Building Together:

Seven principles for engaging civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure in the Pacific islands

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Building Together:

Seven principles for engaging civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure in the Pacific islands

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Executive Summary

In recent times major new infrastructure initiatives have been announced for the Pacific islands. Growing geostrategic competition in the region is a key driver for this focus on financing new infrastructure projects. However, there is also no doubting that Pacific island states do have significant, and unique, infrastructure needs. The Asian Development Bank estimates the Pacific will require USD 3.1billion in infrastructure investment each year until 2030.[1] While there is a rush to finance new projects, there is also no shortcut for quality. This renewed focus on infrastructure by development partners and Pacific island governments alike, presents an opportunity to consider, and promote, shared standards for quality infrastructure.

This paper, based on extensive research and consultations, is intended to stimulate thinking about best standards for infrastructure investment in the Pacific. It suggests that if lasting development outcomes are to be assured, civil society will need to play a greater role in the prioritisation, design, implementation and maintenance of new infrastructure in the Pacific islands. Pacific island countries are home to a rich and vibrant civil society, comprised of diverse organisations. Civil society groups strengthen Pacific societies by holding leaders to account. Often however, they also collaborate with government in policymaking and service delivery, and play an important role linking island communities with provincial and national governments. Civil society also delivers community-scale infrastructure directly.

In planning new infrastructure investments in the Pacific, it is important that decision-making by local actors is central. Working with local actors ensures projects are based on local and national priorities and cements the perceived legitimacy and sustainability of outcomes. Infrastructure investments are also an opportunity to promote Pacific enterprise and create local employment, as well as strengthening Pacific civil society organisations. Infrastructure also needs to be designed against biodiversity loss and a changing risk profile associated with climate change. Ensuring infrastructure planning and delivery is inclusive and does no harm will strengthen the resilience of Pacific island populations, including marginalised groups. For these reasons, collaborative forms of infrastructure governance, involving a wide range of stakeholders, are required.

This paper provides a set of principles for policymakers to use as they work with civil society and the private sector in the Pacific to design and implement resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure. These principles provide a guide for assessing infrastructure investments. This paper also provides practical entry points for implementing good practice and involving civil society in the prioritisation, design, construction and maintenance of infrastructure projects in the Pacific region.

Ultimately, building quality infrastructure in the Pacific islands requires meaningful engagement with civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure. It means going beyond a narrow focus on building hard assets, to thinking about the ways that new infrastructure, and the services they provide over time, will contribute to lasting development outcomes.

This paper is designed around **seven principles for implementing good practice and engaging civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure in the Pacific islands**. A summary of each of the principles is provided below.

Principle 1 emphasises that **civil society is a key partner for the delivery of quality inclusive infrastructure**. Ensuring high quality infrastructure means collaborating with civil society in the governance and decision-making around infrastructure and supporting civil society organisations to be involved in the delivery of infrastructure.

Principle 2 explains successful investment in **built infrastructure requires corresponding support for 'soft infrastructure'** – institutional strengthening, policy reform and robust regulatory frameworks are just as important as hard assets, as infrastructure needs to effectively deliver services over time.

Principle 3 suggests renewed investment in **infrastructure should be leveraged to strengthen Pacific enterprise**. New projects can stimulate economic growth, through employment, skills transfer and capacity development, and through partnership with local business and civil society organisations. Efforts must be intentionally inclusive so that they benefit marginalised groups.

Principle 4 notes that **community-driven infrastructure is key for Pacific contexts**. Many Pacific islanders live in rural areas, and the state often provides limited services outside island capitals, grant financing for smaller-scale projects is therefore crucial for alleviating hardship.

Principle 5 emphasises that Pacific infrastructure should **build resilience to disaster, climate change and environmental risks;** more than protecting hard assets, this means ensuring new infrastructure contributes to enhanced community resilience for all and protects the biodiversity upon which Pacific Island communities and economies depend.

Principle 6 explains that, if planned and implemented well, new infrastructure can help to **create a safe, inclusive and accessible environment for people with disabilities.** Key to this is meaningful engagement with civil society groups representing people with disabilities.

Finally, **Principle 7** suggests that all new investment in infrastructure in the Pacific should be **designed from the outset to address gender inequality** and to ensure it does no harm. Robust mechanisms should be established to monitor outcomes.

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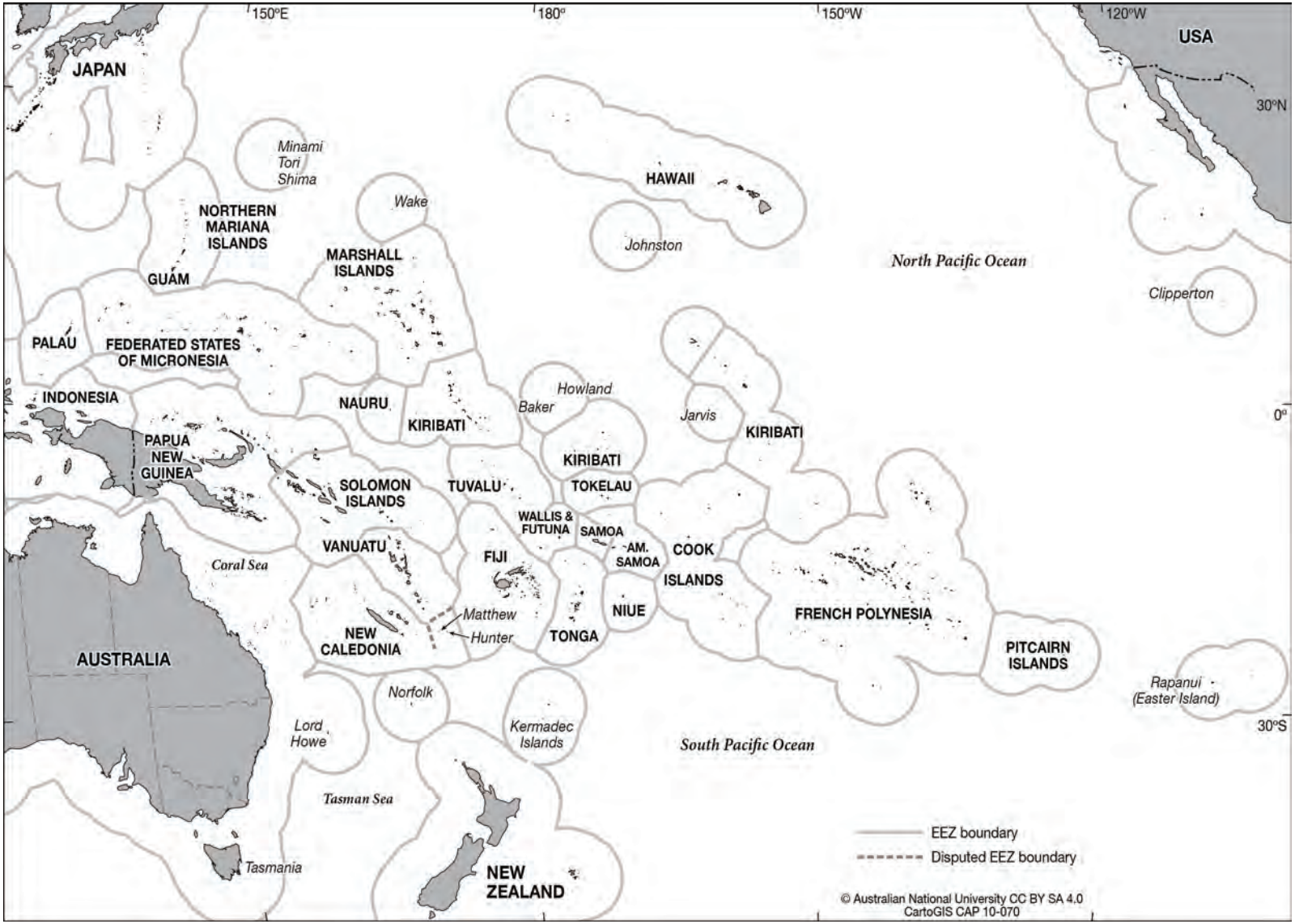
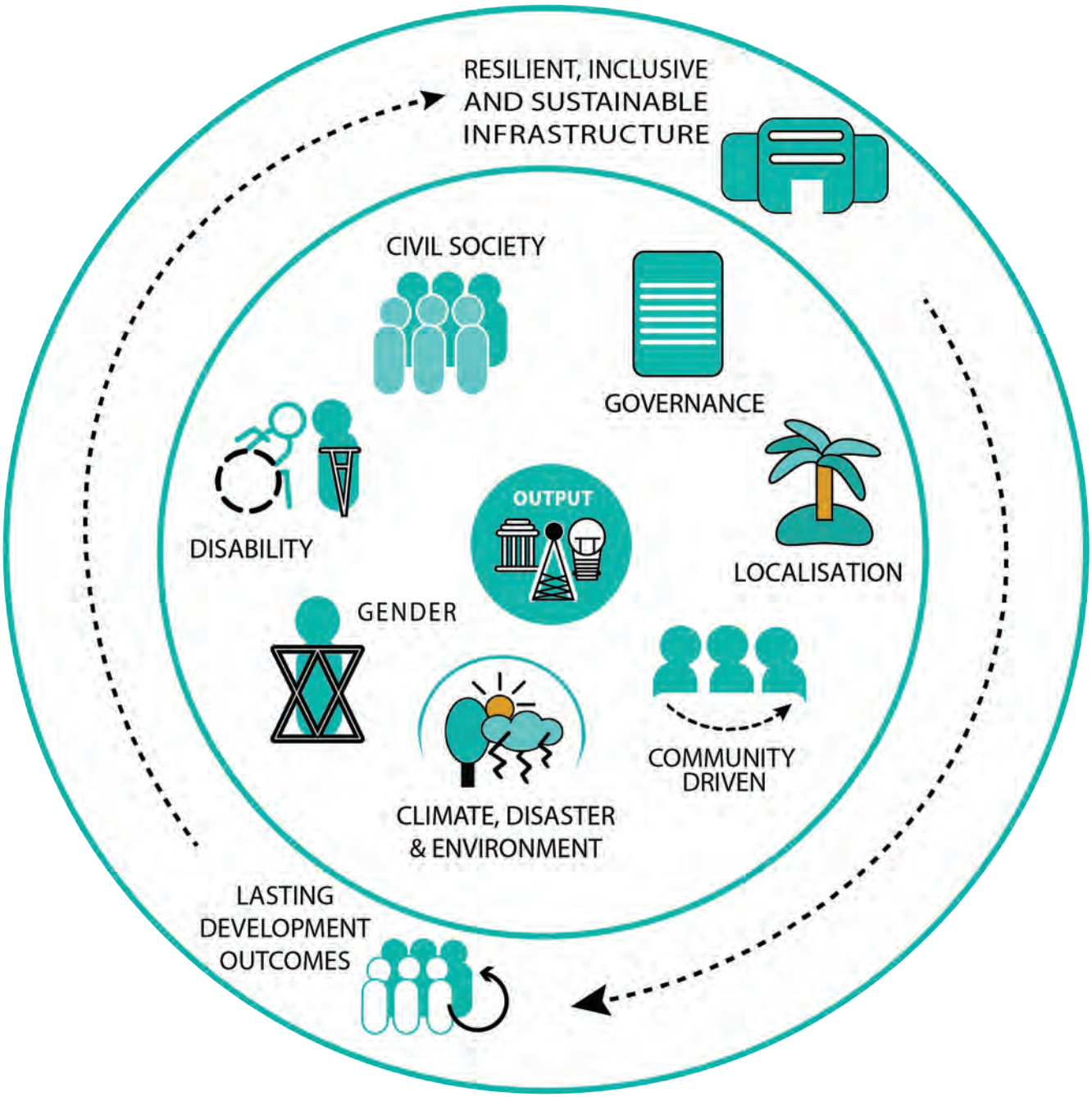


Source: CartoGIS Services, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University 2020

Figure 2: From infrastructure 'outputs' to development 'outcomes'



Building quality infrastructure in the Pacific islands requires **meaningful engagement** with civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure. It means going beyond a narrow focus on building hard assets, to thinking about the ways that new infrastructure, and the services they provide over time, will contribute to **lasting development outcomes.**

Purpose and Approach

The purpose of this paper is to provide a set of principles for policymakers to use as they work with civil society and the private sector in the Pacific to design and implement new infrastructure programs and projects. These principles also provide a guide for assessing new infrastructure investments in the Pacific.

