

Skilling Pacific communities for resilience



Students at Nasau Youth Training Centre in Sigatoka work in groups to brainstorm the dangers and risks that might exist in their natural environment during times of disaster as part of the course on resilience developed by the EU PacTVET Project in collaboration with the Fiji Higher Education Commission. **Photo:** Fiji Higher Education Commission

By Rajan Sami

How do you upskill Pacific communities to take care of themselves during extreme weather events? And how do you get them to harness their traditional knowledge and skills in adapting to climate change?

That's been one of the aims of a European Union funded project that's been mainstreaming climate change adaptation, and sustainable energy in tertiary curricula in 14 Pacific Island countries and Timor Leste since 2014.

The European Union Pacific Technical and Vocational Education and Training on Sustainable Energy and Climate Change (EU PacTVET) is a €6.3m project implemented by the Pacific Community (SPC) in partnership with the University of the South Pacific (USP) since 2014.

At the outset, the project conducted training needs and gaps analyses for the 14 Pacific members of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States and Timor Leste to determine what skills were urgently needed in the areas of climate change adaptation and sustainable energy.

Following this the project, in collaboration with the Fiji Higher Education Commission, developed regional qualifications in Resilience (which combines climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction); and Sustainable Energy - world firsts - in partnership with the respective ministries and departments of education in the 15 project countries.

In the years since, leading off the regional qualifications, countries have either contextualised the regional

qualifications and adapted them to suit their national needs or they've incorporated the unit standards from the regional qualifications into existing national courses.

In Fiji, for example, the project has supported the development of National Qualifications in Resilience Levels 1-4 to address a training gap that existed at undergraduate level. Certificates I and II are being delivered by national training institutes while Certificates III and IV in Resilience are delivered at regional level by USP Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE).

The EU PacTVET project has supported the Fijian Ministry of Youth to deliver Certificate I directly to a number of rural and remote communities in Fiji. Building on the knowledge acquired at senior secondary school level, Certs I and II look at the causes and impacts of climate change as well as adaptation using traditional knowledge and techniques. For example, a traditional food preservation method such as cooking in earth ovens can be used to enhance food security alongside agricultural interventions such as intercropping. The training has also acted as catalysts for community elders to pass on valuable knowledge and skills (that are increasingly being lost) to youth.

Certificates I and II also cover disaster preparedness and in this regard, communities are being encouraged to produce their own action plans after identifying the dangers and risks that may be present in their environments; and to review their decision making processes to include the needs of women and persons with disabilities.

"One of the communities, for example, determined that a



ADAPTIVE COMMUNITIES Sea level rise led to the relocation of Narikoso Village on Kadavu to higher ground, one of the first communities in Fiji to do so due to the impacts of climate change. SPC, GIZ and other partners have supported the Fijian Government with the adaptation efforts, which is helping inform planned relocation for other similarly affected Pacific communities. National and regional courses in resilience developed with EU PacTVET support aim to equip Pacific communities with the practical knowledge and skills needed to adapt to climate change, and better prepare for extreme weather events.

Photos: EU-GIZ ACSE Programme/GIZ; Fiji Higher Education Commission

separate space was needed to meet the needs of pregnant women in evacuation centres,” said Apenisa Tamani, Climate Change Education Advisor at GIZ. Tamani delivered the training alongside counterparts from Fijian Ministry of Youth. Meanwhile, USP TAFE has been delivering the regionally accredited ‘Certificate III and IV in Resilience’ to a number of students from PICs, who are trained on hazard identification and risk assessment, institutional frameworks, cost benefit analysis for resilience projects, and workplace communications, giving the Pacific an expanded pool of regional expertise in this important field. Upon completing Certificate IV, Tevita Fakaosi of Tonga, said: “Competency-based assessment is one thing I have learned where you provide evidence that you can do a particular task in a given situation/context. This will be useful when conducting training with the communities that I work with.” Tomasi Tuilevu, a Fiji-based student who works at the National Fire Authority voiced similar sentiments: “The vision of the Fiji National Fire Authority is ‘Building community resilience

towards emergencies’. We can utilise this training and put into practice the things learnt from this training towards our efforts to fulfil this vision.”

About EU PacTVET

The EU PacTVET Project is funded by the European Union as part of a Euro 32 million Climate Change and Sustainable Energy (ACSE) Programme funded under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF 10) Pacific Regional Envelope, and concludes this year. Project countries include 14 Pacific ACP States: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu; and Timor Leste. For more information, visit www.gem.spc.int/projects/pactvet

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