

Disaster-responsive social protection

Policy brief for the Pacific Small Island Developing States

Asia-Pacific Disaster Risk Network

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Regional Platform for Multi-hazard Early Warning System

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Preface

The Government of Samoa and the United Nations are implementing the *Strengthening Resilience of Pacific Islands States through the Universal Social Protection Programme* (hereinafter referred to as the “Programme”), with funding support from the Joint Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Fund. The Programme offers a strategic opportunity to consider disaster risk in the design and implementation of social protection systems in countries at the heart of social protection innovation. This policy brief series by ESCAP and its partners aims to provide practical suggestions on how to design social protection schemes that build resilience to disasters.

Co-published with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) of Samoa, this first issue (Policy brief 1) is intended to introduce the key issues that need to be considered across the five strategic interventions of the Programme, namely data and evidence, public finance, institutional coordination, partnerships and outreach. The second brief will discuss how disaster-responsive social protection (DRSP) might be operationalized in Samoa through nationally appropriate design and instruments. The third brief will explore fiscally sustainable financing for various possible social protection schemes, with different disaster risks, beneficiaries and benefits.

The policy briefs are intended primarily for government officials involved in designing social protection systems in Samoa, as well as the technical committee of the Programme. The second group of audience are development and humanitarian partners, and non-governmental organizations that are interested in improving the ability of their social protection schemes to accommodate disaster-related emergencies and contribute to building resilience to disasters in the long-term.

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Executive Summary

This policy brief aims to inform ongoing efforts in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to review and design social protection systems. The focus of the current issue is on Samoa. Designed and implemented properly, disaster-responsive social protection (DRSP) has tremendous potential to help address the most common causes of poverty in the Pacific SIDS, most notably the lack of access to social services and high exposure to shocks. DRSP mechanisms are commonly rolled out after disasters, but they can also be used ex-ante by building the resilience and adaptive capacity of individuals and households.

Making social protection disaster-responsive means that current and future levels of disaster risk, projected intensity and frequency of hazards, the exposure of population and its coping capacity should be incorporated into the review and design of all social protection programmes. It requires using data and evidence to design targeted parameters that can accommodate and respond to the dynamic changes in the patterns of vulnerability and exposure to hazards, as well as to the double burden imposed by disasters on people who are vulnerable. Predictable and adequate finance is key to the credibility and success of DRSP. Public finance can be reinforced by innovative measures, such as strengthening linkages with contingency reserves and insurance, and aligning social protection with the priorities of climate finance. Finally, making DRSP work is a whole-of-society undertaking that requires collaboration across various ministries, between development and humanitarian actors, and between national and village authorities.

The growing importance of social protection

Social protection refers to a broad set of government transfers of income or services designed to reduce vulnerability and build resilience.¹ This may include instruments that improve access to vital services, such as education, healthcare, water and sanitation, and labour market programmes. Globally, social protection has assumed an increasingly important role in promoting socioeconomic development over the long term and protecting development gains from disasters. In fact, while important gaps in coverage remain, the majority of countries in Asia and the Pacific have increased investments in social protection.² The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include a dedicated target to “implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable” (SDG 1.3). Most recently, many countries in Asia and the Pacific have rolled out new and/or built on existing social protection schemes to cushion the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.³

Social protection is an important part of the whole range of policy instruments that governments can use to mitigate the impacts of disasters on poverty and inequality. Designed and implemented properly, it can support the Pacific SIDS by addressing at least two of the most common causes of poverty in the region; inadequate health and education services, and high exposure to shocks.⁴

This claim is supported by a computable general equilibrium (CGE) model simulation carried out by ESCAP for 26 countries which comprise 90 per cent of the population of Asia and the Pacific.⁵ The simulation revealed that increasing government investments in social sectors, such as social protection, health, education and infrastructure, can mitigate disaster-driven increases in poverty. The simulation further shows that social protection is expected to deliver the highest levels of poverty reduction (Figure 1).

¹ United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), *Time for Equality: The Role of Social Protection in Reducing Inequalities in Asia and the Pacific*. ST/ESCAP/2735.

