Disaster Preparedness and Resilience among Auckland's Pacific Peoples

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Introduction

Auckland is Aotearoa New Zealand's largest city, composed of a rich range of ethnicities, religions, languages spoken, and migration histories. This policy brief considers disaster risk reduction (DRR) messaging and policy with Pacific peoples living in Auckland communities. Pacific peoples account for a large portion of the city's population, and are underserved in current disaster awareness efforts.

Diversity within these communities, as well as technological, linguistic, and cultural factors, pose significant challenges in disaster risk reduction messaging. Alongside these challenges, Pacific peoples also bring strengths and capacities to improve DRR. Taking these challenges and capacities together,

Key Question:
The success of Disaster Risk Reduction depends upon ensuring disaster messaging reaches its target communities. How can we make sure the messaging is successful?

we present the current state of disaster awareness and preparedness in these communities, challenges in hazard specific communication, as well as viable pathways for improved future disaster communications and DRR initiatives in Pacific Auckland.

Study

The conclusions outlined in this brief are drawn after conducting interviews with 20 Pacific leaders across the Auckland region.

Findings

The success of DRR depends upon ensuring disaster messaging reaches its target communities (TCs). In regard to this, we present four principles of disaster risk communication (reach, relevance, receptiveness, and relationships) to engage with diverse communities. Effective disaster messaging must have sufficient *reach*, *relevance*, and *receptiveness* to decrease vulnerabilities and increase capacities. Pacific peoples' identities are strongly tied to kinship and connection – *relationships*, and these relationships can be fostered with organisations tasked with civil defence. Taken together, these 4Rs of disaster engagement can ensure more effective communications and approaches to DRR.

Risk perception is a primary factor of DRR engagement. Communities are more likely to respond effectively to hazards when there is a perceived direct risk to them and their families.

A single approach to communication and engagement will not work for all Pacific peoples. It is critical that the communities are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate and engage proactively. Messaging must be tailored to the specific cultural and social context.

Some considerations include:

Reach	The degree to which communication strategies will get to a TC
Relevance	The degree to which communication is seen as being relevant to a TC
Receptiveness	The degree to which engagement is done in culturally resonant ways
Relationships	The way in which two or more people or things are connected

- **Leadership and locale**

Utilising the churches, community leaders, and/or cross-cultural consultants with DRR education and messaging can create a balance between providing accurate information and comfort, where messages are taken seriously, without causing undue panic or anxiety.

- **Language**

Where possible, disaster messaging should be done in Pacific languages. Workshops and other educational information that is disseminated face-to-face will help to generate reach and receptiveness, and establish authenticity and trust between parties.

- **Technology**

A significant number of the wider community do not utilise digital technologies, due to personal preference, cost, and access to the internet. For younger groups, smartphones and social media, particularly Facebook, are effective and are increasingly being used as organising platforms.

- **Utilising existing communication structures**

Improved DRR messaging, utilising existing influential media platforms such as 531 PI (a Pasifika Radio station in nine languages), can bridge barriers.

- **Le Vā and Youth Leadership**

Kinship, connection, and *vā* are foundational principles within Pasifika cultures. Pasifika identity centralises interconnection and collective wellbeing. Young people account for a large proportion of the Pacific population and offer vital roles as knowledge brokers

Resources

- strong social relationships within their communities
- a wealth of direct and indirect experience living through disasters in their home country
- existing structures for strong networking and resource-pooling

Policy Recommendations
- Taking up a polymedia communication strategy including radio, social media, and community workshops
- Mobilise trust: Utilise existing leadership and communal hubs
- Ensuring that capacity awareness programmes, workshops, communications, and training are delivered in languages spoken by these communities; and
- Delivering messages in culturally relevant ways and in consultation with community leaders

To find out more about this research, please visit:
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