Climate and disaster risk financing helps vulnerable communities in Fiji

"Volunteerism can catalyze disaster risk reduction," says Karan Narayan, national UN Volunteer Project Support Officer with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) in Fiji. Karan supports to building disaster resilient communities through market-based climate and disaster risk financing instruments.

Karan Narayan serves with UNCDF’s Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme (PICAP). PICAP’s main objective is to provide swift financial relief to the most vulnerable following a natural disaster. This pilot initiative targets agriculture, fisheries, retail and tourism, with a special focus on women, youth, migrants, as well as micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

"The participation of enterprises helped me understand their financial challenges during the cyclone season, plus the double whammy from the COVID-19 pandemic, which did not make operations any easier. -- Karan Narayan, national UN Volunteer Project Support Officer with UNCDF, Fiji

In March, Karan Narayan concluded research missions in Labasa and Savusavu in the north of Fiji, followed by Nadi, Sigatoka and Rakiraki in the west. His colleagues headed out to Tavua and Ba.

Karan's team collaborated with stakeholders, including the government, to develop market-based climate and disaster risk financing instruments, such as parametric insurance that focused on affordability, fast recovery and resilience.

Parametric insurance uses a weather-based index to measure financial losses incurred by climatic events. A climatic event and its intensity determine the insurance coverage. This method assesses the possible exposure of an individual or a business and therefore keeps the premiums cost-effective. It also caters to the middle- and low-income earning population.
In May, a workshop of the PICAP partners Project Steering Committee gave Karan the opportunity to connect with stakeholders who are also working to improve communities. Karan supports PICAP’s project management and capacity building in his home division in the west of the country, along with three aggregator partners, the Fiji Sugar Cane Growers Council and Cane Farmer’s Cooperative Savings, Loans Association Limited and Nature’s Way Cooperative.

Like any disasters, including climate-induced disasters, volunteerism can catalyze disaster risk reduction. Supporting your community through mitigation (prior to a cyclone) or adaptation (post cyclone) can often start with a simple initiative and deliver for the greater good. For youth, volunteering can be your greatest strength and achievement, as you will nurture yourself while serving others around you, and thus influence collaborative action. --Karan Narayan

Disaster risk financing field research is part of Karan’s responsibility, and for that he reaches out to the most vulnerable groups such as sugar cane farmers, vegetable growers, fishermen and market vendors. UNCDF’s climate adaptation approach includes parametric insurance, so that the financial security of vulnerable population following an extreme climatic event is secure.

Karan has been a great team player at UNCDF. He contributed his time and expertise to the project and collaborated with government and stakeholders to develop market-based climate and disaster risk financing instruments. --Krishnan Narasimhan, Lead Specialist and Programme Manager at PICAP, UNCDF, in Fiji

Asia and the Pacific

• International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction • disaster risk reduction • climate change mitigation and adaptation

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