



The Pacific Region

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

Disaster Preparedness (DIPECHO) 2013-2014:

€ 3 million

2014 emergency assistance:

- € 238 000 for Solomon Islands in response to floods
- € 1.5 million for sexual and gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea (2014-2015)

2013 emergency assistance:

- € 1.8 million for Fiji and Samoa after Cyclone Evan
- € 150 000 for Marshall Islands in response to drought



National staff members of ECHO's partner ADRA distribute food parcels to vulnerable families in Fiji – victims of Cyclone Evan which hit in December 2012. © ADRA

Key messages

- The Pacific region is frequently hit by natural calamities such as floods, earthquakes and cyclones. Pacific countries rank among the highest in casualties and people affected per inhabitant.
- Promoting and enabling active participation of both women and men in training, planning and decision-making for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and emergency response is crucial for reducing vulnerability to natural calamities in the Pacific.
- It is important to develop linkages with development programmes and climate change action to increase community resilience to natural disasters.
- The European Commission provides humanitarian assistance to the Pacific region both in terms of disaster preparedness and emergency relief when major disasters strike.
- In 2013, the European Commission identified the widespread sexual and gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea as a "forgotten crisis". It allocated €1.5 million to support protection and care systems for violence victims in the period 2014-2015.

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Humanitarian situation and needs

The Pacific is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world in terms of the recurrence, severity and scope of hazards, with high exposure to cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and flash floods, tidal surges, landslides, drought, forest fires and volcanic eruptions, as well as epidemics. This is compounded by environmental degradation and the negative impact of climate change.

Lack of economic diversity, remoteness from major trade and commercial centres, strong gender inequalities are factors which characterise many of the Pacific island nations, and exacerbate their vulnerability to disasters. With a total population of some 10 million spread across a vast area, the death toll and number of people affected by natural calamities can appear rather low in standard disaster statistics, but the Pacific countries rank among the highest in casualties and people affected per inhabitant.

The European Union's humanitarian response

Emergency assistance

Heavy rains at the beginning of April 2014 caused large-scale flooding which left 9 000 displaced in the capital of the Solomon Islands, Honiara, and other areas of Guadalcanal. Roads and bridges were badly damaged and more than 52 000 people were affected. The European Commission allocated €238 000 in humanitarian funding to its partner organisation World Vision to help the most vulnerable people. Environmental expertise was deployed to the islands through the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#)* as part of a joint EU/UN mission to help assess the risks triggered by the heavy rains. EU aid covered sanitation facilities and the delivery of hygiene kits.

Following an extended dry spell, the Republic of the Marshall Islands saw a drought for several months and the government declared a state of emergency for 13 atolls/islands on 9 May 2013. The most pressing needs were access to safe drinking water and food assistance. In response, the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) committed € 150 000 to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to implement a relief action, including the provision of water tanks, repairs to rain-water collection systems and hygiene promotion awareness.

Cyclone Evan cut a path of destruction through the island nations of Fiji and Samoa in December 2012. Following an assessment mission by experts from ECHO, a total of € 1.8 million were released for humanitarian assistance for rehabilitation of shelters, water and sanitation systems and food and agriculture recovery. Implementing partners were ADRA, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), Oxfam, IFRC and UN-Habitat.

In 2013, the European Commission identified the widespread sexual and gender-based violence in [Papua New Guinea](#)* as a "forgotten crisis". It allocated €1.5 million to support protection and care systems for victims of violence in the period 2014-2015. Médecins sans Frontières-Holland will use these funds to provide emergency first aid and psychological counselling, as well as safe haven accommodation, to the victims and their families. Perpetrators will also receive psychological counselling.

Reducing the impact of natural disasters

A [Disaster Preparedness programme \(DIPECHO\)](#)* for 2013-2014 is currently ongoing in the Pacific region. The funding amounts to € 3 million with special focus on Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, as well as some regional initiatives.

