



SOLOMON ISLANDS

Strengthening Communication and Knowledge Networking

Disaster Context

One area in which there has always been recognized potential for improvement in the Solomon Islands is emergency communications and disaster management. The need was all too graphically illustrated by the tropical cyclone Zoe, which struck the far eastern islands of Tikopia and Anuta in late 2002.

Tikopia and Anuta were completely cut off from the world for nearly a week after Zoe struck. The devastation and destruction were revealed by a freelance film maker who chartered a Cessna plane and took aerial pictures of Tikopia Island. The only high-frequency radio equipment used by the islanders for voice communication was not working due to battery problems for many months before the cyclone struck. It was an example of technology deployed without adequate planning, training, and support.

There are approximately 1,500 people living in Tikopia and approximately 600 people in Anuta. Hopefully the implementation of this project will not only install a crucial emergency communication link, but also help to facilitate an important link to other social services, education, health, and socio-economic activities.

Project Title

The Solomon Islands People First Network (PFnet)

Sectors

- Capacity-building
- Information and communications
- Rural development

Funding

From August 2002, PFnet entered a six-month period of interim support by the UNDP Fiji Multi-Country Office, whilst seeking multiple donors for a two-year expansion programme to reach the majority of the country's remote communities and achieve self-sufficiency in operations. This programme requires approximately \$500,000.

PFnet is still seeking funds to scale up to national level. UNDP support for PFnet is due to end on 12 February 2003. Monthly budget support of \$5,900 is required.

Partnerships

- Rural Development Volunteers Association, Ministry of Provincial Government, and Rural Development
- Ministry of Provincial Government and Rural Development
- Solomon Islands Development Administration and Participatory Planning Programme
- National Disaster Management Office (NDMO)
- UNOPS

Programme Activities

Through reference to its own capacities (the PFnet Manager was Director of the National Disaster Management Office from 1991-2000 and is a contracted member of UNDAC) and in consultation with the current National Disaster Council, a close understanding of disaster management procedures is ensured. A procedure will be agreed in the eventuality of a variety of natural disasters, especially seismic and extreme weather events.

In consultation with the management committee, an e-mail operator and capable person(s) will be identified and trained by PFnet to conduct initial damage and emergency-needs assessments and send reports to aid emergency response services. This activity will be integrated into the project as part of the long-term capacity-building and training programmes to achieve sustainability.

During deployment, PFnet will train the operator on completing initial damage emergency needs assessment forms and entering data using a simple database to be designed by PFnet similar to the system used to send daily reports in our rural e-mail stations. This reporting system must be linked to the NDMO, and therefore will require building NDMO's capacity to receive the

information and make quick decisions.

Warning services (i.e. via the National Warning Centre or the Nadi and Brisbane Tropical Cyclone Centres) can be linked automatically through subscription to e-mail lists, allowing immediate warnings to be received and circulated throughout the communities.

The objectives of this project are as follows:

- To establish easy and affordable communication access for Tikopia and Anuta, and therefore facilitate the exchange of information between the two communities and development programmes, NGOs, government offices, the media, businesses, and other stakeholders
- To provide a sustainable and appropriate form of emergency communication for the two islands
- To develop and incorporate an emergency communication component into the PFnet Model that can be replicated in the South Pacific Region

Expected project outputs are as follows:

- Easy and affordable public access to communications on Tikopia and Anuta
- Easy and affordable access to information on social services, such as education and health, on the two islands
- Improved access to development partners and programmes
- A fully developed emergency communication system for the two islands
- Improved warning services via direct link to the National Cyclone Warning Centre-Honiara and regional cyclone warning centres in Fiji and Australia, enabling the two islands direct access to cyclone-related information
- A direct link to the NDMO will be established that enable the two islands access Cyclone Safety Advisories
- E-mail operators and committee members trained to disseminate cyclone warning information, raise awareness on cyclone safety procedures, conduct initial emergency needs assessments and produce assessment reports
- Improved public knowledge and awareness
- Experience and technical know-how shared with other countries