This paper draws on new research exploring civil society engagement in infrastructure development in the Pacific islands. It provides practical entry points for implementing good practice and involving civil society in the prioritisation, design, construction and maintenance of infrastructure projects in the Pacific region. Engaging civil society is critical to ensure high standards are met and meaningful development outcomes are achieved.

This research encompassed an extensive desktop review of existing literature, including academic sources, policy documents, technical reports and media. Consultations and interviews were undertaken with over 50 participants in Australia, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. Key stakeholders consulted include representatives of Australian and Pacific civil society organisations, Pacific Islands Forum governments, development economists, researchers, journalists, representatives from key multilateral development banks, UN agencies and Pacific regional organisations. Representatives from the private sector were also consulted.

Introduction

New investment in infrastructure is important for helping Pacific island countries reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development for all. Well-designed and implemented infrastructure is a key driver of economic growth and can promote more inclusive, resilient and equitable societies. While there is clearly a need for increased investment in Pacific infrastructure, there is also no shortcut for quality. Achieving high standards requires a commitment to good practice, and a corresponding investment in strengthening the governance of infrastructure. This paper explains that engaging civil society is crucially important for ensuring high-standards for infrastructure investment in the Pacific islands.

A renewed focus on infrastructure

In recent times major new infrastructure initiatives have been announced for the Pacific islands. In late 2018 for example, the United States, Australia, Japan and New Zealand launched a major investment in rural electrification in Papua New Guinea. The Australian government also announced it would finance new telecommunications infrastructure for Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and committed to a ten-year $250 million bilateral infrastructure program in the Solomon Islands. More significantly Australia, long the region's largest provider of development finance, has established a new multi-billion-dollar infrastructure development bank dedicated specifically to Pacific island countries.[2]

The Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific, which uses a mixture of commercial loans and grant financing, represents a significant change in Australia's aid program to the Pacific. This renewed interest in financing infrastructure comes in a context of increasing geostrategic competition, and accusations in some quarters that traditional development partners have neglected a focus on hard infrastructure.[3] In recent times a number of countries have become increasingly active in the Pacific – including Australia, the United States, Britain, France, Japan and China.[4] China has, for example, become a more significant source of lending for infrastructure (including through its Belt and Road Initiative) and Chinese construction firms are involved in delivering new Pacific infrastructure. Long active in the region, multilateral development banks – including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank – have also scaled up finance available for Pacific island countries.[5] It is in this context of a more crowded and complex region that decisions are being made regarding infrastructure investments. This renewed focus, by Pacific island governments and development partners alike, is also an opportunity to consider, and promote, shared standards and approaches for quality infrastructure.

Increasingly, countries are developing shared standards for high-quality infrastructure development across Asia and the Pacific. In 2019 for example G20 member states (together accounting for 85% of the global economy) endorsed new *Principles for quality infrastructure investment*.[6] In late 2019, the United States, Japan and Australia also released a new multilateral initiative – the *Blue Dot Network* – intended to bring together governments, the private sector, and civil society to promote the highest standards for transparent and financially sustainable infrastructure development in the Indo-Pacific.[7] Both initiatives explicitly called for civil society to be involved in the governance of infrastructure. Other

global agreements and United Nations conventions also provide a high-level basis for determining the traits of quality infrastructure. Agreements such as the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),* the *Paris Climate Agreement, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*, the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness,* the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*, and the *Agenda for Humanity* all include principles such as equity, inclusivity, localisation, resilience, sustainability, poverty reduction and low carbon development. These have been translated into regional and national policies in the region and provide an important framing for Pacific infrastructure development.

There is no doubting that Pacific island states have significant, and unique, infrastructure needs. The Asian Development Bank estimates the Pacific will require USD 3.1billion in infrastructure investment each year until 2030.[8] Pacific island countries face constraints which limit options for sustained economic growth, including: small size, distance from markets, high transport costs, a heavy reliance on imports, a vulnerability to disasters and the impacts of climate change. High quality infrastructure – including roads, wharves and airports – are crucial for mitigating these intractable constraints to growth. Infrastructure is also key to improving lives and easing hardship. Many island communities, particularly in rural areas and remote islands, lack access to basic transport services, electricity and water and sanitation infrastructure. More than just hard assets, improvements in infrastructure can help to strengthen social, economic and ecological systems.[9]

Investing in infrastructure to promote sustainable development

This paper, based on extensive research and consultations in the Pacific islands and Australia, is intended to stimulate thinking about best standards for infrastructure investment in the Pacific. It suggests that if high standards and lasting development outcomes, are to be assured, civil society will need to play a greater role in the design, implementation and maintenance of new infrastructure in the Pacific islands. Infrastructure will also need to be designed against a changing risk profile associated with climate change; which requires both an investment in more resilient infrastructure, and support for climate governance by integrating climate change measures into national infrastructure policies and planning. Ensuring infrastructure planning and delivery is inclusive and does no harm will also strengthen the resilience of Pacific island populations, including marginalised groups.

Inclusive infrastructure includes marginalised groups at all stages. These groups can include women, children, youth, people with disabilities, older people, people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and indigenous and ethnic minorities. These groups have specific infrastructure requirements, that are often not well met across the region. Their absence from infrastructure planning and delivery often results in infrastructure governance and decision-making that excludes the perspectives of all, and the development of infrastructure which is inaccessible and exacerbates safety risks. This paper takes a deep dive into strategies which promote disability inclusion (principle 6) and gender equality (principle 7), as these are priority areas for action in relation to inclusion in the Pacific.

Engaging local actors, and supporting civil society, key to lasting outcomes

This paper explains that engaging Pacific civil society is critically important for new infrastructure investment; for ensuring transparent decision-making, helping to assure the legitimacy of process, and fostering a lasting ownership of outcomes. Pacific island countries are home to a rich and vibrant civil society, comprised of diverse organisations. Civil society groups strengthen Pacific societies by holding leaders to account. Often however, they also collaborate with government in policymaking and service delivery, and play an important role linking island communities with provincial and national governments. Civil society organisations also deliver infrastructure directly, particularly smaller-scale community infrastructure. A unique feature of Pacific civil society is the continuing strength of traditional systems of authority.

Across the region, traditional forms of governance remain important for everyday life – including the design, implementation and maintenance of community infrastructure. Faith-based organisations also play an important role in the Pacific, as churches often provide services, like health and education, in remote areas poorly serviced by the state. In planning new infrastructure investments in the Pacific, it is important that decision-making by local actors is central. Working with local actors ensures projects are based on local and national priorities and cements the perceived legitimacy and sustainability of outcomes. Infrastructure investments are also an opportunity to promote Pacific enterprise and create local employment, as well as strengthening Pacific civil society organisations. A wide range of stakeholders should be considered partners in the design of quality infrastructure in the Pacific, each of whom bring unique strengths to the table. People living with disabilities, and their representative organisations, are co-designers for accessible infrastructure. Pacific women are experts on their own development and can help provide appropriate gender markers for monitoring the impacts of new infrastructure. Working with indigenous landowners is critical for the lasting success of infrastructure projects in many parts of the Pacific. For these reasons, collaborative forms of infrastructure governance, involving a wide range of stakeholders are required.

Ultimately, if designed well, and driven by local priorities, new investment in Pacific infrastructure can be transformational. High quality infrastructure can have significant social and economic impacts: helping to change gender norms and create more inclusive societies, as well as building skills and bolstering the Pacific private sector. Much depends on the decision-making process for the selection, design, implementation and maintenance of infrastructure. This paper provides a set of principles for policymakers to use as they work with civil society and the private sector in the Pacific to implement new infrastructure programs. It is hoped these principles will provide guidance for Pacific island governments, for development partners, and for civil society groups themselves.

"If we're not careful these projects will be driven by the needs of the people proposing them, the only beneficiaries will be the companies building them..."

Emeline Siale Ilolahia. Executive Director, Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO)

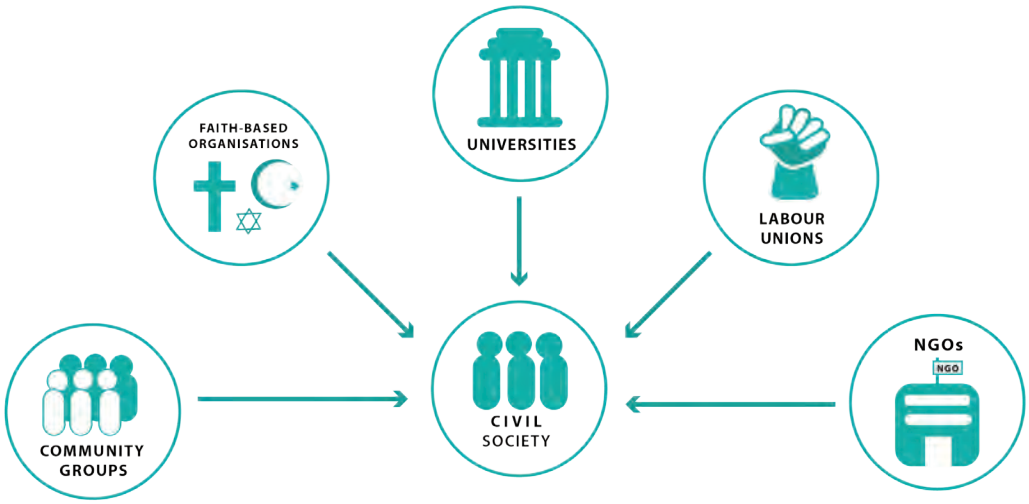
Photo: Rebecca McNaught

Principle 1: Partner with Pacific civil society to deliver quality infrastructure

Civil society is a key partner for the delivery of quality infrastructure in the Pacific islands; engaging with civil society is critically important for ensuring sustainable outcomes and achieving high standards.

OVERVIEW: New infrastructure projects tend to be financed and managed by governments and multilateral institutions, while being implemented and built by private contractors. However, civil society organisations are also key partners, who bring unique strengths to the table based on extensive experience working with island communities, and frequently represent the voices of groups traditionally excluded from infrastructure planning. Ensuring high-quality infrastructure means engaging with civil society in the selection of infrastructure priorities and the design of projects. Collaborative models of governance – involving government, the private sector and civil society – are important for planning and delivering infrastructure that results in lasting outcomes and meets the priorities of diverse local groups. Supporting a vigorous civil society, capable of monitoring new infrastructure investment and holding public institutions and private actors to account, assures benefits for all members of society and helps to minimise risks. Civil society organisations also provide high-quality infrastructure directly – particularly smaller-scale community projects – and help to link communities with ongoing institutional support.

Figure 3: What is Civil Society?



Civil society includes a diverse group of actors, including non-governmental organisations, universities, faith-based organisations, trade unions, groups representing marginalised communities (such as Disabled Person's Organisations), professional associations and informal groups. More broadly, civil society also includes media and social movements. In the Pacific, civil society also encompasses indigenous forms of local decision-making, subsistence-based community groups and kinship networks. Civil society, along with private and public sectors, is the third pillar of society and assists in strengthening democracies. A strong and effective civil society is a development outcome in its own right.

Civil society has an important role to play in infrastructure development in the Pacific islands. Civil society organisations often have a deep understanding of local context and extensive networks, including working relationships with communities. These are crucial for ensuring new projects are matched with local needs, and for the sustainability of project outcomes. Many civil society organisations are involved in the delivery of infrastructure, for example through the construction of disaster and climate resilient housing in post-disaster recovery and installing community-level water and sanitation infrastructure. Just as importantly, civil society groups frequently complement larger scale infrastructure projects undertaken by development banks and private contractors, through participatory initiatives which engage local communities in the design, implementation, and maintenance of infrastructure.