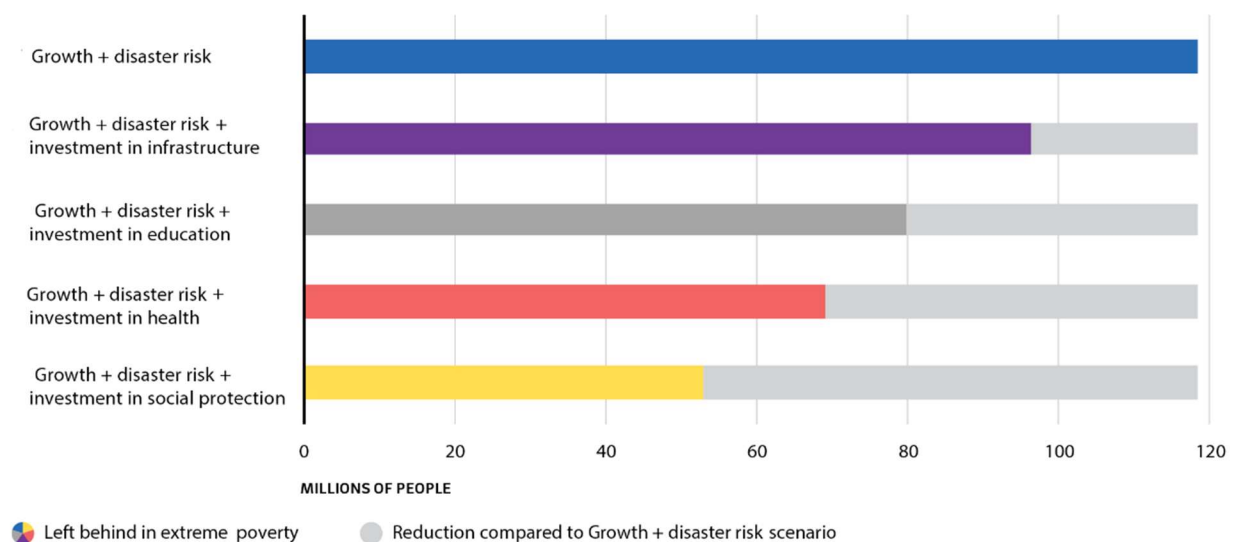
² Ibid.

³ United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), *Policy Responses to COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific*, 2020. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/covid19/policy-responses>

⁴ S. Kidd, “Poverty, vulnerability and social protection in the Pacific: The role of social transfers”. Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2012.

⁵ Due to data limitations, only two Pacific SIDS (Fiji and Papua New Guinea) could be included in the simulation. For more details, see Chapter 3 “Investing to outpace disaster risk” in United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), *The Disaster Riskscape across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for resilience, inclusion and empowerment* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.F.12).

Figure 1: Projected number of people living in extreme poverty in 2030, with disaster risk and investment scenarios.



Source: ESCAP calculations based on CGE model simulation.

Many Pacific Islands nations have established social protection schemes, such as the Care and Protection Allowance in Fiji and the Senior Citizens Benefit Fund in Samoa.⁶ The 2016 Cyclone Winston marked the first instance of a Pacific SIDS (Fiji) delivering recovery assistance using an existing social safety net programme with commendable verifiable benefits.⁷ A number of Pacific SIDS have also provided cash transfers and unemployment benefits to cushion the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸ As of August 2020, the Government of Samoa announced two phases of stimulus packages totalling \$US 54 million to support individuals and households that were the hardest hit, as well as tourism-related businesses.⁹

Why we need disaster-responsive social protection

There are several justifications for ensuring that social protection is disaster-responsive. Firstly, when disasters occur in high-risk, low-income countries, it is the social sectors and vulnerable populations that

⁶ S. Kidd and others, "Child-sensitive Social Protection in Fiji: Assessment of the care and protection allowance", UNICEF Pacific and Fiji Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, 2015.

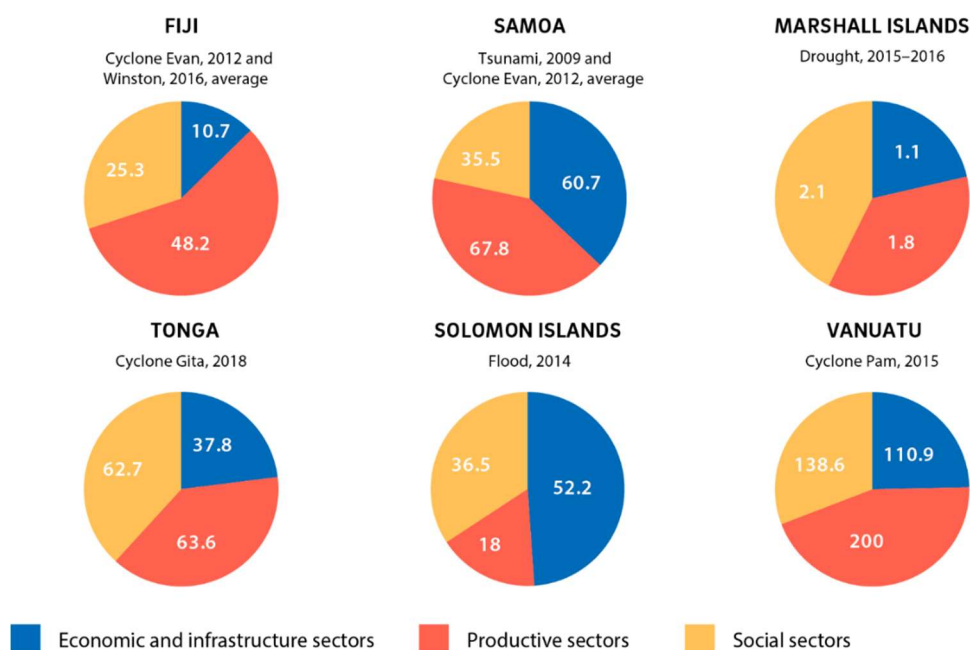
⁷ O. Ivaschenko and others, "Does 'Manna from Heaven' help? The role of cash transfers in disaster recovery - lessons from Fiji after Tropical Cyclone Winston", *Disasters*, vol. 44, No. 3, (2020), pp. 455-476 and V. Rios, O. Ivaschenko, and J. Doyle, "Cash transfers' effect on government support: the case of Fiji", *Disasters*, vol. 44, No. 1, (2020), pp. 152-178.

