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can do Church Agencies Networks Disaster Operations



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AHP

Disaster READY

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News

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CAN

DO Consortium

Members: Fiji Council of Churches, Methodist Church in Fiji, Fiji Baptist Church, Salvation Army, Caritas, ADRA Fiji and Olafou. CAN DO Fiji also recognises the following ANGO partners: Act for Peace, Uniting World, ADRA Australia and Caritas Australia

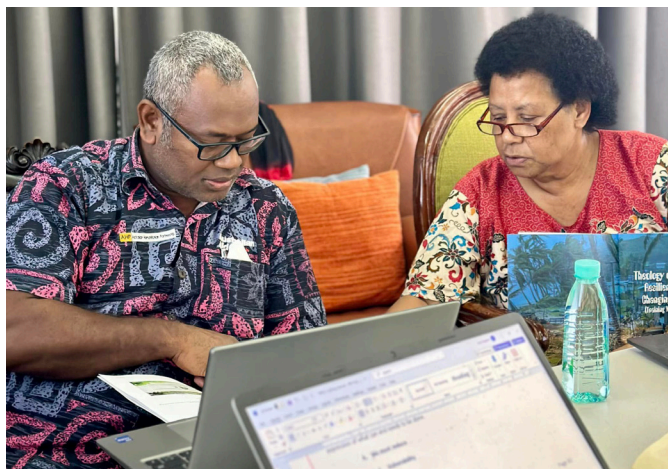


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Review of Theology of Disaster Resilience Manual



Safe n Redi GIS Coordinator Etika Naitini with Methodist Church of Fiji's Ms Joana participate in the manual review process.

In an effort to improve education and dissemination of messages on disaster preparedness, a three-day workshop was held at Lagoon Resort to review the Theology of Disaster Resilience in a Changing Climate (TDRCC) manual.

This manual represents a pioneering effort to contextualize theology within the framework of natural disasters, providing church leaders and communities with a biblically grounded understanding of resilience, preparedness, and suffering.

Natural disasters present a significant challenge to theologians, church leaders, church agencies, and social workers, as traditional theological language often seems inadequate in these contexts. The TDRCC manual seeks to bridge this gap by offering a new language for discussing

the role of faith during disasters.

TDRCC Coordinator Reverend Tomasi Jale emphasized the importance of this review after conducting four pilot trainings in Vanua Balavu, Naitasiri, Nadroga, and Namosi.

"We saw the need to have the manual reviewed to better suit the trainers, who are church ministers, so they can effectively disseminate the message down to the families," Rev. Jale explained.

First launched in December 2023, the TDRCC manual is the first of its kind in Fiji and the Pacific. It is designed to help church leaders guide their communities in exploring resilience and preparedness from a biblical perspective during times of disaster. This approach not only strengthens the community's faith but also equips them with practical knowledge to navigate the challenges posed by natural disasters.

The Review of the TDRCC Manual workshop was made possible through a partnership with Uniting World, an Australian partner to The Methodist Church of Fiji, under the Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO). CAN DO, a consortium under the Australian Humanitarian Partnership's Disaster READY Program, serves as the secretariat for nine faith-based organizations, fostering collaboration and support in disaster preparedness and response.

"This workshop marks a significant step forward in enhancing the effectiveness of the TDRCC manual, ensuring that church leaders are well-equipped to support their communities in times of need."

CAN DO Maps Way Forward

The Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) consortium, under the Australian Humanitarian Partnership's Disaster READY program, recently convened in Sydney, Australia for a comprehensive planning workshop. The purpose of the meeting was to review and refine the consortium's 2025 workplan and priorities, as well as to outline strategies to enhance partnerships.