Given their closeness to communities, civil society organisations often facilitate the engagement of marginalised groups within communities in infrastructure planning and delivery, including women and girls, people with disabilities, ethnic and indigenous minorities and others. Recognising their unique strengths, multilateral banks have explicit strategies for involving civil society in new infrastructure investment.[10]

Local civil society organisations in Pacific island countries should be consulted in the selection, design and implementation of new investment in infrastructure projects. Cultural, political and geographic nuances can be critical determinants for infrastructure success and not readily picked up by international staff and advisors. Likewise, specific, localised considerations related to gender and disability inclusion can be challenging to identify. Pacific civil society organisations have extensive experience working with communities on resilience and development initiatives and are key sources for knowledge of local contextual considerations. However, they are frequently small and under-resourced, and it is important to consult with Pacific civil society organisations without draining them. They also need to be supported to engage effectively in infrastructure consultations.

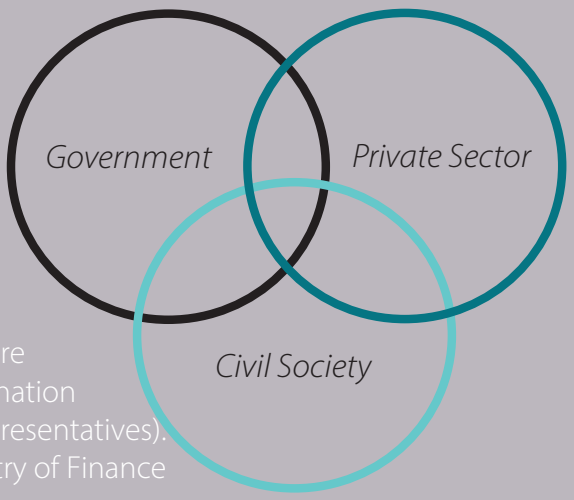
Collaborative models of governance, which draw on the respective strengths of government, civil society and the private sector, are important for the success of infrastructure projects in the Pacific. Project decision-making driven by central government agencies, through strong engagement with relevant ministries and sectoral and sub-national duty bearers are most likely to succeed. Equally important however is the engagement of stakeholders from the private sector and from civil society. For example, regular forums for dialogue between civil society, private sector and governments – intended to promote and agree upon good practice infrastructure development – are useful for furthering infrastructure practice. Collaborative governance can also help to strengthen infrastructure decision-making through civil society membership in 'national level' decision making bodies (**see Box 1** for an example from Samoa), and for specific project management and oversight. Infrastructure project processes can for example include calls for expressions of interest for civil society representation on project level steering groups (**see Box 1** for an example from Vanuatu). Civil society can also converge in coalitions and networks to advocate for improvements to infrastructure practice and simplify infrastructure consultations for governments and the private sector.

Drawing on the respective strengths of government, civil society and the private sector can help to ensure the success of infrastructure projects in the Pacific. Governments provide a leadership role and have overall responsibility for infrastructure planning – for financing and procurement for larger projects, and for establishing appropriate policy and regulatory frameworks. The private sector can bring additional capital, technical skills, equipment and competition. Civil society often provides support for marginalised groups, promotes transparency and acts as a bridge between community groups and official decision-making processes (**see Box 2** for an elaboration of strengths of stakeholders in collaborative processes).

BOX 1: EXAMPLES OF CIVIL SOCIETY COLLABORATION

Collaborative infrastructure governance in Samoa

Actions taken by island governments to manage infrastructure projects are a key determinant of development outcomes. In Samoa all major infrastructure projects are vetted by a national development committee, chaired by the Prime Minister and including cabinet members and CEOs of government agencies. This committee includes representatives from both civil society and the private sector. Where aid or debt finance is required, projects are also approved by a separate national aid coordination committee (which also includes civil society representatives). Both committees receive advice from the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Samoa. [86]



Collaborative project management in Vanuatu

Port Villa waterfront. Credit: Rebecca McNaught

A good example of 'project level' collaboration is the recent redevelopment of the Port Vila seafront in Vanuatu. Officially called the Vanuatu Tourism Infrastructure Project, this development sought to revitalise a commercial and public space that acts as a 'gateway' to the country for cruise ship arrivals. The project used a technical advisory group, chaired by the Vanuatu Project Management Unit, to ensure civil society, government and businesses were involved in making key decisions.

BOX 2: STRENGTHS OF CIVIL SOCIETY, PRIVATE SECTOR AND GOVERNMENT

Civil society	Government	Private sector
Support for poor and marginalised groups	Public financial management and market regulation	Technical and management expertise
Assist in ensuring transparency and accountability of public and private sectors	Regulatory, legal, institutional and policy reform	Greater competition and coverage of infrastructure, job creator and employer
Help citizens access their rights	Security, justice, administrative and political institutions	Provide equipment and are a key user of infrastructure
Provide services under-served by government and private sector	Provision of public services and infrastructure services	Provision of some public services
Bridge between citizens and decision-making processes	International relations and diplomatic efforts	Enable large scale implementation
Vast community networks and understanding of local context	Social, disaster and environmental protections	Additional capital and innovative financing solutions, contributes to tax revenue

Table derived from multiple sources.[87]

Engaging Pacific civil society means working with a range of actors. Civil society organisations work across different *scales*, from regional policymaking, to national representative bodies, to very localised community organisations. Pacific regional organisations tend to be engaged in development of policy frameworks that impact across multiple island countries. Many of these are based in Fiji's capital Suva, as it is host to key regional intergovernmental organisations and regional diplomatic posts and UN agencies. Engaging regional civil society organisations is important for *regional* Pacific-wide policymaking. It would be crucial for example, to engage the Suva-based Pacific Disability Forum when considering a regional blueprint for accessibility standards in the design of infrastructure. Regional civil society organisations are also participants in policy processes of the Pacific Islands Forum (the premiere regional political forum in the Pacific).

In most Pacific island countries there is a national representative body or 'umbrella' organisation for civil society, helping to provide an entry point of engagement for governments and development partners alike. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat maintains a database of national focal points for civil society engagement.[11] Most island countries also have a national Disabled People's Organisation, and at least one national women's rights organisation. Across the Pacific hundreds, if not thousands, of very local civil society actors, often church groups and traditional community authorities, are involved in the planning and construction of 'village-level' infrastructure projects. Informal community groups and kinship networks are just as important as legal, contractual entities.[12] Often informal groups are linked with larger organisations, based in island capitals, who provide an important connection between communities and national policymaking and funding opportunities. A table summarising potential roles that civil society organisations might play in decision-making about Pacific infrastructure is provided below in **Box 3.**

In planning new infrastructure investments, it is important to recognise, and strengthen, decision-making by local civil society actors in Pacific island countries[13]. The concept of localisation has been widely adopted in recent global frameworks, especially the SDGs and the Agenda for Humanity. To recognise and work towards the achievement of the SDGs, localisation should be incorporated into the practice of infrastructure development.

Consultations in the Pacific confirmed that new investment in infrastructure is an opportunity to further localisation efforts that have occurred in recent years. This includes strengthening local civil society and promoting the local private sector, by providing new opportunities for local businesses, and jobs and skills training for Pacific islanders. Local knowledge, engaged from the concept stages of new infrastructure projects, is crucial for ensuring projects match community needs, are supported locally, and do no harm. Infrastructure governance structures should acknowledge the resourcefulness of Pacific Islanders and civil society organisations and build from their strengths. This includes valuing indigenous and local knowledge in decision making.

This paper provides practical entry points for implementing good practice and involving civil society in the prioritisation, design, construction and maintenance of infrastructure projects in the Pacific region. See entry points for Principle 1.

BOX 3: ROLES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT

Civil society actors can perform a broad range of activities and may be involved in decision-making about infrastructure at multiple scales.

Scale	Potential roles	Organisations
Pacific regional	• **Consult** and collaborate on regional infrastructure policy and standards; and Pacific-wide investment priorities; (e.g. regional 'blueprint' for accessibility standards) • **Convene** civil society, private sector and governments to further infrastructure practice (e.g. forums on infrastructure good practice) • **Conduct** research and training for infrastructure development (e.g. producing graduates skilled in climate change and disaster risk analysis) • **Implement** regional aid programs with infrastructure components (e.g. Disaster Ready, Water for Women).	• Regionally focused and international CSOs Organisations that work in three or more Pacific island countries (e.g. Pacific Islands Association of NGOs – PIANGO, Pacific Disability Forum, and Pacific Conference of Churches). • Universities (E.g. University of the South Pacific) • International CSOs and national counterparts
National	• **Consult** on national infrastructure decisions; e.g. through civil society membership of national infrastructure steering group (see **Box 1** Samoa example) • **Submit** infrastructure proposals and policy recommendations e.g. Solomon Islands Infrastructure policy • **Support** to convene civil society actors to engage with government (including coalitions). • **Engage** civil society in national infrastructure awareness programs such as building codes, build back better, disaster preparedness (e.g. build back better post-cyclone Winston, Fiji)	• National level umbrella organisations, alliances or networks that represent a group of CSOs at the national level (e.g. the Vanuatu Association of NGOs – VANGO) or Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations SUNGO) • Thematic engagement (e.g. National Disabled People's Organisations, national women's rights organisations) • Media (e.g. newspapers, PACNEWS)
Project	• **Engage** in design and implementation of major projects; e.g. through expressions of interest for civil society representation on project steering groups (see **Box 1** Vanuatu example) • **Support** to work with communities to determine infrastructure priorities and/or to build/monitor community infrastructure.	• Organisations that work on one issue area, or with local communities (e.g. Partners in Community Development Fiji – PCDF).
Community	• Advocacy (e.g. community based) • Development and maintenance of community led infrastructure • Transparency and accountability of initiatives such as scorecards, social audits, community monitoring	• Community level groupings, for example women's groups, church groups, traditional community authorities and community development committees.

Table adapted from Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat - Civil Society Organisations.[88]

BOX 4: USEFUL RESOURCES ON PACIFIC CIVIL SOCIETY[89]

- Asian Development Bank. 2019. Participation Tools for the Pacific. 'Part 1: Engaging Pacific Civil Society Organisations'. ADB, Manila. Philippines.
- Pacific Islands Forum. 2016. Pacific Islands Forum, Civil Society Organisations Engagement Strategy. Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Suva, Fiji.
- Oxfam. 2017. A quick guide to engaging with regional policy. [Guide for Pacific civil society] Oxfam in the Pacific, Suva, Fiji.
- RDI Network 2017. How to partner for development research. Research for Development Impact Network. Canberra, Australia.
- RDI Network. 2018. How to collaborate with Pacific Churches for development research. Research for Development Impact Network. Canberra. Australia.

Entry Points: Principle 1

Entry Point 1: Local civil society organisations in Pacific island countries have a deep understanding of context and extensive networks – including working relationships with communities – and should be engaged in the selection, design and implementation of new infrastructure projects.

Entry Point 2: Civil society should be considered as an infrastructure delivery partner in two ways. First, civil society groups can complement larger scale infrastructure projects, through participatory engagement of local communities in the design, implementation and maintenance of infrastructure. This is particularly important for inclusion, as civil society groups can ensure the voices of people with disabilities, women and other marginalised groups inform infrastructure design, development and monitoring. Second, many civil society organisations can assist in the delivery of infrastructure and associated outreach, for example through the construction of disaster and climate resilient housing in post-disaster recovery and installing community-level water and sanitation infrastructure.

Entry Point 3: Collaborative models of governance, which draw on the respective strengths of government, civil society and the private sector, should be used to strengthen infrastructure decision-making at the national level, and for specific project management and oversight.

Entry Point 4: To engage with Pacific civil society means working with a range of actors for different purposes including regional organisations, national representative or umbrella organisations, national Disabled People's Organisations and women's rights organisations, as well as with local actors such as church groups and traditional community authorities, local women and people with disabilities.

Entry Point 5: Working through civil society coalitions is an efficient way to undertake consultations. Pacific civil society organisations can help to coordinate community consultations around infrastructure, but it is important they are supported and have the resources to do so.