⁸ United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Policy Responses to COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific, 2020. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/covid19/policy-responses>

⁹ United Nations Country Team in Samoa, COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan, 2020.

are usually hit the hardest. ESCAP's analysis covering 29 major disasters in the Asia-Pacific region shows that almost 40 per cent of losses and damages from disasters occurred in the social and productive sectors. In Samoa, 35.5 per cent of the combined damage from the tsunami (2009) and the Tropical Cyclone Evan (2012) was in the social sectors (Figure 2). Since people require strong social and productive sectors to help lift them out of poverty, disasters can make it difficult for households to break the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty. Without the necessary support, households with little or no savings are forced to cope 'negatively' by decreasing nutritional intake or removing children from school, therefore transmitting poverty inter-generationally.¹⁰ DRSP can break this cycle, and therefore prevent disasters from eroding development gains.

Figure 2: Sectoral impacts of selected major disasters in the Pacific during the last 10 years (2009-2019), millions of US dollars



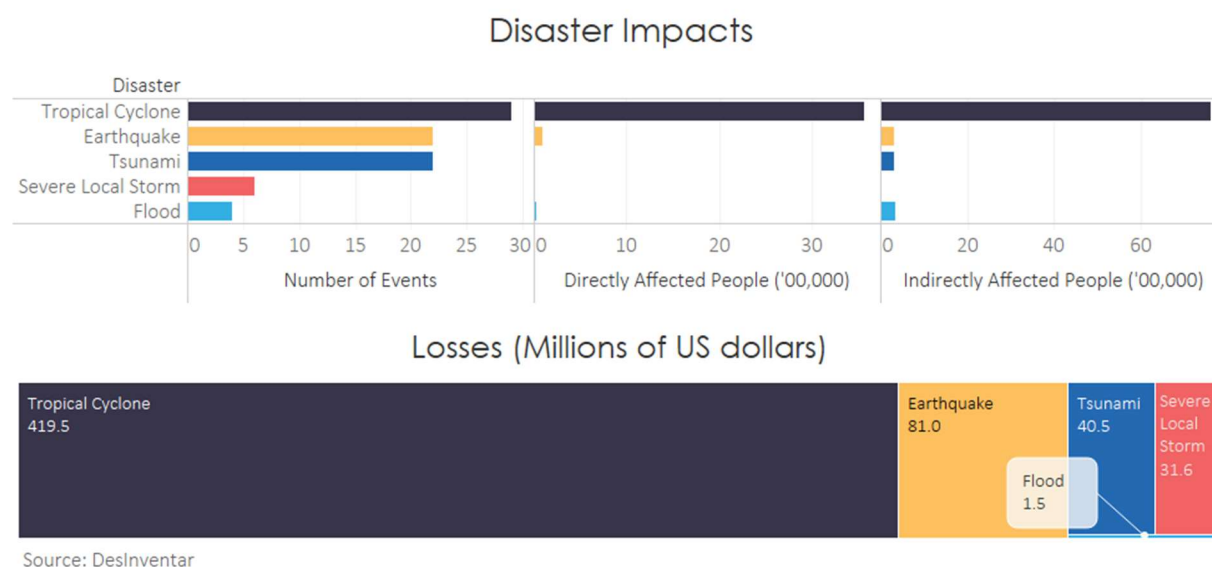
Source: United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), *The Disaster Riskscape across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for resilience, inclusion and empowerment* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.F.12).