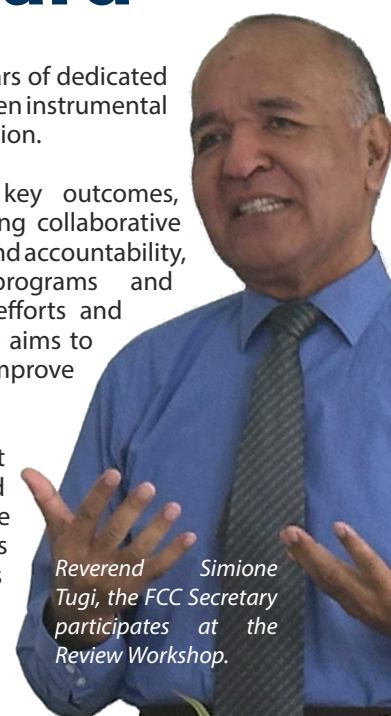
Led by Caritas Australia, CAN DO is dedicated to disaster risk reduction through faith-based collaboration. Representatives from CAN DO Fiji, including Etika Naitini, Timaleti Ratu, Reverend Tomasi Jale, and Christine Lemau, participated in the meeting. The Fiji coalition comprises 10 faith-based organizations, such as ADRA, Caritas, Methodist Church, and others, working together to strengthen disaster resilience in the region.

During the gathering, a special farewell was extended to Geoff Shepherd from Caritas Australia and Murray Millar from ADRA Australia, both founding members of CAN DO

Australia, who are retiring after years of dedicated service. Their contributions have been instrumental in advancing the consortium's mission.

The meeting also highlighted key outcomes, including the emphasis on building collaborative partnerships, enhancing capacity and accountability, and supporting locally-led programs and initiatives. Through coordinated efforts and effective communication, CAN DO aims to create resilient communities and improve overall well-being.

CAN DO continues its commitment to disaster preparedness and emergency response and the consortium remains steadfast in its mission to empower local actors and foster sustainable partnerships for a more resilient future.



Reverend Simione Tugi, the FCC Secretary participates at the Review Workshop.

GIS Champions trained on Safe n Redi App



CAN DO's Geographic Information System (GIS) team hosted an important training session for GIS champions and volunteers to familiarize them with the Safe n Redi App in March. This innovative tool is designed to enhance evacuation center safety and readiness during disasters.

Government stakeholders and our church partners from the Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) were encouraged and empowered to use this cutting-edge technology. The Safe n Redi App provides crucial information and resources that can

significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of disaster response efforts.

The training is a key component of the CAN DO Safe n Redi Project, which falls under the Australian Humanitarian Partnership's Disaster READY program. This initiative aims to build resilience and preparedness among communities vulnerable to natural disasters.

"The session was also supported by the Building Resilience for People with Disabilities in the Pacific Project, funded by the

French Government's Crisis and Support Centre of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. This collaboration highlights the commitment of multiple international partners to strengthen disaster readiness and ensure the safety and well-being of all community members," GIS Coordinator Etika Naitini said.

"Through these efforts, we are not only enhancing our immediate disaster response capabilities but also fostering long-term resilience and preparedness. By equipping our GIS champions and volunteers with the knowledge and tools they need, we are paving the way for safer, more resilient communities across the Pacific," he added.

Enhancing Accessibility and Resilience

Apisalome Yabakitalei, vice president of the Tavua Vatukoula Disabled Association, recently expressed his deep gratitude for the newly implemented ramp and disability access at their evacuation center in Tavua village. Recognizing the importance of this project, Apisalome diligently monitored the construction process, knowing it would significantly impact his community.

Tavua is home to many individuals with disabilities, including approximately ten wheelchair users and many others who rely on crutches. The new accessibility features at the evacuation center are a game-changer, ensuring that during any disaster, evacuation will no longer be a daunting challenge for these individuals. "Evacuating to the center during a disaster will now be much easier for individuals with disabilities, thanks to the new accessibility features," Apisalome highlighted.

Given Tavua's susceptibility to flooding and cyclones, the enhanced accessibility of the evacuation center ensures that all community members, including those with disabilities, can seek refuge safely and efficiently during times of crisis. This crucial improvement was made possible through the Safe n Redi project by the Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) under the Australian Humanitarian Partnership's Disaster READY program.

Jay Nasilasila of the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation emphasized the importance of this initiative. "In terms of disasters, persons with disabilities are mostly neglected. One of the main issues we hear from our members is the inaccessibility of evacuation facilities, which hinders the safety and protection of people with disabilities seeking shelter," he

said. "The Safe n Redi project has bridged that gap, ensuring that accessibility and retrofitting work is done in evacuation facilities. This allows individuals with disabilities to freely access evacuation centers and shelters."