"A 'ground-up' approach to developing infrastructure priorities is crucial in the Pacific. Civil society helps to link communities with governments, particularly at the provincial level, which is very important because that is where the top and the bottom meet (not just 'top-down' or 'bottom up') but working together"

Tevita Ravumaidama. Executive Director, Partners in Community Development Fiji

Photo: Rebecca McNaught

Principle 2: Support new projects with investments in soft infrastructure

Successful investment in built infrastructure requires corresponding support for 'soft infrastructure'; institutional strengthening, policy reform and robust regulatory frameworks are all just as important as hard assets, as infrastructure needs to effectively deliver services over time.

OVERVIEW: Delivering quality infrastructure in the Pacific requires support for locally led good governance and domestic reform. Clear rules, open tendering processes, and robust institutions and oversight mechanisms are all key to ensuring new projects lead to good development outcomes. Transparent, fair, and inclusive procurement processes implemented by informed personnel are the cornerstone of good infrastructure governance, and Pacific civil society organisations and local populations should be involved. The debt sustainability implications of new infrastructure investment should be transparent. Supporting quality infrastructure also requires a commitment to developing effective public policy: regulatory reforms which determine the ownership, pricing, maintenance and use of infrastructure are at least as important as building hard assets themselves.

All hard infrastructure – roads and Internet cables, power-lines and electric wires – must be accompanied by robust 'soft infrastructure'. The institutions, processes and people who prioritise, plan and design new projects, who monitor construction, who regulate infrastructure, and who ensure its ongoing maintenance, are at least as important as 'tangible assets' such as buildings or bridges. Supporting soft infrastructure involves strengthening national public institutions and working with sub-national authorities and local decision-makers, including traditional leaders, people with disabilities, indigenous and ethnic groups and women in island communities. Strengthening soft infrastructure means actively engaging with a vigorous civil society, capable of monitoring new infrastructure investments and holding public institutions and private actors to account to ensure widespread benefits and minimise risks. There is no shortcut for building high quality infrastructure, with strong environmental and social safeguards, and which achieves sustainable development outcomes.

There is widespread acknowledgment that promoting good governance and domestic policy reform is crucial for achieving positive development outcomes in Pacific island countries. There is also an understanding that governance reform needs to be locally led.[14] Protracted governance challenges in island states also mean that new infrastructure needs to be carefully planned to ensure it is appropriate for a given context.[15] Where new infrastructure, particularly commercial infrastructure, is built it is important to support accompanying policy and regulatory frameworks. Governments and development partners, through initiatives such as the Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility, also have a crucial role to play in ensuring the ongoing investment in infrastructure maintenance. It is especially important that infrastructure is designed, and building materials selected, according to the Pacific's highly corrosive environment. The Pacific is littered with projects that were built with the best of intentions, but which are slowly crumbling in the tropical sun for lack of ongoing investment in maintenance. Careful planning is also required to ensure the sustainability of debt financing for infrastructure investments in the Pacific, a region where economic growth rates are typically slow and many projects, while crucially important for development outcomes, have limited economic returns.

Past experience managing infrastructure projects reveals that it is the actions of Pacific island governments themselves that is the key variable in the achievement of good development outcomes.[16] Management of debt-financed infrastructure projects across the region varies considerably, but countries with strong institutional arrangements, such as national planning committees and robust oversight mechanisms, have tended to derive greater benefits.[17] In many places, civil society actors are a key part of these planning committees and oversight mechanisms.

Building new infrastructure needs to be guided by clear standards and regulations. Universal Design principles are a foundational condition of good design and consider the needs of a wide range of users in the design of an environment to ensure all people can use and benefit from a product, environment or service to the greatest extent possible. Universal Design principles are outlined in the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Accessibility Design Guide and are obligated under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, national building codes which incorporate these are not present in all Pacific countries.

National standards, including building codes and guidelines for disaster recovery, help to ensure hard assets are accessible to all and built to be resilient to disasters, such as intense tropical cyclones, and to the impacts of climate change (**see Box 5**). Some communities may need financial assistance with the up-front costs of building to safer standards. In addition to regulatory standards, ensuring new infrastructure is accessible to all – including people with disabilities – requires the development ongoing education of all stakeholders. Civil society can play a key role in dissemination and awareness-raising on resilient and inclusive building practices.

Achieving sustainable development outcomes requires an up-front focus on policy development and regulatory reform to accompany any new infrastructure build. Multilateral lenders, like the Asian Development Bank, tend to require policy commitments before new infrastructure loan packages are announced. Robust public policy is important to ensure benefits of new infrastructure are widespread, and that risks are well managed. When, for example, large-scale water infrastructure is built, it is crucial to ensure government has in place effective policy for pricing and tariffs and for the maintenance of built infrastructure. Some recent Pacific infrastructure announcements have been characterised by a lack of accompanying policy frameworks or agreements. When a major electrification partnership for Papua New Guinea was announced in November 2018, for example, details were initially not included on how the project would manage its partnership with state-owned PNG Power to extend the existing power grid and encourage private sector involvement in 'off-grid' and mini-grid power supply.[18] With regard to the new Internet cable from Australia to Papua New Guinea, and to the Solomon Islands, greater initial clarity around governance arrangements may have helped ensure equitable access for would-be users of the enhanced telecommunications infrastructure.[19]

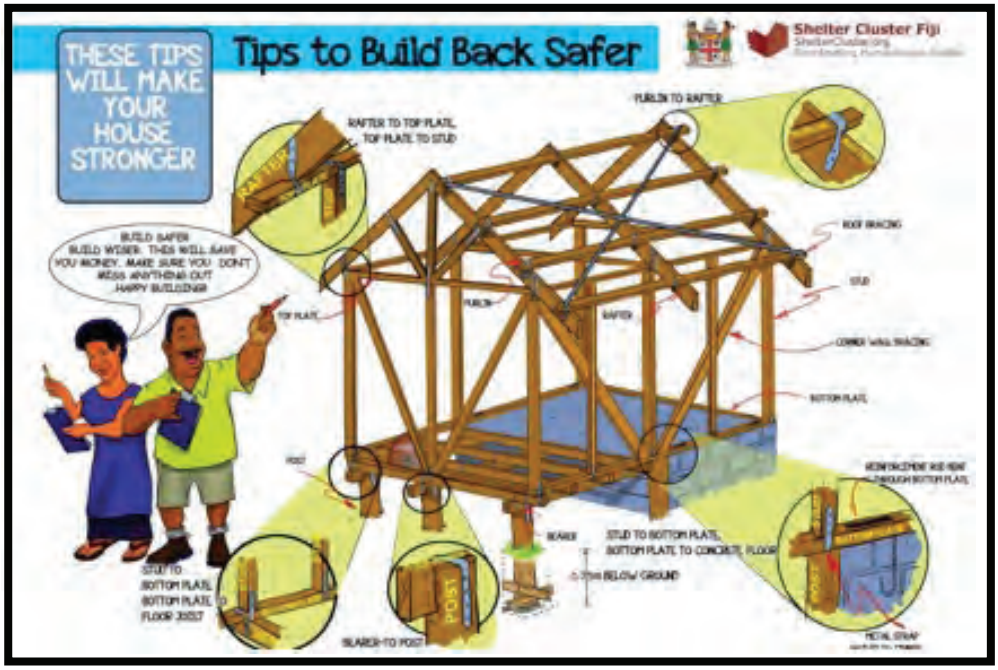
Transparent decision-making regarding infrastructure projects is important to avoid selection of projects driven solely by supplier-interests or by opaque political patronage. Although transparent processes take more time, the outcomes are higher quality than those that are expedited. Tendering processes should be competitive and transparent, and there is a strong need for robust social, resilience and environmental safeguards be a requirement of project design. Many infrastructure projects have significant social and environmental impacts and a robust civil society sector – including development NGOs and media – has a crucial role to play holding local institutions and political leaders to account in the selection and ongoing management of infrastructure projects. Involving civil society early in decision-making about infrastructure investment, helps to ensure that priorities, and design features, are based on local need, minimise risks to marginalised groups, and will benefit women and people with a diverse range of disabilities in their delivery and beyond. Proposals for new infrastructure can also come from civil society itself.

Strengthening governance systems in the Pacific is important for ensuring debt sustainability. Using non-concessional debt finance to fund new infrastructure would likely risk exacerbating debt distress, at least in some Pacific island countries. Recent reports have suggested that, while Chinese infrastructure loans to the Pacific have generally gone to countries that can absorb those debts, there is a risk that future lending at similar rates would pose a risk to debt sustainability for borrowing countries.[20]

BOX 5: DEVELOPING STANDARDS FOR BUILDING SAFER SHELTER IN FIJI

Build Back Safer - Developing standards for building safer shelter in Fiji

The creation of the 'Fiji Shelter Handbook' [90] is an example of government, civil society and private sector partners working together to create new infrastructure standards. After Fiji was devastated by severe Cyclone Winston in February 2016, new guidelines were created to help people to build back using disaster-resilient and accessible construction techniques, and to ensure safer shelter practice. These guidelines are now used by the Fiji Shelter Cluster - part of the Fiji government's formal coordination mechanisms for disaster in Fiji. They were developed in close consultation with the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation to ensure they incorporate accessibility principles. The Fiji Shelter Handbook was developed with support from the Australian Government, Shelter Cluster Fiji coordination team and partners, and produced by Habitat for Humanity Australia and Habitat for Humanity Fiji, as part of the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) Disaster READY program.



Shared guidelines help people in Fiji to build back safer after disasters. Image: Fiji Shelter Cluster. 2019.

For its part, Australia intends to be a responsible lender, and will need to be careful to avoid similarly exacerbating debt problems. This likely means Australian loans will need to be as concessional as possible and involve a mix of loans and grants. Strengthening institutional capacity in Pacific island countries to assess risks posed by new debt liabilities would also help to avoid new debt burdens.[21]

On the face of it, Pacific island countries are some of the most at-risk of debt distress anywhere in the world. Island states have small economies, face unique constraints which limit sustained growth (linked with intractable factors of economic geography), and are uniquely exposed to natural hazards and economic shocks. Together, these factors limit the ability of island states to take on and repay significant non-concessional loans. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank – commonly taken to be standard bearers for international good practice in infrastructure lending – have formal rules which require them to provide more concessional loans to countries at higher risk of debt distress, or to provide grants only for countries considered to be at high risk. The reality is, if development partners want to do more to address infrastructure needs in the Pacific, for most island countries this will require new grant financing.[22]

Finally, it is critically important to engage municipal and provincial governments in the design, implementation and management of infrastructure. Across the Pacific, sub-national authorities play an important role in maintenance of new infrastructure, and in some cases also implement it. Local governments also have many other roles that intersect with infrastructure, such as authorising development applications in urban settings, urban planning and zoning, local economic development (such as regulation of marketplaces), provision and maintenance of public spaces, and acting as a bridge connecting national governments and the public (particularly in rural areas). Local governments are also regularly responsible for, or input into, sub-national development planning, helping to ensure the priorities of all community members are heard at other levels of government.

Entry Points: Principle 2

Entry Point 1: Strengthen the capacity of national public institutions, sub-national authorities and local decision-makers, including traditional leaders, women, people with disabilities and ethnic and indigenous minorities in island communities to prioritise and design new projects, monitor construction, regulate and maintain infrastructure.

Entry Point 2: Support transparent decision-making regarding infrastructure projects by facilitating engagement of civil society in infrastructure governance, important for monitoring new infrastructure investments and holding public institutions and private actors to account.

Entry Point 3: Where new infrastructure, particularly commercial infrastructure, is built it is important to support accompanying policy and regulatory reform, including effective policies for universal design, pricing and tariffs.

Entry Point 4: Careful planning, by both Pacific island governments and development partners, is required to ensure the sustainability of debt financing for infrastructure investments.