Secondly, social protection needs to be recognized as a key policy instrument for building resilience to climate change. Samoa is no stranger to climate-related disasters, with tropical cyclones dominating its risk landscape based on losses and frequency, and the number of affected people (Figure 3). In fact, the overall economic impact of climate-related disasters may have been under-estimated in previous calculations. Recent modelled estimates, reported in the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2019*, suggest that if drought is added to the landscape of risk, Samoa's average annual loss due to disasters could reach up to \$US 40 million dollars or approximately 5.40 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017.

¹⁰ United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), *The Disaster Riskscape across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for resilience, inclusion and empowerment* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.F.12).

There is strong evidence from both climate models and observations that climate change will make extreme weather events more frequent and intense.¹¹ Cyclone Evan, which struck in 2012, can be used as an analogue of the kinds of extreme weather events that we can expect more of in a changing climate. The value of damage and loss it caused is equivalent to 29 per cent of the country's GDP,¹² and resulted in notable losses in housing and infrastructure.¹³

Figure 3: Disaster profile of Samoa (1900 – 2015)



The increasing climate risk means that efforts to protect the people and economy from future tropical cyclones and other extreme weather/climate events must be accelerated. This will require new policy approaches, with scaled-up support for vulnerable groups and innovative forms of social protection.

Left unmitigated, the cumulative impacts of recurring disasters prevent households from progressing out of poverty and becoming more resilient to future shocks. Instead, families continue to resort to negative coping strategies that further erode their chances of escaping poverty, such as withdrawing children from school and selling livelihood assets. However, this link can be broken by implementing disaster-responsive social protection systems as a critical *ex-post* strategy to respond to vulnerable people and help them recover and build back better.¹⁴ Because disasters tend to affect a large area, the ability of community members to help each other might be weakened. The experience of Fiji provides a compelling example of how social

¹¹ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), "Summary for Policymakers: Global Warming of 1.5°C", Geneva, 2018.

¹² Government of Samoa, "SAMOA Post-disaster Needs Assessment: Cyclone Evan 2012", March 2013. Available at https://www.gfdr.org/sites/gfdr/files/SAMOA_PDNA_Cyclone_Evan_2012.pdf

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), *The Disaster Riskscape across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for resilience, inclusion and empowerment* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.F.12).

protection can assist disaster-affected populations to build back better and faster from a disaster (see Box 1).

Social protection can also form an important *ex-ante* strategy, by cushioning vulnerable populations against the impacts of shocks and stresses (e.g. via income replacement), and enhancing community resilience,¹⁵ by reducing exposure to hazards (e.g. by providing incentives/assistance to retrofit houses to withstand tropical cyclones or delivering public work programmes to rebuild mangrove forests).

Existing social protection programmes can be modified in several ways, to become disaster-responsive. Some commonly used forms are summarized in Figure 4. The benefits and challenges of each form in the specific context of Samoa will be discussed in the next issue of this policy brief series.

Figure 4: Implementation of disaster-responsive social protection.

PIGGYBACKING	VERTICAL EXPANSION	HORIZONTAL EXPANSION	PARALLEL OPERATION	REFOCUSING
Using part of an established system or programme, such as the beneficiary list, staff, registration, or payment mechanisms.	Temporarily increasing the value or duration of an intervention to meet existing beneficiaries' additional needs.	Temporary inclusion of a new caseload into a social protection programme, by either extending geographical coverage, enrolling more eligible households in existing areas, or altering the enrolment criteria.	Designing an intervention with elements resembling others that already exist or are planned, but without integrating the two, e.g. align identification method, transfer value or delivery mechanism.	Adjusting the existing social protection programme to refocus assistance on groups within the caseload that are most vulnerable to the shock.

Source: Adapted from C. O'Brien and others, "Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Research", Synthesis Report, Oxford: Oxford Policy Management, 2018.

¹⁵ C. O'Brien, "10 Things You Wish You'd Always Known about Shock-Responsive Social Protection", World Food Programme, 15 June 2020.

Box 1: Fiji – Cyclone Winston, 2016

In 2016, Tropical Cyclone Winston hit Fiji, causing damages of approximately 20 per cent of Fiji's GDP for 2016.^a Approximately 60 per cent of the population was affected, with 40,000 people requiring immediate assistance. Massive private and public losses were accumulated in destroyed physical assets and infrastructure. Livelihoods were adversely affected, with the agriculture and fishery industries heavily disrupted.

The Government of Fiji used vertical social protection expansion, in which the value and duration of an existing intervention is temporarily increased to meet the additional needs of existing beneficiaries. The beneficiaries of three existing schemes received extra payments. In addition to the usual benefits, the cash transfers were paid alongside housing vouchers as part of the housing reconstruction scheme.