Nasilasila added that the project includes providing technical advice to ensure accessibility retrofitting work is done to the right standard. "When our disability emergency operation centers are activated, we often receive information about persons with disabilities staying in their homes because evacuation facilities are not accessible. The Safe n Redi project has changed that, allowing them to access these facilities without any barriers," he noted.

One of the communities that has significantly benefited from this project is Tavua village. This village often experiences flash floods, and persons with disabilities previously found it difficult to access the evacuation centers. "With the Safe n Redi project, they can now freely access the facilities at any time they experience flooding. Accessibility has been ensured not only at the entrance but throughout the facilities, allowing them to stay in the centers for more than 24 hours," Nasilasila explained. "This highlights the importance of having accessible evacuation centers, which has been a key focus of the Safe n Redi project."

Safe n Redi Coordinator Etika Naitini shared, "In the last years with 2.0, we've been able to provide technical support to retrofit five church facilities and eight communities for disability access. From that, we've also identified a few more sites for year 2.0 where we will work directly with the churches for further retrofitting of their facilities."

"These retrofitting efforts underscore a strong commitment to inclusivity and safety for individuals with disabilities. By improving infrastructure, CAN DO Fiji is fostering a more resilient and supportive community in Tavua. The collaboration and dedication demonstrated through the Safe n Redi project highlight the ongoing efforts to ensure that all community members can navigate and withstand the challenges posed by natural disasters," he added.

Empowering Women in Disaster Preparedness



Unaisi Bakewa, a dedicated community worker and volunteer for Tavua Disability Association, has seen firsthand the transformative impact of the Women Leadership in Disaster Risk Reduction program in Tavua. And also as the District Women Representative, she understands the critical role women play in her flood-prone community.

"The training is incredibly useful for us," Unaisi shared. "We live in a flooding area, and whenever disaster strikes, the low-lying areas of Tavua are always targeted. The recent training sessions (held in May) have been invaluable,

helping us understand how to respond before, during, and after disasters."

Unaisi highlighted how the program has empowered women, giving them the knowledge and confidence to act swiftly and effectively. "A lot of women shared that they enjoyed the training. It empowered them and taught them important lessons on disaster preparedness. We now know what to do when a disaster strikes."

She emphasized the pivotal role of women in disaster response. "As women, we are always the first

responders. We wake up first in the morning and are the last to sleep at night. When disaster strikes, we ensure everything is in place to protect our families and community. When warnings come, we share information and prepare together."

Unaisi's words reflect the strength and resilience of the women in Tavua. The Women Leadership in Disaster Risk Reduction program has not only provided them with vital skills but also reinforced their essential role in safeguarding their community.

Women Voices in Disasters Matter



In Navolau village in the Ra Province, the voices of women have been given new strength and recognition through the Women Leadership in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) awareness program, conducted by the Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) Fiji.

The training was conducted in February and the session was filled with emotion as women were reassured by village elders that their voices are welcome, and their opinions matter in village meetings. Tears flowed as the women felt a newfound acceptance and respect.

Timaleti Ratu, the Women Leadership

Coordinator, shared a poignant story from another community. A woman married into a traditional village was told never to raise her voice because she didn't belong. This contrasted sharply with Navolau, where elders and men expressed disappointment that women are treated so poorly elsewhere.

"Women in our village are encouraged to speak up during meetings and to voice their opinion freely," village headman Iliesa Ulutegu said. He then reminded the women participants that when they marry and join their husbands' communities, they become an integral part of those communities.

Ms. Ratu, with six years of experience in training and awareness across Fiji, noted that Navolau is the first community she has encountered where women are fully accepted, with no

gender inequality or male dominance.

Jay Nasilasila, the Disability Inclusion Officer from the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation, also participated in the awareness session, highlighting the inclusive approach of the program.

Meanwhile, similar program was conducted in Muana-i-ra village in Rewa in April, a collaboration with Women in Fisheries. Women in Fisheries is under the Oxfam Consortium of the Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) and had sent out an invitation to have the program awareness in this community.