"It must be an enforceable requirement that… contractors engage with local businesses and create business sustainability and growth in Pacific businesses and create employment in Pacific markets. Projects must leave behind more than just concrete." [91]

Frank Yourn. Executive Director, Australia-Pacific Islands Business Council

Photo: Rebecca McNaught

Principle 3: Leverage infrastructure investment to strengthen Pacific enterprise

To promote economic growth in Pacific island countries, new investment in infrastructure should be leveraged to strengthen Pacific enterprise, create local employment and support local civil society.

OVERVIEW: New investment in infrastructure in the Pacific islands is an opportunity to directly stimulate economic growth, through the creation of employment opportunities, skills transfer and capacity development, and through partnerships with local enterprises. This is particularly important for women and people with disabilities, who risk exclusion from these opportunities due to gender norms and prevailing discriminatory attitudes towards people with disabilities – both common across the Pacific. Local engineering and construction firms should be involved in tendering processes, and contractors should be required to engage local businesses across the project cycle and in the delivery of associated goods and services. Priority should be given to 'labour based' approaches to construction and maintenance, which favour the creation of jobs and income earning opportunities over the use of large equipment (these approaches are especially suitable for road maintenance and for infrastructure in remote islands). Support should also be provided to local civil society organisations to facilitate community consultations, and to complement hard infrastructure with education and outreach programs. Local business and civil society organisations should be required to maximise participation by women and people with disabilities through awareness raising, outreach, and the establishing of targets and risk-management efforts.

A renewed investment in infrastructure in the Pacific is an important opportunity to support local enterprise. The Australian private sector is being encouraged to play a greater role in infrastructure construction and maintenance in the Pacific, including with financial assistance from the Australian government to draw down risks.[23] However, a redoubled involvement of Australian firms may crowd out local small and medium enterprises.[24] A common complaint about Chinese infrastructure projects in the Pacific is that they are reliant on Chinese labour during the construction process.

If Australian contractors are perceived to be crowding out local opportunities this would risk exacerbating similar concerns. To avoid this, new infrastructure investments should engage effectively with local enterprise, including subcontracting for project components and employing local labour during construction.[25] Traditionally the domain of men without disabilities, new infrastructure development is a critical opportunity for the creation of social and economic development opportunities for all through the engagement of women, people with disabilities and other traditionally marginalised groups, as workers **(see Box 6)**. This can raise awareness of what these groups can do, challenging assumptions and shifting norms in the process, as well as improving the skills and economic situation of women, people with disabilities and their families.

Infrastructure projects represent an opportunity to transfer key skills to Pacific island countries, where critical skills shortages are hampering private sector development and economic growth. In some places foreign workers are filling skills shortages. In Papua New Guinea for example, the World Bank estimates there are upwards of 40,000 foreign workers and many of them are working in trade occupations.[26] Recent research by the Asian Development Bank has identified options to facilitate skills transfer in the Pacific, including contractual obligations (with penalties for non-compliance) and positive incentives for incorporating skills transfer into infrastructure projects.[27]

BOX 6: LEVERAGING INFRASTRUCTURE TO BUILD SKILLS IN VANUATU

In Vanuatu, DFAT's Vanuatu Skills Partnership has supported Rural Training Centres (RTCs) to deliver certificate-level construction courses for trainees, where the practical component involved building much-needed new training facilities. Construction of these new facilities incorporated accessibility design principles and involved female trainees and those with disabilities. On the island of Espiritu Santo, trainees included evacuees from the 2018 volcano eruption on the island of Ambae, who eventually returned to their island with a qualification in construction to assist in rebuilding their communities. Opportunities for local skills development are especially important in locations with limited formal job opportunities, and where self-employment and entrepreneurship are critical economic drivers.

New infrastructure projects are a chance to promote employment opportunities in Pacific island countries. During the construction phase, large scale projects can be labour intensive, creating new opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Consideration should also be given to deliberately promoting labour intensive approaches to infrastructure maintenance. Labour based approaches – common for road maintenance – prioritise the creation of jobs and income earning opportunities and emphasise the use of people over the use of large equipment. These approaches are considered especially suitable for smaller and more remote islands where equipment costs can be prohibitive. They also help to involve local communities in their own infrastructure maintenance **(see Box 7)**.

New infrastructure projects should look to create opportunities for all to be involved in project delivery – including women, young people and people with disabilities. Infrastructure investments ought to complement investment in other areas, such as Australia's considerable support for skills development in the Pacific through bilateral programs, and through the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC).

BOX 7: ROADS TO EMPLOYMENT

Promoting women's economic empowerment in Solomon Islands

Labour based approaches to road maintenance have been used in the Solomon Islands since the 1980s where they are considered an effective and sustainable method for road maintenance.[92] On the island of Malaita, the Asian Development Bank and the Solomon Islands government have encouraged local communities to form indigenous road maintenance companies, and to tender for maintenance works in their local area. Importantly, this approach has contributed to women's economic empowerment, with many of the road maintenance companies run by women. By some estimates, more than half the road workers on Malaita are women.[93]

The APTC currently provides 'Built Environment' courses intended to produce work-ready graduates with skills in carpentry, tiling, painting and plumbing. The Australian government's commitment to 'providing employment and training opportunities for local contractors and communities' as part of the Papua New Guinea Electrification Project is an approach that could also be maintained across new investment in infrastructure in the Pacific islands.[28] Support for skills development can help to expand economic opportunities for people with disabilities. In Vanuatu for example, the *Vanuatu Skills Partnership* seeks to link skills development to economic growth areas. This has led to the engagement of people with disabilities as accessible tourism coaches. They travel around the country advising large and small tourism operators on modifications required to improve the accessibility of hotels, bungalows and tourist attractions. This both improves accessible tourism infrastructure and provides models for effective inclusion to businesses and the broader community.

Infrastructure investments should be bundled with community engagement and development initiatives supported by civil society. Hard infrastructure can only fulfill its full potential if it intersects effectively with the lives of communities that surround it. For example, improved sanitation facilities often need to be matched with education programs to realise the full benefits. Likewise, enhanced road infrastructure needs to be matched with adequate road safety and measures to minimise damage to valuable livestock. Outreach programs run by civil society actors can complement hard infrastructure and help to maximise benefits and reduce risks. An example of this approach can be seen in the *Papua New Guinea Rural Primary Health Services Project*; which coupled the development of new health facilities with training and education programs. The Asian Development Bank, the Ministry of Health and the organisation Marie Stopes International worked together to implement priorities in Papua New Guinea's National Health Strategy.[29] As of late 2019, this program had seen the establishment of 25 new community health posts across eight provinces, considerably improving access to health services for remote populations.[30]

Entry Points: Principle 3

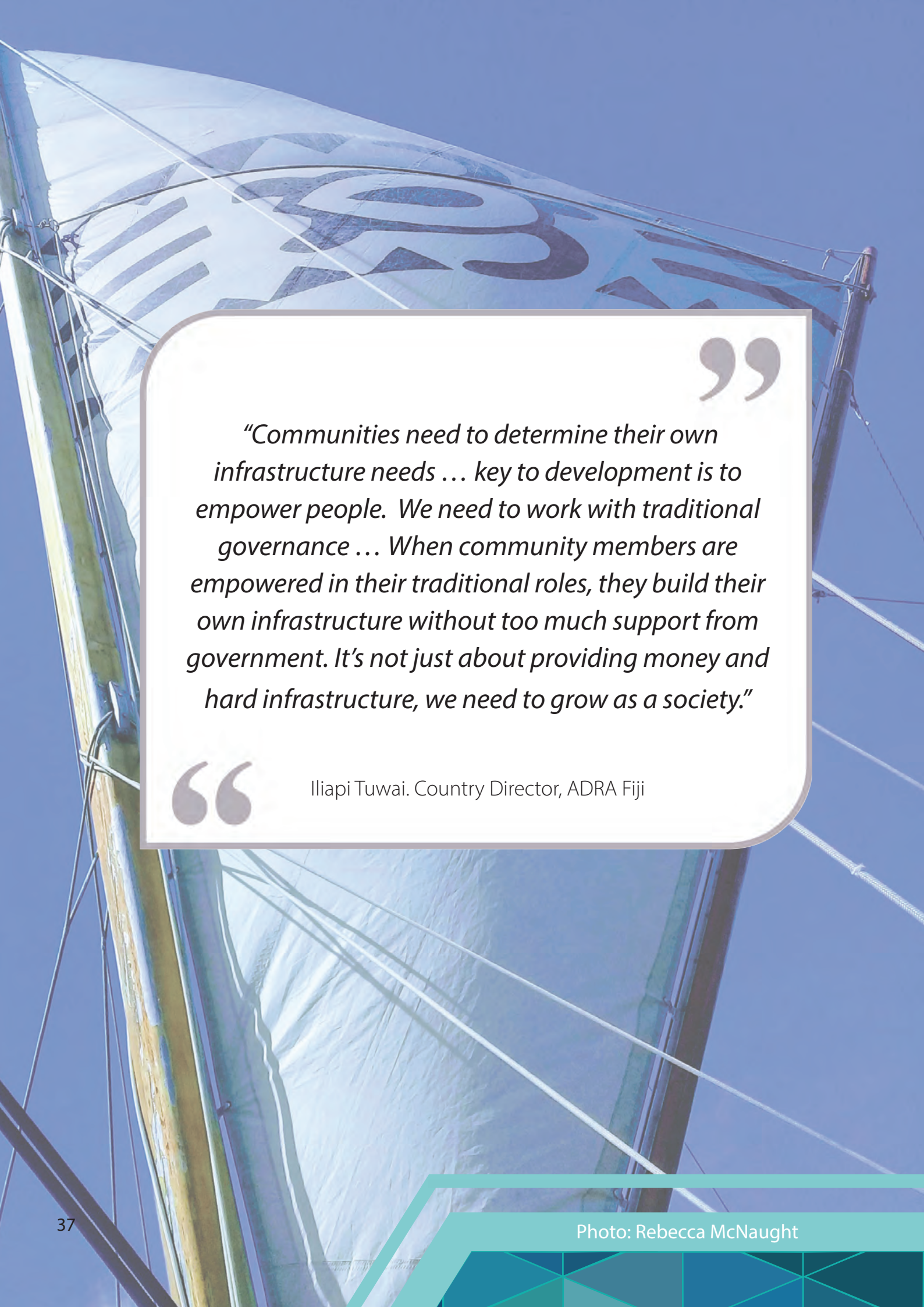
Entry Point 1: New infrastructure investments should engage with local enterprise, including by subcontracting for project components and employing local labour during construction.

Entry Point 2: Skills transfer should be included in Pacific infrastructure projects, through either positive incentives or contractual obligations, with penalties for non-compliance.

Entry Point 3: Consideration should be given to deliberately promoting labour intensive approaches to infrastructure maintenance. These approaches are considered especially suitable for smaller and more remote islands where equipment costs can be prohibitive.

Entry Point 4: New infrastructure projects should look to create opportunities for all to be involved in project delivery – including women, young people and people with disabilities.

Entry Point 5: To reach their full development impact potential, infrastructure investments should be bundled with community engagement and initiatives supported by local civil society. For example, improved sanitation facilities often need to be matched with education programs to realise full benefits. Outreach programs run by civil society actors can complement hard infrastructure and help to maximise gains and reduce risks.



"Communities need to determine their own infrastructure needs … key to development is to empower people. We need to work with traditional governance … When community members are empowered in their traditional roles, they build their own infrastructure without too much support from government. It's not just about providing money and hard infrastructure, we need to grow as a society."

Iliapi Tuwai. Country Director, ADRA Fiji

Photo: Rebecca McNaught

Principle 4: Community-driven infrastructure is key for Pacific contexts

Focusing on smaller-scale infrastructure ensures a rapid delivery of projects that are targeted to the needs of Pacific islanders; community driven projects are often cheaper, higher quality, locally led and reduce the potential for corruption.

OVERVIEW: In the Pacific islands people have unique infrastructure needs. Across the region many live in rural and remote areas, where the state has a limited reach and transport options are infrequent and expensive. In these contexts, smaller-scale infrastructure is crucial for alleviating hardship. One model for delivering small-scale infrastructure is to provide grant support for community-driven projects – allowing communities to select infrastructure priorities and contribute to construction and maintenance.