A study by the World Bank showed that the impact of the cyclone on the poorest Fijians was reduced by more than 30 per cent and the cost-benefit ratio was greater than four. Notably, dwellings were repaired quickly.

Fiji's recovery was accelerated by two key factors: an adaptive social protection system, and a pre-existing cluster system that facilitated effective cross-sectoral coordination. The social protection system enabled the identification of hard hit poor and vulnerable population segments while the existing electronic payments system made the cash and voucher payouts particularly effective.^b These efforts were strengthened by the activation of the National Cluster System. Based on the United Nations model, it comprises joint coordination forums (clusters) in critical sectors, such as health and nutrition, shelter, and communications. These clusters, co-led by a Fijian government ministry and an international agency, enabled identification of immediate gaps and supported coordination with other agencies and international organizations to ensure that necessary public needs were met.

^a S. Esler, "Post-Disaster Needs Assessment: Tropical Cyclone Winston", Fiji: Government of Fiji, 20 February 2016.

^b A. Mansur, J. Doyle and O. Ivaschenko, "Social Protection and Humanitarian Assistance Nexus for Disaster Response: Lessons Learnt from Fiji's Tropical Cyclone Winston", Social Protection and Labour Discussion Paper, No. 1701 (Washington D. C: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ The World Bank, 2017).

Making social protection disaster-responsive

For social protection to effectively serve as a pathway for breaking the link between disasters, poverty, and inequality, it must build the resilience and adaptive capacity of communities. This means that future levels of disaster risk, including the intensity and frequency of hazards, population exposure to disasters, and their coping capacity, should all be incorporated into the design and review of all social protection programmes.

The following section discusses the cross-cutting issues that need to be considered across the strategic interventions of the Programme to make social protection disaster-responsive.

1. Data and evidence

Making social protection systems disaster-responsive requires an understanding of risks....

.... for targeting beneficiaries

Social protection systems should consider specific patterns of vulnerability to disasters. The most common proxy for vulnerability is poverty level. In Samoa, individuals are classified as “extremely poor” if their incomes fall below the Food Poverty Line (FPL), and “poor” if their incomes fall between the FPL and the Basic Needs Poverty Line (BNPL).¹⁶ Individuals and households whose expenditures exceed the BNPL by less than 100 per cent are considered poor or vulnerable to becoming poor.

Conventional social protection systems are normally designed based on ‘static’ snapshots of poverty, as measured by household surveys.¹⁷ This measure does not capture the ‘dynamic’ impacts of disasters which can perpetuate chronic poverty, create transitory poverty, or push near-poor populations, typically just above the income threshold for government assistance programmes, into poverty. Targeting based on poverty levels therefore needs to be complemented by a ‘dynamic’ classification of poverty, which includes changes in wealth due to disasters, which responds to new patterns of vulnerability, which can make people susceptible to hazards, and takes into account the disaster response capabilities of the population. Targeting must also consider where these dimensions of vulnerability intersect, thereby subjecting individuals to a double burden during disasters. In the context of Samoa, the people who experienced heightened vulnerability were those employed in the informal sector, as well as children, students, people with disability, and retirees based on the 2013/2014 Household Incomes and Expenditures Survey (HIES). The same people are highly likely to experience heightened vulnerability during disasters.

Information about new vulnerabilities created by the disaster, and their intersection with poverty might be challenging to obtain making it difficult to enforce very fine targeting criteria. To avoid exclusion errors, and ensure that the most vulnerable people are reached, social protection systems should instead employ universal measures, where benefits are extended to everyone within an area or category, such as by age group, regardless of income or wealth and without conditions.¹⁸ An interesting feature of the Government

¹⁶ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Centre, Samoa Hardship and Poverty Report. Apia: Samoa National Statistics Office, 2016.

¹⁷ S. Kidd, *Poverty, vulnerability and social protection in the Pacific: The role of social transfers*. Canberra: Australian Agency for International Development, 2012.

