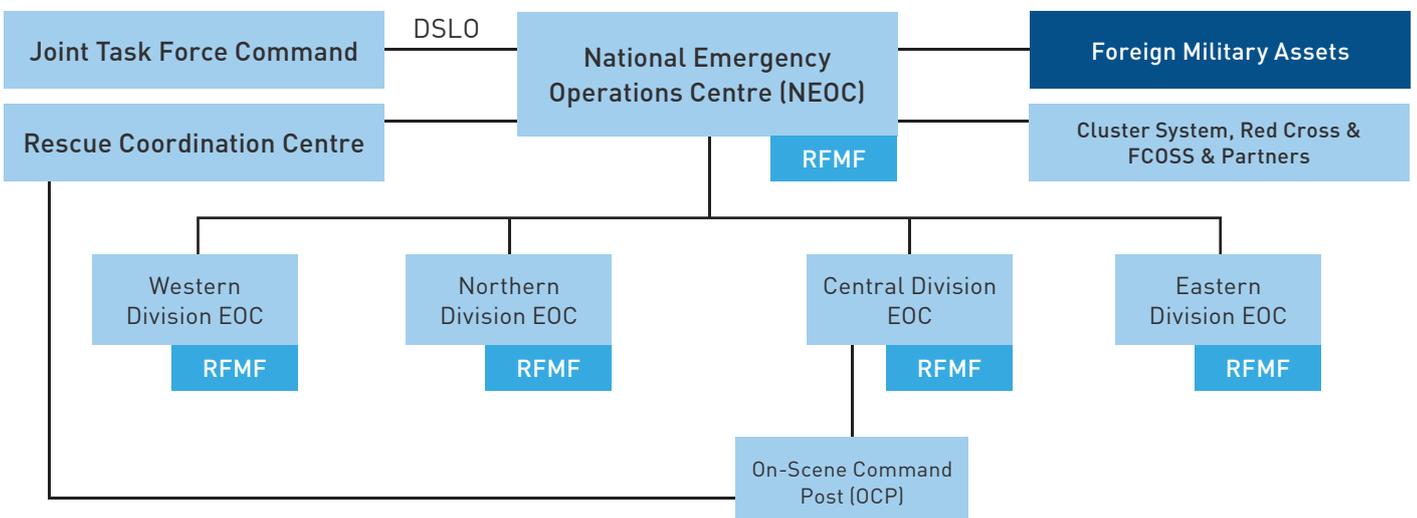
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND RELIEF

The RFMF plays an active role in disaster response in collaboration with other Government agencies. It has the capability to provide critical assistance such as evacuations, response and rebuilding. The RFMF can also deploy to aid neighboring countries. It works closely with international partners, such as Australia, New Zealand, France and US, in joint disaster response exercises and training.

ROLE OF RFMF IN PHASES OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSIBILITIES



THE JOINT TASK FORCE COMMAND WITHIN THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



Source: Adapted from Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination, p. 34.

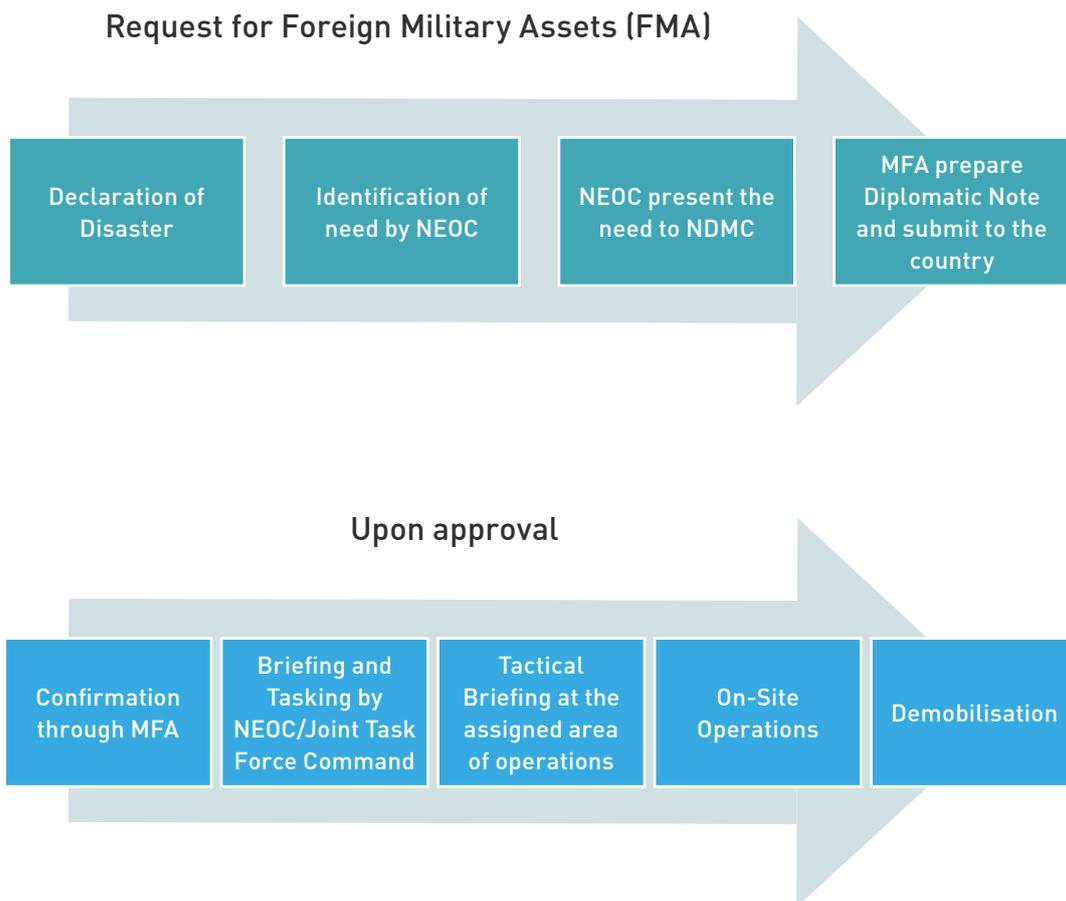
HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION MECHANISMS