Community-driven approaches are a cost-effective way to rapidly deliver new infrastructure. Civil society organisations can help to facilitate community-driven projects, and local ownership of projects helps to ensure quality infrastructure and reduce potential for corruption. Working with indigenous landowners to build small-scale infrastructure requires culturally sensitive engagement as traditional forms of governance remain central to community decision-making in many parts of the Pacific.

Pacific island countries face unique challenges arising from their distance from major centres, and these geographic realities are often exacerbated by expensive, unreliable or non-existent transport links.[31] Isolation means that Pacific island states are fundamentally different to other developing countries, as both traded goods and per capita infrastructure costs are much higher than in other parts of the world.[32] In addition, Pacific populations are often spread across widely dispersed island archipelagos, or in rural highlands poorly serviced by transport infrastructure. Most Pacific islanders live in rural villages, particularly in larger countries in Melanesia.[33] While urbanisation is a growing trend in the region, the share of population that lives in rural areas is well above global average. Rural communities, particularly those on smaller islands distant from national capitals, rely on local resources for livelihoods and food security.

Investing in smaller-scale infrastructure is critical for reaching the Pacific's most vulnerable communities. 'Last-mile' infrastructure – such as seawalls, flood-proof housing, footpaths, feeder roads, water supply and tanks, sanitation, 'off-grid' energy, community halls, and animal shelters – are crucially important for helping to lift people out of poverty. Often smaller-scale infrastructure can be built and managed by communities themselves, which helps to ensure projects are cheaper and higher quality. Involving community decision-makers in infrastructure planning can help avoid the potential for losses due to graft, and can ensure community members take responsibility for maintenance, minimising reliance on external assistance to fund future repairs or rebuilds.

One modality for delivering smaller-scale infrastructure is that of 'community-driven development'. National governments and aid programs that use a community driven development (CDD) model seek to ensure communities are 'in charge of identifying, implementing and maintaining their own externally funded development projects'.[34]

Over the past two decades, community driven development programmes have become increasingly important for delivering small scale infrastructure in the Pacific, in line with global trends.[35] Community driven development programmes facilitate local participation in project selection and management. Typically, community members establish project committees, and are usually required to contribute cash, materials or labour to new projects. This model means small projects can be delivered across a wide area in a short amount of time. Direct community management also means that 'CDD tends to deliver infrastructure that is higher quality, and with less loss due to corruption'.[36] The World Bank has found CDD programs have, when they are sustained over time, led to measurable reductions in poverty, particularly amongst the poorest populations and communities **(see Box 8)**.[37]

BOX 8: Supporting Community Driven Development in the Solomon Islands

In collaboration with the World Bank, the Australian government is currently supporting a rural development program in the Solomon Islands which uses a Community Driven Development approach to deliver small-scale village infrastructure. During phase one of the Solomon Islands Rural Development Program (2008-2015) nearly 200,000 people benefitted from nearly three hundred infrastructure subprojects, many of which deployed community labour and in-kind support.[94] The program delivered village halls, water tanks and supply, sanitation facilities, school classrooms, health clinics and housing to accommodate health workers. An evaluation of the program found the quality of infrastructure investments was notably high, and community support for new small-scale infrastructure was broad.[95]

Celebrating the opening of a water supply project in Isabel Province, Solomon Islands. Image: Edward Suinao/DFAT.[96]

Civil society organisations are crucially important for implementing smaller-scale infrastructure projects. They often have specialised knowledge of local context and working relationships with local communities.[38] Civil society organisations also link community decision-makers with governments and development and aid agencies, particularly by

helping communities to develop their own village development plans and connecting them with potential sources of funding (**see Box 9**). In Fiji, the Australian-financed Fiji Community Development Program (FCDP) – which disbursed 146 small grants to dozens of organisations between 2012 and 2017 – enabled civil society organisations to support villages to develop their own Community Development Plans and to connect village leaders with relevant sub-national and national government authorities.[39]

Community driven development offers opportunities for local-level participation in infrastructure decision-making and implementation by people with disabilities, women and indigenous and ethnic groups. However, approaches to inclusion must be deliberate, with discrete efforts made to engage with these groups at all stages of the process, recognising that due to discriminatory attitudes and entrenched assumptions about the roles and norms of these groups, persistent efforts may be required. These efforts should include linkage with local organisations and programs which support these groups, including local women's groups, Disabled People's Organisations and community-based inclusive development programs.

Pacific policymakers have called for more direct-funding for small scale community infrastructure, to help build resilience to the impacts of climate change. In July 2019, economic ministers from Pacific Islands Forum countries agreed to establish a new international organisation – the Pacific Resilience Facility. This facility is intended to act as a regional fund that will invest in small-scale community-level projects, including infrastructure, to support the resilience of communities to disasters and the impacts of climate change. Pacific Ministers suggested the fund was needed because 'small-scale preparedness projects are not widely supported and financed by major development partners'.[40]

Working with communities to build smaller scale infrastructure requires culturally sensitive engagement. In most Pacific island countries Western forms of statehood and private property co-exist with resilient indigenous ways of knowing and being. Unique and localised systems of community governance and dispute resolution remain central to people's lives, alongside more recently introduced systems of government. New infrastructure projects often require direct negotiations with indigenous landowners. At times the negotiation of access to land can be fraught – especially where legal landowners and decision-makers reside outside of the place of the proposed infrastructure, and where the rights and interests of traditional custodians are under-represented.

Infrastructure projects are also a chance to draw on, and work with, the unique knowledge and experience of indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples have traditional knowledge that is valuable for the design of robust infrastructure, including knowledge of local resources and materials, weather and land-use patterns. Traditional governance is often crucial for the planning and construction of small-scale village infrastructure. In the event of disasters for example, communities often mobilise quickly through indigenous forms of governance and local networks to repair community infrastructure. These same networks can be key to unblocking hurdles in construction, such as efficient supply and transport of materials during wet seasons.

BOX 9: PLANNING TOGETHER: WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO DECIDE INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES

Drawing on sub-national and community-level development plans is important for addressing the expressed needs of local communities. Across the Pacific, civil society organisations often play an important role working with village leaders to draw up community development plans, which help to determine smaller-scale infrastructure priorities. In Fiji for example, Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF) aims to facilitate community participation in development planning. Supported partly by grants from the Australian government, PCDF is currently working with Fiji's Ministry of iTaukei affairs to develop community development plans across the country; with more than 1,000 community plans to be drafted through extensive consultations by 2023.

In Tonga's remote islands of Ha'apai civil society organisations recently teamed up with Tonga's Ministry for Internal Affairs to train town and district officers in local development planning. Subsequently these officers worked together with local leaders to create community, district and island level development plans. Climate and disaster resilience, as well as inclusion considerations, were woven into the plans and implementation of associated infrastructure such as water tanks. Due to the remote location of the islands and high expense of outside maintenance, low-tech solutions were devised for water management and maintenance.

Consultations for community development plans. Image: Partners in Community Development Fiji

Entry Points: Principle 4

Entry Point 1: Engage local civil society in the planning and delivery of small-scale community-driven infrastructure projects – allowing communities to select infrastructure priorities and contribute to construction and maintenance.

Entry Point 2: Increase direct-funding for small scale community infrastructure, to help build resilience to the impacts of climate change.

"You need to work with existing strengths. When communities were rebuilding in Fiji for example, after Tropical Cyclone Winston, in many places, village leaders mobilised young people to carry out repairs. They worked with the mataisau [a traditional clan of skilled builders/carvers] to build stronger housing. You find out what works, and you add value to that".

Vani Catanasiga. Director, Fiji Council of Social Services

Photo: Philippa Smales

Principle 5: Build Resilience To Disaster, Climate Change And Environmental Risks

Pacific infrastructure must consider disaster, climate change and environmental risks; more than protecting hard assets, this means ensuring new infrastructure contributes to enhanced community resilience for all, and protects the biodiversity upon which communities and economies depend.

OVERVIEW: New infrastructure in the Pacific needs to be designed from the outset against a changing risk profile associated with climate change and biodiversity loss, including both slow-onset challenges and more frequent and intense weather events. Beyond protecting the infrastructure asset, the initial design should include measures to enhance rather than undermine community and ecological resilience. Pacific institutions should be supported to systematically integrate climate and broader environmental risks and ensure management and maintenance plans are in place in order to ensure infrastructure longevity. New infrastructure projects should be in line with low-emissions development pathways and help countries achieve nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. Concessional finance for infrastructure should not be used to fund fossil fuel projects that undermine action on climate change.

The Pacific region is highly exposed to disasters. Tropical cyclones and their associated storm surges are an annual feature in the Pacific region, with two of the most powerful cyclones ever recorded in the southern hemisphere occurring in Vanuatu in 2015 (Cyclone Pam) and Fiji in 2016 (Cyclone Winston). In addition, the occurrence of floods and drought are often exacerbated by the El Nino Southern Oscillation, a periodic warming and cooling of the Pacific Ocean. Being located on the Pacific 'ring of fire' also results in regular earthquakes, tsunami and volcanic activity. In addition to the immediate effects on the lives and safety of Pacific island populations, other consequences include for example, damaged infrastructure, degradation of ecosystems and water resources, disease, disrupted education, increased exposure to violence and sexual abuse, and reduced nutrition. Disasters can also displace people from their homes, either temporarily or permanently,[41] and the effects are exacerbated for women and people with disabilities, with increased rates of gender-based violence post-disaster, and exclusionary barriers to disaster response including inaccessible evacuation centres and early warning systems.

Climate change not only modifies the nature of hazards, through changes to their timing, extent, frequency, severity and type, but is also a threat magnifier.[42] Incremental changes to temperatures, sea level and rainfall can render a population more exposed to mosquito borne diseases, reduce food availability and diversity, or erode shorelines, which in turn exacerbates the impacts of disaster 'shocks'. Susceptibility to a disaster includes not just the hazard and the exposure to it, but also the socio-economic and environmental vulnerability of the exposed population, including the status of their infrastructure. In order to mitigate the impacts of disasters, management of existing assets[43] and retrofitting existing infrastructure can be just as important as investing in new infrastructure.[44]

In line with climate change science, as well as Pacific regional and national policy frameworks, new infrastructure should promote a low-emissions, resilient development model. In endorsing the *'Framework for Resilient Development' 2016-2030'* (FRDP) Pacific leaders recognised disaster and climate risks needed to be incorporated into the day to day practices of development 'including policymaking, planning, financing, programming and implementation, to build resilience'.[45] Most recently, the *Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Change Action*, signed by island leaders meeting in Tuvalu for their annual Pacific Islands Forum, calls for continued efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and for countries to work towards net zero emissions by 2050.[46] In this light, infrastructure investments in the Pacific should not only incorporate climate and disaster resilience, but also assist Pacific island countries to reduce dependency on expensive fossil fuel imports and avoid fossil fuel extraction.

Resilient infrastructure is more than the protection of 'hard' infrastructure. While the protection and robustness of the infrastructure asset itself is an important consideration in creating resilient infrastructure, there are other considerations to be made.[47] The first is the propensity of the surrounding population to support the resilience of the infrastructure. For example, maintenance and upkeep will determine the life of the infrastructure. The second is the contribution new infrastructure makes to the resilience of linked populations - a 'systems based' approach.[48] Well-built infrastructure can contribute to resilient development in many ways, including by providing greater and sustained access to

economic opportunities, such as markets **(see Box 10 below)**; improving access to health and education services, and social support networks; reducing costs of disaster recovery; and improving participation in governance.[49] This is particularly important for people with disabilities and women, whose lives can be greatly improved by developments such as these, but whom are frequently excluded from planning and implementation efforts.

BOX 10: THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE IS STRONG

In one example, from Fiji, of using risk analysis to build resilient infrastructure, landslide risk was woven into the design and implementation of a small-scale roads project in the country's Northern Division. This was achieved through collaboration between multiple actors, including local government, the local private sector, United Nations Development Programme, civil society organisation Live and Learn Environmental Education, and community members from the village of Nasolo.