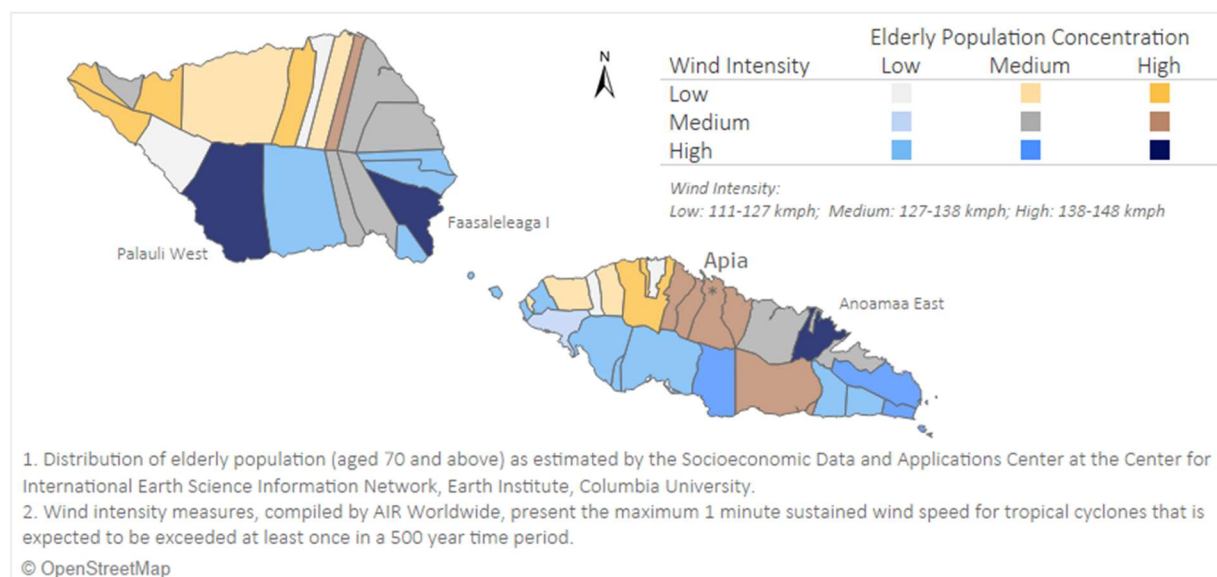
¹⁸ United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Social Outlook for Asia and the Pacific: Poorly Protected (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.F.2).

of Fiji's post-Tropical Cyclone initiative was its decision to top-up payment to all beneficiaries, whether or not they resided in affected areas.¹⁹

.... for incorporating disaster-related contingencies in the design

The design of social protection systems should also be informed by exposure to hazards. This requires overlaying climate and disaster risk information on maps of hazard-prone areas to pre-identify how the social protection system should be expanded to reach more people after or before a disaster, and to understand what assistance is required to reduce their exposure. The example, shown in Figure 5, uses a geo-demographic targeting approach to identify locations of a vulnerable demographic group that coincides with locations experiencing high exposure to hazards.

Figure 5: Locations of elderly populations (70 and above) exposed to various intensities of wind speed in Samoa



The ongoing exercise by the Samoa Bureau of Statistics (SBS) on household listing and national identifications presents an opportunity to build the foundation for better design and implementation of DRSP programs. This exercise, in conjunction with the 2021 census, can be used to constitute a national database of households for adapting existing programs to be responsive to disaster-risk.²⁰ Examples show how governments could piggyback on existing programs by identifying non-beneficiaries who experience heightened vulnerabilities during shocks, and extending social protections to those households (for example, through horizontal expansion). This approach was successfully executed by the Governments of Mauritania and Senegal to issue emergency assistance/cash transfers to households during lean seasons in recent years.²¹ Geo-locating such a database, whereby each household is tagged to a sufficiently low-

¹⁹ O. Ivaschenko, and others, Does 'Manna from Heaven' help? The role of cash transfers in disaster recovery - lessons from Fiji after Tropical Cyclone Winston. *Disasters*, vol. 44, No. 3 (2020), pp. 455-476.

²⁰ V. Barca, and C. O'Brien, "Factors affecting the usefulness of existing social protection databases in disaster preparedness and response", Policy Brief: Shock responsive social protection research, Oxford Policy Management, December 2017.

²¹ World Bank, "Disaster Recovery Guidance Series: Social Protection and Disaster Recovery", Washington, D.C., 2019.

level administrative boundary (for example, a village or neighbourhood), would be beneficial as it can be used in conjunction with hazard maps. This could enable the execution of a more accurate geodemographic targeting of potentially vulnerable beneficiaries into DRSP programmes.

Standard social protection programs may be modified to become disaster-responsive. For example, a standard social protection program may entail providing cash transfers to families based on the number of children in attendance at schools. The evidence suggests that post-disaster schemes which apply conditions can be counterproductive, as people may not be able to comply with the requirements to provide identification documents or attend workshops. For example, in the event of a disaster, conditions may be waived, given that the disaster may impact the ability of children to physically attend classes at school. Withholding provision of social protection benefits at this time would only exacerbate the impacts of a disaster. Evidence from the Philippines in the wake of Super Typhoon Haiyan, in 2013, shows that the effectiveness of cash transfer programmes in preventing people from falling into poverty was enhanced by a prior agreement that the conditionalities would be waived for three months if a state of calamity was declared.²²

Other examples of social protection programme adaptation include vertical expansion, where the amount or frequency of cash transfers are increased for existing beneficiaries, and horizontal expansion, where new individuals and households are temporarily included as beneficiaries. In such an example, policymakers in Samoa may target those population groups who are classified as vulnerable to becoming poor (i.e., whose incomes fall slightly above the BNPL). In all cases, flexibility must be built into such systems, so that policymakers can scale up and increase payment amount and frequency as and when the needs of the beneficiaries are greatest.