COORDINATION OF FOREIGN MILITARY ASSETS

There are two main phases related to requesting and deploying foreign military assets (FMA) in response to a disaster. The first phase begins with the declaration of disaster, followed by the NEOC's identification of need. NEOC then presents the identified need to the NDMC, after which the MFA prepares and submits a diplomatic note to the relevant foreign entity. Upon approval, the second

phase outlines the steps following the acceptance of the request. It starts with confirmation through the MFA, followed by briefing and tasking by NEOC or the JTFC, then a tactical briefing at the assigned area of operations, leading to on-site operations, and concluding with demobilisation. The chart below outlines the flow of FMA coordination.

OPERATIONAL DIAGRAM OF REQUEST AND APPROVAL FOR FMA



Source: Humanitarian Civil Military Coordination, pp. 31 & 32.

CASE STUDY: TROPICAL CYCLONE WINSTON 2016



20-21 February 2016



Category 5



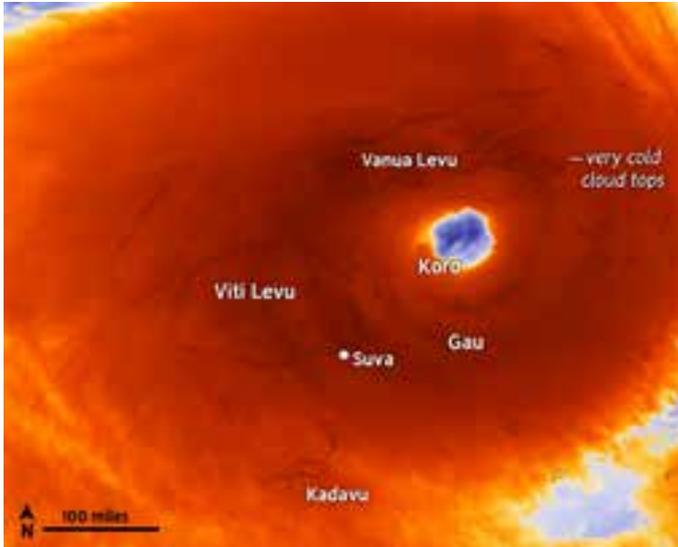
350,000 affected



44 fatalities



USD 1.38 billion



Source: <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/event-tracker/tropical-cyclone-winston-causes-devastation-fiji-tropical-paradise>

OVERVIEW

Tropical Cyclone Winston struck Fiji on 20–21 February 2016 as a Category 5 cyclone, bringing devastation on a scale previously unseen in the country. With wind speeds reaching nearly 300 km/h, Winston followed an unpredictable path that complicated preparedness and response efforts. The cyclone caused catastrophic damage, particularly on the northern and eastern sides of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, flattening entire villages, destroying infrastructure, and crippling the agricultural sector. Out of 350,000 affected, 40,000 people were displaced and 44 were killed, and the economic losses were estimated at more than USD 1 billion, over 20% of Fiji's gross domestic product.

The cyclone's impact extended beyond immediate destruction. Crops, livestock, and fisheries were decimated, threatening food security for months. Schools, hospitals, roads, and utilities suffered widespread damage, leaving many communities isolated and vulnerable.