Subsequently, in April 2018, the Nasolo farm road stood up to two cyclones in two weeks while farm roads in the surrounding area were damaged. This enabled Nasolo villagers to continue taking their harvests to Suva, contributing to the economic security of village. In this sense, the local government was spared the expense of road repairs and the Nasolo village was able to bounce back much faster from the events than if the road hadn't considered these risks.[97]

Civil society organisations, both local and international, have played a complementary role to Pacific island governments, assisting in the formulation and implementation of national disaster and climate change policies. This has included for example, unique roles in promoting the voices of marginalised groups,[50] supporting communities to access and make sense of climate and disaster information,[51] and participating in formal climate governance arrangements[52] **(see also Box 12)**. While there are a growing number of examples of civil society-led resilience projects, these are currently underutilised in the development of larger scale infrastructure projects in the region. Another important consideration in creating resilient infrastructure is the interaction between new infrastructure and the natural environment, including its impact on biodiversity and natural resources **(see Box 11).**

Prioritising green infrastructure approaches and ensuring that environmental considerations are entrenched in the entire life-cycle of infrastructure projects contribute to infrastructure resilience while protecting biodiversity and natural resources.[53] The final consideration is the resilience of the connecting 'infrastructure network', i.e. how a piece of infrastructure connects with, and supports, other pieces of infrastructure and the resilience of those.[54] For example, a road is resilient and fulfills its full potential only if it connects with other roads and bridges that are also resilient.

BOX 11: WHAT IS GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE?

The USAID defines green Infrastructure (GI) as: "any engineered intervention that uses vegetation, soils, and natural processes to manage water and create healthier built environments for people and the natural resources that sustain them.

GI can range in scale from small scale technologies such as rain gardens and green roofs to regional planning strategies targeting conservation or restoration of natural landscapes and watersheds. GI approaches may be interconnected with existing and planned grey infrastructure networks to create sustainable infrastructure that can enhance community resiliency to disasters and climate change".[98]

In 2020, the World Economic Forum ranked extreme weather events, biodiversity loss and failure to mitigate climate change as the greatest global economic risks.[55] Recognising that making decisions based on these risks is essential, investors, insurers and lenders are increasingly identifying climate and environmental risk in their portfolios and taking measures to embed resilience into infrastructure investments.[56] Cost benefit analyses have been used extensively for climate and disaster resilient infrastructure in the Pacific region.[57]

Ex ante studies have found that every dollar invested up front in resilience measures has saved four dollars in economic value in return. Retrospective risk analysis in the Pacific region has demonstrated that infrastructure that fails to take into account a breadth of climate, disaster, environmental and social risks can undermine community resilience and increase the economic burden of the state and individuals through, for example, compromising health and safety; disrupting access to services due to infrastructure damage caused by disasters; inequitable access to benefits; creation of conflict and marginalising some groups of society.[58] Infrastructure therefore needs to incorporate solid risk analysis from the very beginning, including cost benefit analysis of resilience measures in order to demonstrate the benefits of up-front resilience investments and make decisions about which risks to prioritise.

Pacific Island communities and economies are highly dependent on biodiversity. For example, inshore fisheries provide the primary or secondary source of income for up to 50% of households in the Pacific region and between 50-90% of animal protein consumed by rural populations.[59] Infrastructure projects can have negative impacts on biodiversity and natural resources, and existing ecosystems should not be compromised in the building of new infrastructure. It is important that the precautionary principle is applied in building infrastructure in ecologically sensitive areas and unintended environmental consequences from infrastructure are considered and militated against. 'Green infrastructure' approaches not only help mitigate those risks but may also assist with the restoration of damaged ecosystems and ecosystem services upon which people depend.

BOX 12: BUILDING SAFER SCHOOLS IN THE PACIFIC

Toward resilient buildings and resilient communities

In Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu civil society organisations are collaborating with government and the private sector to make schools safer. Through the World Bank's Safer Schools Program in the Pacific (which is supported by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery and the Bank's Global Program for Safer Schools) Save the Children is working with professional services firm Arup to undertake technical risk assessments of school infrastructure and develop guidelines and manuals for making schools safer. Working with government, the program strengthens the processes by which schools are designed, constructed, operated and maintained so as to reduce risk. The project acknowledges that local school communities have knowledge of the hazards that increase risk and so their involvement is critical in order to make schools safer and contribute to child safety.

A family at a Save the Children Child Friendly Space at Mango Station, on the outskirts of Luganville, the capital of Espiritu Santo. Photo: Robert McKechnie / Save the Children Australia

In addition, green infrastructure can increase community resilience through sustaining ecosystem services such water resources conservation, flood and storm water management, groundwater recharge and water supply.[60] More sustainable use of natural resources, including marine resources, have been identified by the World Bank as the Pacific's best chance to avoid a low-growth future[61], so ensuring that infrastructure projects go beyond environmental safeguards to proactively protect biodiversity is critical. In Honiara, Solomon Islands, restoring or protecting public green spaces such as waterways and botanical gardens have been found to provide community resilience and ecosystem benefits.[62] Civil society organisations have long played an important role in strengthening and monitoring the environmental safeguards of infrastructure donors and could play an equally important role on large infrastructure projects in the Pacific region. For example, civil society brings experience in green recovery and reconstruction that can be applied to infrastructure more broadly.[63] Local civil society actors also have extensive knowledge of biodiversity and environmental risks.

Entry Points: Principle 5

Entry Point 1: In addition to investments in new infrastructure, consider retrofitting existing infrastructure to ensure resilience to climate change and disasters. For example, national civil society organisations can play a useful role in rolling out awareness campaigns on building standards and building back better in post-disaster recovery.

Entry Point 2: In line with Pacific regional and national policy frameworks, infrastructure investments should incorporate inclusive climate and disaster resilience measures. New infrastructure should assist Pacific island countries to reduce dependency on expensive fossil fuel imports and avoid fossil fuel extraction.

Entry Point 3: Pacific civil society experience in community resilience building should be leveraged to ensure that infrastructure is well maintained and contributes to, rather than undermines, the resilience of surrounding communities.

Entry Point 4: Infrastructure needs to incorporate solid risk analysis from the outset, including cost benefit analysis of resilience measures, to ensure benefits from up-front resilience investments. Infrastructure oversight mechanisms at national and project level that include civil society membership can contribute to risk analysis.

Entry Point 5: Use green infrastructure approaches, improve public spaces and go beyond infrastructure environmental safeguards to increase community and ecological resilience. Ecosystems should not be compromised in the building of new infrastructure. Local civil society knowledge of biodiversity and environmental risks are crucial in this regard.

"The World Bank project allowed our organisation to conduct accessibility access audit of public facilities to ensure accessibility for all …"

Mataafa Fa'atino Utumapu, Manager, NOLA
(Samoa's Disabled People's Organisation)

Photo: Philippa Smales

Principle 6: Create safe, inclusive and accessible infrastructure

If planned and implemented well, new infrastructure helps to create a safe, inclusive and accessible environment for people with disabilities; key to this is meaningful engagement with civil society groups representing people with disabilities.

OVERVIEW: Investment in inclusive and accessible infrastructure is important for realising human rights and eliminating discrimination in Pacific island countries. Meaningful consultation and decision-making that involves all community members is crucial. This paper takes a deep dive into strategies which promote disability inclusion (principle 6) and gender equality (principle 7), as these are priority areas for action in relation to inclusion in the Pacific. To ensure infrastructure is accessible and inclusive of people with a disability, development partners and local authorities should work with representative civil society groups, including Disabled People's Organisations, throughout the lifecycle of infrastructure investment. Hard assets should be accompanied by investment in regulatory standards and education; including support for a Pacific regional 'blueprint' for comprehensive accessibility standards.

Pacific leaders have made commitments to provide an inclusive and accessible environment for all. Around 1.7 million people – nearly 15% of the total population in the Pacific islands – experience disability.[64] Through a range of regional and global frameworks, island governments have committed to ensuring all people have the right to participate fully in public life. Most island countries have for example ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD). In 2016, national leaders meeting for the Pacific Islands Forum also endorsed a Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with a Disability (PFRPD) which commits decision makers to developing a barrier-free society which embraces the diversity of all Pacific people. An accessible environment enhances the autonomy of persons with disabilities and promotes economic and social development through enabling participation in education, work and social opportunities. New investments in infrastructure should use accessibility principles and inclusive processes to avoid inadvertently creating barriers to participation for people with disabilities.

Key to inclusive infrastructure is the involvement of representative civil society groups, including Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs). Truly accessible infrastructure will be usable by people with diverse disabilities, for example people with mobility difficulties and vision impairments will be able to navigate the built environment, and signage will be understandable to people with intellectual disabilities. As such, the development of inclusive infrastructure needs to be underpinned by inclusive processes, and should be informed by the perspectives of a range of people with disabilities themselves.[65] Women and girls with disabilities face greater inequalities then men and boys, due to additional barriers to their participation in social and economic opportunities; infrastructure development is an opportunity for redressing these inequalities, however to enable this, infrastructure planning, implementation and monitoring processes must make dedicated efforts to seek out their perspectives and input. Involving civil society organisations through local associations of people with disabilities is critical to ensuring infrastructure that is designed to be accessible has been planned, used and approved by men and women with diverse disabilities, as efforts made for some groups can inadvertently create barriers for other groups.[66] Inclusion is both a process and an outcome.

Ensuring accessibility requires a greater investment in 'soft infrastructure', including the development of appropriate regulatory standards, and ongoing education of all stakeholders. Despite the existence of international commitments, implementation of inclusive infrastructure across the Pacific has been limited. Few countries have a comprehensive set of regulations that cover accessible public infrastructure, transportation, information and communication services, in line with the CRPD.

However, there are clear examples of good policy. The 'Rights of Persons with a Disabilities Act' of the Marshall Islands for example states that Government must develop measures to ensure people have full access to infrastructure. Some countries, such as Samoa, have also revised their building codes, but there is little enforcement around the region. There are also examples of good practice.

In Samoa for example, the World Bank's Enhanced Road Access Project[67] sought to build road infrastructure using access guidelines from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (**see Box 13**). Features such as ramps, wider pavements and signage were considered prior to construction which ensured that designs were inclusive of persons with disabilities. Access audits were undertaken by people with diverse disabilities, including a site visit and scoring system to determine where improvements could be made to the design.

Work opportunities in infrastructure projects are often limited for people with disabilities, resulting in their exclusion from economic and social development opportunities. While some Pacific governments have made policy commitments to the provision of an inclusive and accessible environment for all, Pacific Island states face considerable budgetary constraints in making this a reality – overall domestic resource allocation for the inclusion of persons with disabilities is still below 0.15% of the GDP for most countries.[68] While more can be done to make the most of existing resources, the intrinsic geographic, economic and institutional constraints faced by many countries are curtailing investments that are needed to further decisive progress. Not developing accessible and inclusive infrastructure limits economic participation of women and people with disabilities, constraining national growth, while retrofitting inaccessible infrastructure in line with CRPD obligations is much more expensive than building accessible infrastructure in the first place.

Recent reviews suggest most Pacific island countries ought to revise national accessibility standards. A review undertaken, for example, by the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility (PRIF) recommended most island countries should revise their standards or adopt new ones.[69] It also recommended DPOs should lead awareness raising and more effort should be made to ensure that all new infrastructure is accessible. A Pacific Disability Forum review of accessibility standards in the region – covering built environment, transport and telecommunications (and DPO-led accessibility audits) – confirmed and extended the PRIF review's conclusions.[70] While DPOs are increasingly being consulted by some development partners in regard to the accessibility of infrastructure, no Pacific country has a basic set of accessibility standards and corresponding enforcement mechanisms.