2. Public finance

A predictable and adequate source of financing is key to successful social protection systems. Predictability can be ensured by having clearly-defined protocols, regarding government liabilities, response measures and their expected costs, that are laid out before a disaster strikes.²³ Additionally, adequacy of funds can be ensured by putting in place a financing strategy for the social protection system to incorporate the additional cost of making the schemes disaster-responsive. The additional financial requirement may be determined by analysing the likely additional caseload due to disasters, disaster needs, responses and costs.²⁴ A scenario-based analysis to explore fiscal sustainability of DRSP in Samoa will be presented in the third brief in this series.

Increasing investments in the social sectors and in infrastructure will require additional finance, but the amounts are small compared to the damages and losses already sustained by many countries due to disasters. For example, in Fiji, the additional investments per year are less than one-fifth of its projected average annual loss due to disasters (Figure 6). In fact, the additional investments could be even less than the damages and losses sustained from individual major disasters. In Fiji, the average additional investment per year is \$US 65.9 million, which is just 5 per cent of the losses incurred as a result of Tropical Cyclone

²² United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), *The Disaster Riskscape across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for resilience, inclusion and empowerment* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.F.12).

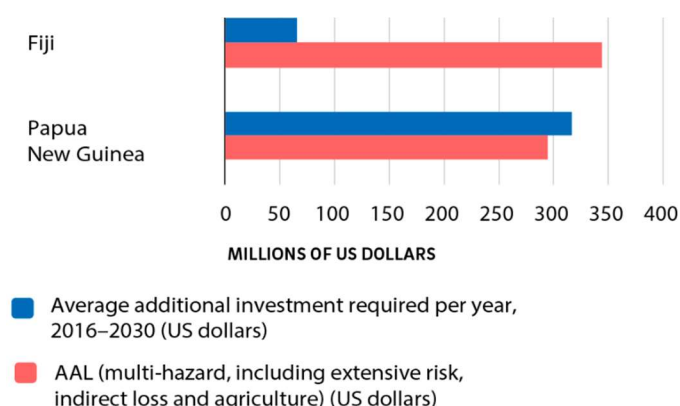
²³ United Nations and ASEAN, *ASEAN Guidelines on Disaster-responsive Social Protection to Increase Resilience*. Bangkok, 2020.

²⁴ Ibid.

Winston (\$US 1.3 billion).²⁵ This means that, despite the upfront costs, disaster-responsive social protection will be a cost-effective strategy for reducing poverty.

A range of financial instruments could be potentially tapped to finance DRSP. The traditional mix includes contingency funds, and multi-year national and local disaster reserves, where budget lines are established that can be drawn upon in a disaster. The Government can also improve linkages between insurance payouts and contingency credit (the release of emergency credit to provide immediate liquidity in the aftermath of a disaster), by ring fencing a specified portion of the credit and/or insurance payout to finance social protection schemes (Box 2).

Figure 6: Annual additional investment to meet Average Annual Loss (millions of US dollars)



New sources of climate finance present a promising source for piloting social protection schemes as part of a broader climate resilience project. For example, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the largest climate finance institution, approved three projects, in 2019, which have DRSP components (Madagascar, Philippines and Senegal). The approved project of the Philippines will identify and pilot test DRSP and other forecast-based early actions in project sites and scale them up through integration in local resilience plans and relevant development and sectoral plans. Tapping into climate funds for DRSP requires joint priority setting and close coordination between the nationally designated authority and the agencies involved in designing and implementing climate change and social protection programmes, such as social services, labour, statistics, finance.

3. Institutional coordination, partnership, and outreach

Coordination across sectors: DRSP cuts across several ministries, most notably those ministries responsible for social welfare, climate, disaster, finance, and statistics. All relevant actors need to be involved during the design phase to ensure that policy frameworks, systems (e.g., databases) and procedures are unified and standardized. As discussed in the previous section, coordination is indispensable in mobilizing financing from climate funds and other international sources. Coordination with financial institutions and the ICT sector is crucial. As seen in many countries, ICT-enabled technological

²⁵ United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). *The Disaster Riskscape across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for resilience, inclusion and empowerment* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.F.12).

solutions, such as digital cash transfers, digital identity, and blockchains, reduced leakages, ensured speedy payments, helped DRSP to be truly counter-cyclical, and promoted financial inclusion.²⁶

Partnerships between development and humanitarian actors: DRSP includes both ex-ante and ex-post measures. Coordination between disaster risk management, humanitarian actors and social protection actors should be initiated well before disasters strike. Building such coordination structures enable cross-sectoral cooperation that can be leveraged in times of crisis to improve response and recovery. During Super Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, the World Food Programme and UNICEF piggybacked onto the existing cash transfer programme of the Philippine Government which enabled them to quickly reach beneficiaries.