NATIONAL COORDINATION AND CIVIL-MILITARY RESPONSE

The Fijian government responded to TC Winston by declaring a state of emergency, triggering access to emergency funding and opening the door to international assistance. The NDRMO, operating under the NDMC, assumed the lead coordination role. It brought together representatives from government ministries, the RFMF, the FPF, NGOs and international partners, ensuring a unified approach to disaster management.

Civilian authorities maintained leadership throughout the response, focusing on restoring critical services, distributing food and seedlings, and managing long-term recovery through the Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development, and Statistics. The Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Protection played a central role, ensuring that gender, disability, and protection issues were integrated into all phases of the response. Data collection and reporting were disaggregated to ensure targeted support for vulnerable groups, and FCOSS acted as the voice for civil society, coordinating NGO efforts and ensuring their integration into national plans.

The RFMF was mobilised rapidly, with personnel embedded in the NEOC and deployed across all divisions. Military engineers prioritised reopening roads and restoring access to remote communities, while also supporting search and rescue, relief distribution and damage assessments. Coordination with international military partners, such as Australia and New Zealand, was facilitated through established protocols, ensuring that FMA aligned with Fiji's priorities.

The FPF, as primary first responders, managed public order, enforced curfews and maintained security in evacuation centres and affected communities. Their presence was crucial in preventing looting and ensuring the safety of both survivors and relief workers. Joint operational command centres, incorporating representatives from all agencies, enabled daily information sharing and resource allocation, which was vital for prioritising the most affected regions.

KEY AREAS OF COORDINATION

The response to TC Winston showcased the strengths and challenges of Fiji's integrated approach:

- **Search and rescue.** Civilian, military and police teams worked together to conduct life-saving operations, often in difficult and isolated terrain. The RFMF provided heavy equipment and aviation support, while the FPF managed records and family reunification.
- **Relief distribution.** Logistical challenges were immense due to damaged infrastructure. The RFMF's organisational capacity and equipment ensured that relief supplies reached even the most remote islands, with police providing security for routes and distribution sites.
- **Public Order and Security.** The FPF, supported by the RFMF, maintained order, enforced curfews, and protected relief operations, especially in areas where social tensions were heightened by the disaster.
- **Community engagement.** Civil authorities, in partnership with traditional and religious leaders, led information campaigns, organised community clean-ups and provided psychosocial support. The involvement of RFMF and FPF units in these efforts helped foster trust and cooperation.
- **Health and Disease Control.** Rapid establishment of temporary medical facilities and enforcement of public health measures were achieved through coordinated efforts between civil, military and police agencies.

EVOLUTION OF CIVIL-MILITARY STRUCTURES AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Fiji's experience with TC Winston drove significant improvements in disaster management. Localisation and community engagement are now central to disaster planning, with greater emphasis on the inclusion of women, people with disabilities, and local leaders in decision-making.

Ongoing training, supported by international partners and agencies like UN-OCHA, ensures that all stakeholders, from engineers to health workers, are prepared for future emergencies. The development of SOPs for NGOs and the annual gathering of civil society organisation practitioners have further institutionalised best practices and improved coordination.

Key Learnings

Despite the overall effectiveness of the response, several challenges emerged:

- **Communications infrastructure was damaged severely**, hampering coordination, especially in remote areas. Satellite phones and radios were essential but not widely available.
- **The scale of the disaster overwhelmed national resources**, making the integration of international assistance both necessary and complex.
- **Overlapping authority between agencies occasionally led to confusion regarding the chain of command**, particularly where military and police responsibilities intersected.
- **Logistical bottlenecks**, such as damaged transportation routes, delayed relief efforts despite best efforts.
- **Lessons from TC Winston led to the creation of the SWIFT** to streamline the importation and distribution of relief goods and prevent future delays.
- **The response to TC Winston in Fiji demonstrates the value of integrated civil-military coordination, strong government leadership, and effective partnerships with international actors.** The lessons learned inform ongoing reforms and capacity-building, ensuring that Fiji is better prepared for future disasters. The experience also offers a replicable model for other disaster-prone nations seeking to strengthen their own disaster management systems.



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
EMT	Emergency Medical Team
FCOSS	Fiji Council of Social Services
FEMAT	Fiji Emergency Medical Assistance Team
FMA	Foreign Military Assets
FPF	Fiji Police Force
JTFC	Joint Task Force Command
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MRMDDM	Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management
NDC	National Disaster Controller
NDMC	National Disaster Management Council
NDMP	National Disaster Management Plan
NDRMO	National Disaster Risk Management Office
NEOC	National Emergency Operations Centre
NFA	National Fire Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RFMF	Republic of Fiji Military Forces
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPC	Pacific Community
SWIFT	Single Window International Facilitation Team
TC	Tropical Cyclone
UN	United Nations
UN-OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

RESOURCES

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