

Pacific Risk Resilience Programme (PRRP)

Working towards resilient communities in the Pacific

Fast Facts

May 2015

Private Sector Engagement Uses Text Messaging to Build Resilience

A series of mobile phone text message campaigns in Vanuatu and Tonga have helped raise awareness about the climate change and disaster related-risks people face daily, plus hints to avoid some of those risks.

Through the interactive quiz campaigns, people are sent a free text message inviting them to participate in a two-way quiz, with a chance to win prizes. Each series of simple questions are designed to test people's knowledge on how best to respond to a disaster situation or to climate change risks.

Vanuatu's National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) and Tonga's National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) partnered with local telecommunications provider Digicel to deliver the SMS campaigns, facilitated by the Pacific Risk Resilience Programme (PRRP) and other partners.

Quizzes provide valuable information, according to more than 80% of participants

- 63% said the disaster-awareness quizzes were "extremely helpful"
- 20% said the quizzes were "helpful"

In the immediate aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Pam, which devastated many parts of Vanuatu, the Government of Vanuatu initiated another text message campaign to urgently assess food security, using this



Signing the public private partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the SMS Quiz are Digicel's Ronan McGrane, National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) Director Leveni 'Aho and Tonga Meteorological Office's Ofa Fa'anunu. (Photo : NEMO)

information to help guide the mobilisation of post-disaster relief support.

This innovative approach to raising awareness and information-sharing has proved so successful that a similar campaign is being planned in Solomon Islands with BMobile and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), supported by PRRP.

OVERVIEW

- First time SMS campaigns used to generate disaster awareness in these countries
- 3 campaigns in Vanuatu, with messages sent to as many as 115,000 users
- 35,000 people in Tonga reached by disaster-awareness quiz
- SMS quiz campaign planned for Solomon Islands in 2015
- Disaster messages indirectly reached whole of Vanuatu in immediate aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Pam

Tonga

An SMS climate quiz campaign, running in Tonga from January to February 2015, attracted more than 35,000 entries. It was a public-private partnership between NEMO, Tonga Meteorological Services (TMS) and Digicel Tonga, and facilitated by PRRP.

"From the results of this quiz we will understand the level of awareness in our communities so we can plan our activities effectively."

- Tonga Meteorological Services Director, Mr. Ofa Fa'anunu

Tonga is the third most-vulnerable nation in the world, according to the World Disaster Index, so the quiz focus was to increase people's awareness of natural hazards and how to respond to disaster events. The 15 simple questions focused on cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis and other disasters.

Prizes such as additional phone credit, were given along the way, with a major prize draw of a laptop and tablet given away in March 2015.

"Partnering with the private sector to deliver awareness information via SMS technology makes sense as most of Tonga has access to this mobile technology... (it) is helping us reach remote communities and improve their levels of resilience. It's a win win for everyone."

- NEMO Director Leveni 'Aho

Communities can become more resilient to climate change and disasters if routine government, community and other planning takes these risks into account. This risk governance approach is delivered through a partnership between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and international non-government organisation Live & Learn Environmental Education (LLEE), and supported by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). PRRP is being delivered in four countries: Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Vanuatu

In Vanuatu three successful disaster-awareness text message quizzes were undertaken through a partnership between Digicel Vanuatu and the Government of Vanuatu, including the Ministry of Climate Change and the Ministry of Education. Partners included SPC-GIZ Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Islands Region (CCCPIR), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), and PRRP.

The first quiz, on climate awareness, was held October 2014 to complement the Climate Zone Quiz television series and received a very positive response with more than 30,000 entries. The second quiz, held in January 2015 to coincide with cyclone season, had more than 122,000 entries across all provinces.

Not only have these quizzes been the first time Vanuatu has used text messaging as a cyclone preparedness and recovery information dissemination tool, but it is also the first time an interactive SMS game has been used to generate risk awareness.

"Digicel is supporting government and partners to reach out to rural communities and schools, and help raise awareness about climate change and disaster related risks, which impact us all here in Vanuatu."

- Digicel Vanuatu Chief Executive Officer, Simon Fraser

Tropical Cyclone Pam: text messages helping recovery

Text messages sent to around 90,000 people around Vanuatu helped Tropical Cyclone Pam-affected people keep their food supply safe, through two separate pre and post-cyclone campaigns.

In the week leading up to Tropical Cyclone Pam, more than 160,000 public-awareness SMS text messages were sent from the NDMO, which sits under the Ministry of Climate Change, to help prepare communities and make sure their food supply was safe. These interactive food security messages encouraged people to prioritise resilient crops, preserve any food they could, protect crops from damage, and look after their livestock.

In the immediate aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Pam, at the request of the NDMO and the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster, people were also asked to respond to a simple survey about their food supply situation. This helped the Cluster collect data for recovery planning to then guide government to distribute information and help to the communities most in-need.

"Once people were able to recharge their phones and the network was back up, being able to receive these messages from the government gave people reassurance they had not been forgotten, and there were people working to make sure they would be looked after."

- Mike Worsp, Digicel Head of Advertising and Media

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From left, Digicel Vanuatu Chief Executive Officer, Simon Fraser, and Brad Partridge, Head of Business Solutions, speaking with government and other PRRP stakeholders about private sector.