Beyond governmental actors, it is also critical to consider actors and stakeholders involved in village governance. In Samoa, existing mutual support groups and recovery systems could be leveraged to accelerate disaster recovery. In the immediate aftermath of previous disasters, such as the 2009 tsunami, communities not directly hit by the disaster responded by providing support in the form of goods and labour to affected communities, thereby accelerating the speed of disaster response.²⁷ Existing cultural frameworks, such as those found in Samoa should not be overlooked, and instead be leveraged to enhance response and recovery efforts.

Outreach: Formal communication systems are important channels in communicating to the public the existence of social protection programmes, conditions of eligibility and pre-agreed modifications during disasters, in order to prevent tension between recipients and non-recipients. Engaging the existing village governance systems and ensuring that their views are taken into account during the design and administration of DRSP is important as it enables the Government to convey information through sources trusted by the communities and to leverage valuable local knowledge of cultural practices to foster community-based adaptation practices.

²⁶ For examples, see chapter 4 of United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), *The Disaster Riskscape across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for resilience, inclusion and empowerment* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.F.12).

²⁷ S. J. Murphy, "Fa'a Samoa: An Aid to Livelihood Recovery Following the Samoan Tsunami? A case study examining two Samoan villages", Thesis. New Zealand: Massey University, 2013.

Box 2: Tonga – Cyclone Gita, 2018

In February 2018, Cyclone Gita caused widespread destruction throughout Tonga, directly affecting over 80,000 people (approximately 80 per cent of the population), damaging and destroying over 5,000 houses, and causing an estimated \$US 164.3 million (or \$T 356.1 million), in losses and damages, which was almost 38 per cent of their GDP in 2017.^a

For the first time, the Government of Tonga responded to this disaster by using its existing social protection system to deliver disaster assistance to the most vulnerable individuals. Within just one month, the Government of Tonga was able to use vertical expansion to deliver one-off cash payouts to recipients of two existing schemes, namely the Disability Welfare Scheme, and Social Welfare Scheme for the Elderly. These additional payouts reached over 3,500 beneficiary households, consisting of 20,000 people, or 20 per cent of the population.^b This example demonstrates how disaster-responsive social protection can be used to implement response measures that are informed by the different dimensions of vulnerability in the affected population. By selecting existing schemes that address vulnerability due to disability and age, the Government was able to support households with the least capacity to rebuild their homes after the disaster.^c In other countries or for other hazards, the relevant dimensions of vulnerability may be different.

This example also demonstrates how disaster-responsive social protection can be facilitated by prior agreements, and financing strategies. Delivering the increased payouts required a budget of approximately \$US 0.37 million (\$T 0.8 million). This was possible due to the use of existing elements of the social protection schemes, including the payment systems. Furthermore, the prior existence of an agreement between the Tongan and Australian Governments meant that the Government of Tonga could use an existing budget support mechanism and was reimbursed within just five days of making the cash payouts.^d

^a Asian Development Bank (ADB), “Cyclone Gita Recovery Project”. 15 June 2018. Available at <https://www.adb.org/projects/52129-001/main#project-pds>

^b Kingdom of Tonga, “Disaster Recovery Framework for Tropical Cyclone Gita”, Nuku'alofa, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, 2018.

^c J. Doyle, “Manna from heaven - cyclones, cash transfers, and the role of social protection in disaster response”, DevPolicy Blog. 20 March 2018. Available at <https://devpolicy.org/cyclones-cash-transfers-and-the-role-of-social-protection-in-disaster-response-20180320/>

^d V. Barca and R. Beazley, “Building on Government Systems for Shock Preparedness and Response: The Role of Social Assistance Data and Information”, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019.

Conclusion

The stimulus packages being rolled out by the Government of Samoa offer an excellent opportunity to develop social protection frameworks, systems and procedures to realize the potential of social protection to break the links between disasters, poverty, and inequality. However, increasing investments in social protection is just as important as investing strategically. This issue brief provides an overview of the ex-ante actions in each of the five strategic areas of intervention of the Programme to ensure that social protection can deliver multiple policy objectives including building resilience to climate-related disaster risks, both current and in the future. The succeeding issue briefs will present options for nationally-appropriate design, forms, and financing options.

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