Investment in a region-wide approach could help island states develop appropriate accessibility standards. The Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) reports that there is broad acknowledgment amongst stakeholders that most countries in the region lack the technical or financial resources needed to develop (or revise) comprehensive national accessibility standards. The Accessibility Design Guide developed by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2013 provides useful general guidance.[71] However the Pacific Disability Forum suggests that a regional Pacific 'blueprint' for comprehensive accessibility standards would be an efficient way to support island governments to tailor their own national accessibility standards.[72]

BOX 13: INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS: ENHANCED ROAD ACCESS IN SAMOA

Transport infrastructure across many Pacific Island countries is not accessible to people with disabilities. For this group, this makes daily tasks, such as getting to and from school, work and church difficult – and sometimes impossible.

The World Bank's Enhanced Road Access Project (ERAP) sought to build road infrastructure in Samoa, in a way which improved social inclusion, and strengthened disaster resilience.

At its outset, the project proactively sought out the voices of men and women with disabilities through their representative groups, Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs) during project design and implementation.

Access guidelines from Samoa's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment were used as a construction reference for road and bridge work to ensure that designs were inclusive of persons with disabilities and the features of accessibility such as ramps, wider pavements and signage were considered prior to construction.

In partnership with Samoa's umbrella DPO, Nuanua o le Alofa (NOLA), access audits were implemented by people with diverse disabilities including site visits and use of a scoring system to determine where improvements could be made to the design. The implementation of access audits was a relatively innovative approach, however the use of these contributed to the development of more suitable and user-friendly facilities.

Higher design standards were subsequently applied to infrastructure investments to help ensure increased climate resilience and reliability of key transport routes.

ERAP resulted in several outcomes. First, people with disabilities found that they were better able to navigate spaces with greater ease and more safely. Secondly, the project helped to promote awareness within the community and Government regarding the barriers faced by people with disabilities, and offered a model for addressing these via collaborative partnership with DPOs.

ERAP also led to greater collaboration between NOLA and the Land Transport Authority (LTA). The LTA are responsible for planning, constructing, maintaining and supervising the country's national roads and land transport infrastructure. Through ERAP, the LTA began working closely with NOLA: the LTA providing their services to facilitate access audits and NOLA providing training to the LTA on how to communicate through sign language.

In the longer term, increasing the climate resilience of infrastructure aims to build social resilience during severe weather events through ensuring connectivity and reliable access that will provide for more efficient and timely responses following disaster events.

Key lessons include:

1. Disability-inclusive processes support disability-inclusive outcomes. These are co-dependent.
2. Disability-inclusive processes that support capacity development of civil society leave behind organisations with stronger advocacy and technical skills.
3. Development partners who use disability-inclusive processes that engage government can influence national standards and approaches by role-modelling these.
4. Disability-inclusive processes and results raise awareness of the rights of people with disabilities.
5. Improving climate resilience can improve social resilience.

The ERAP was funded through a US$15 million grant from the World Bank's International Development Association, the World Bank's fund for those most in need, and a US$5 million grant from the World Bank's Crisis Response Window. The project was also funded through AU$13 million from the Government of Australia, through the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility and the Australia Pacific Islands Partnership.

Entry Points: Principle 6

Entry Point 1: Use accessibility principles and inclusive processes that seek out the perspectives of men and women with disabilities themselves to ensure that infrastructure development offers opportunities for the engagement of people with disabilities, and will be usable by people with diverse disabilities.

Entry Point 2: Development partners and local authorities should work with Disabled People's Organisations – including national organisations and the regional Pacific Disability Forum - and seek engagement with a diverse representation of people with disabilities, including women, men, children and older people with diverse disability types, throughout the life-cycle of infrastructure investment.

Entry Point 3: Hard assets should be accompanied by investment in regulatory standards and education; including support for a Pacific regional 'blueprint' for comprehensive accessibility standards to support island governments to tailor their own national standards.

Entry Point 4: Inclusive infrastructure must go the 'final mile' by intersecting hard infrastructure with ongoing management and maintenance of infrastructure to ensure inclusivity during its lifetime.

"We can no longer rest on the assumption that development projects are gender neutral, and we must recognise that there are gender implications of the way we plan and construct all forms of infrastructure, whether they be hospitals, roads or power-stations." [99]

Dame Meg Taylor. Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum

Photo: Rebecca McNaught

Principle 7: Design Pacific infrastructure to address gender inequality

All new investment in infrastructure in the Pacific islands should be designed from the outset to address gender inequality and to ensure it does no harm; robust mechanisms must be established to monitor outcomes.

OVERVIEW: All investments in infrastructure have gendered outcomes and should be consciously designed to address gender inequality. To do this, local women's representative organisations should be involved in planning new infrastructure and gender markers should be agreed on and built into project design to ensure progress against shared goals. Particular attention should also be paid to ensuring new infrastructure facilitates women's economic empowerment, through jobs created in construction and maintenance, and by ensuring new built infrastructure enhances other economic opportunities for women. Care is needed to ensure infrastructure construction processes and the resulting infrastructure itself do no harm; consultation processes should incorporate a gendered perspective, and contractors should be required to take steps to prevent harm.

Like many parts of the world, gender inequality is widespread and entrenched in the Pacific islands. Across the region, women are grossly under-represented in most official decision-making; Pacific women have amongst the lowest rates of political representation in the world. Women often face difficulties accessing to basic services (including sexual and reproductive health services), and rates of gender-based violence are very high. Pacific women are also more likely to experience difficulties accessing educational and economic opportunities, and overwhelmingly carry the burden for household and family work. This context shapes the experience both women and men have of infrastructure in their communities.

Pacific island states have made clear commitments to address gender inequality. All but two Pacific island governments are signatories to the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).[73] Pacific leaders also endorsed a regional Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration in 2012.[74] In the same year, the Australian government established a regional initiative Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development – a ten-year, $320 million commitment to improve opportunities for the political, economic and social advancement of Pacific women.[75] The initiative supports vibrant and diversified women's movements across the Pacific, which are challenging gendered social norms, and are working to address factors that undermine the realisation of women's rights.

Deliberate efforts are needed to include both women and men in the design of Pacific infrastructure. Members of the community – women, men and children – have different experiences using infrastructure and all groups must be consulted early in the planning of new projects. Women's representative organisations can be key partners for consultations around the design and implementation of new infrastructure in the Pacific. New infrastructure can help mitigate gender inequality or contribute to it. It is not a given that women and men will benefit equally from new infrastructure. When, for example, new roads are built in rural areas it can't be assumed women will benefit from employment opportunities in construction, or from the infrastructure once established. Men are more likely to drive and own vehicles therefore for women, accompanying services - such as affordable public transport - are often key to assuring benefits.[76] Not planning for such services may, however inadvertently, see men become the primary beneficiary of new transport infrastructure.[77] Choices about what to build can also have gendered implications. A decision to focus on large scale projects may direct attention away from infrastructure needs important to women and children, such as the construction of rural health clinics, or even from policy areas like maternal health and gender-based violence.[78] In Papua New Guinea for example (where a major new investment in rural electrification was announced in late 2018) there is chronic underinvestment in maternal health care and a severe shortage of midwives. Recent estimates are that women in Papua New Guinea are 35 times more likely to die in childbirth than their Australian counterparts.[79]

Infrastructure can improve opportunities for women's economic empowerment. Women make significant contributions to Pacific island economies, particularly in the informal economy. In many countries, women are central to agriculture (particularly local food production) and marketplace sales, where women often run food stalls. In Honiara's central market for example, women are responsible for 90% of market activity, both as bulk buyers

BOX 14: BUILDING SAFER MARKETS FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Markets for Change is a Pacific regional program supported, by the Australian government and implemented UN Women, which aims to improve conditions for vendors by improving marketplace facilities and access. The program complements new hard infrastructure in marketplaces – such as improved bathrooms, safety lighting and overnight facilities – with 'soft infrastructure' including support for market vendors associations. These associations, run overwhelmingly by women market vendors, help identify and address issues that improve the safety, security and earning capacity of market vendors.[100] Supporting women vendors to build safer and more representative markets, promotes women's economic empowerment.

from farmers and as retailers.[80] Across the region 75% to 90% of all market vendors are women.[81] Improvements in infrastructure can support women's economic empowerment and can increase the rewards of women's participation **(see Box 14 above).**

Infrastructure can also reduce the time burden of domestic and care work for Pacific women. In the Pacific islands, women carry a disproportionate share of household work, including cleaning, cooking, and child-raising (and often tending to household food gardens as well). Time use studies have found that Pacific women spend far greater hours than men on household tasks like cooking, collecting water and fire-wood.[82] For households that lack ready access to piped water, or clean cooking energy, women are more likely to be tasked with collecting water and gathering wood for the kitchen hearth. It is estimated that 70 per cent of households across the region do not have access to electricity and 85 per cent do not have access to clean cooking energy technology.[83] Improvements in basic infrastructure, such as access to electricity and clean cooking energy, convenient water supply, and improved sanitation, can all significantly reduce time spent on household work and improve health outcomes.[84]

Care is needed to ensure to ensure infrastructure projects do no harm. During construction, major infrastructure projects can have significant social impacts. Large projects typically see an influx of men into new areas. This can be linked with increased risks of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Large construction sites can also be associated with an increase in unsafe sex work and the potential for gender-based violence.

Beyond the construction phase, newly developed infrastructure can also pose gender-based violence risks. For example, long distances to new poorly lit WASH facilities can create unsafe environments for women and girls. In addition, infrastructure which improves access to markets and therefore opportunities for women's economic empowerment may improve women's purchasing power and change family decision-making norms, which in

some households may result in violent consequences for women. Approaches to norm-change and associated risks need to be carefully considered early in project design, and appropriate mitigation strategies established. Local women and men should be involved in the development of these. Pairing 'hard infrastructure' with related 'soft infrastructure' such as sex education or related health services, can help ensure new infrastructure investments improve gender outcomes. Ultimately, transforming harmful gender norms is key to successful women's empowerment programming in the Pacific.[85]

Entry Points: Principle 7

Entry Point 1: Consultation processes should include representatives of all members of communities potentially impacted by new infrastructure. For local gender equality considerations, involve local women's representative organisations in planning new infrastructure.

Entry Point 2: It is not a given that women and men will benefit equally from new infrastructure. Gender considerations should be incorporated into the prioritisation, design and construction of infrastructure investments to ensure equitable distribution of benefits.

Entry Point 3: Particular attention should be paid to ensuring new infrastructure facilitates women's economic empowerment, through jobs created in construction and maintenance, and by ensuring new built infrastructure enhances other economic opportunities for women.

Entry Point 4: Care is needed to ensure infrastructure construction processes and the resulting infrastructure itself do no harm, through pairing hard infrastructure with training and education of contractors and creating safe construction environments for women and children.

Entry Point 5: Approaches to norm-change and associated risks need to be carefully considered early in project design, and appropriate mitigation strategies established to reduce potential for gender-based violence associated with infrastructure development.

Conclusion

In recent times major new infrastructure initiatives have been announced for the Pacific islands. This renewed focus on infrastructure by development partners and Pacific island governments alike, presents an opportunity to consider, and promote, shared standards for quality infrastructure. This paper, based on extensive research and consultations, suggests that if high standards, and lasting development outcomes, are to be assured, civil society will need to play a greater role in the prioritisation, design, implementation and maintenance of new infrastructure investments in the Pacific islands. Towards that end, the paper details seven key principles for engaging civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure.

The seven principles outline that decision-making by a diverse range of local actors is central to planning new infrastructure. Infrastructure investments are also an opportunity to promote Pacific enterprise and create local employment, as well as strengthen Pacific civil society organisations. Infrastructure also needs to be designed against biodiversity loss and a changing risk profile associated with climate change. Ensuring infrastructure planning and delivery is inclusive and does no harm will strengthen the resilience of Pacific island populations, including marginalised groups. For these reasons, collaborative forms of infrastructure governance, involving a wide range of stakeholders, are required.

It is hoped these principles stimulate thinking, and provide useful guidance, for those engaged with infrastructure policy and implementation in the Pacific region. Ultimately, best infrastructure practice means going beyond a narrow focus on building hard assets, to thinking about the ways that new infrastructure, and the services they provide over time, will contribute to lasting development outcomes for the people of the Pacific region. Civil society is a key partner in achieving this.

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