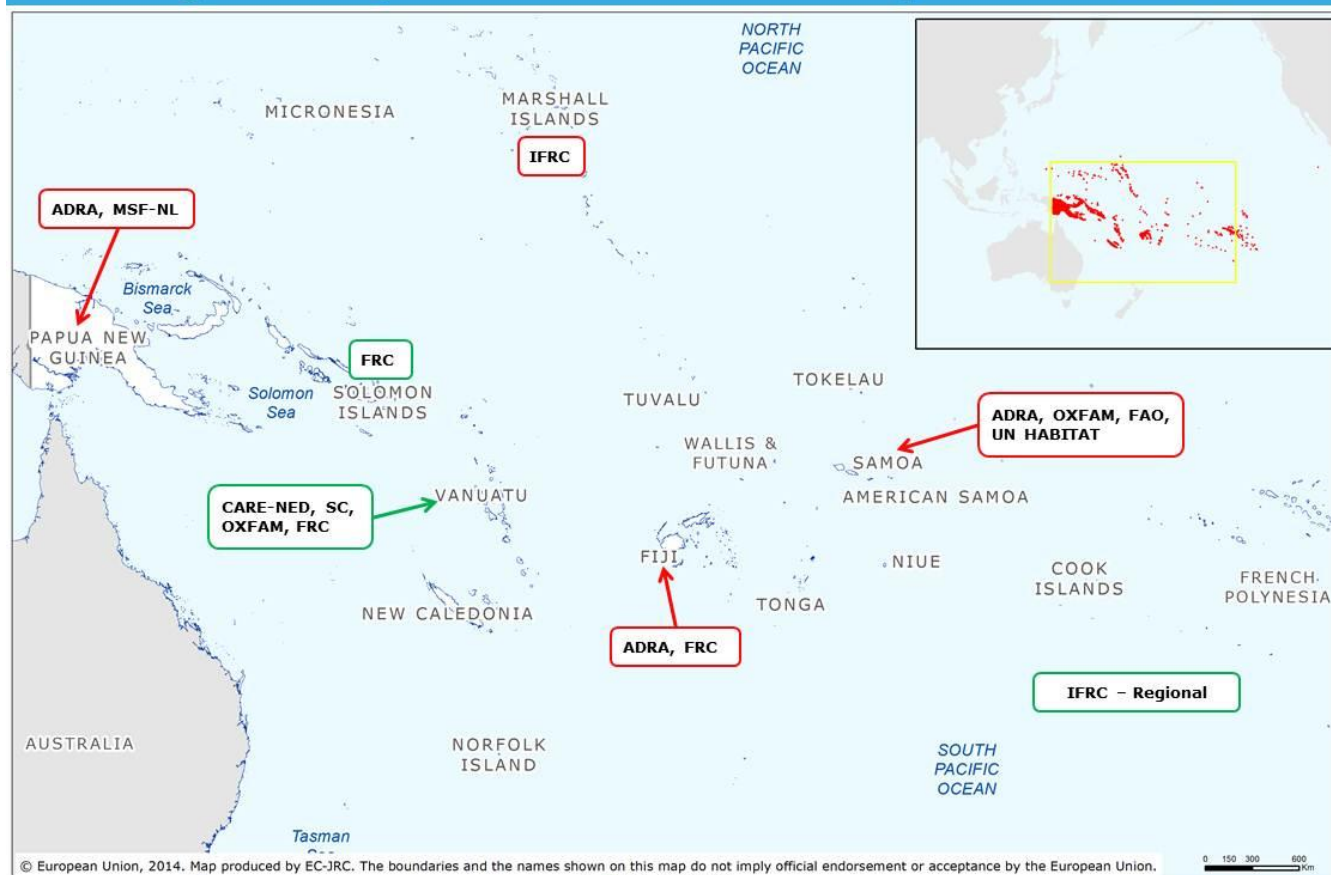
The programme funds community-based disaster preparedness actions, linkages between the community, village, province, region and national levels and standardisation of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) tools, joint work and coordination of governmental and non-governmental organisations, and peer-to-peer learning and experience sharing.



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In Vanuatu, ECHO continues to help strengthening the Vanuatu Humanitarian Team through its partner Oxfam GB. In addition, the French Red Cross, CARE Netherlands and Save the Children are focusing their actions at the community level, enhancing collaboration with the government and continuing efforts to coordinate and develop joint approaches and tools for DRR.

Pacific region - European Union humanitarian response



ECHO funding 2013-2014

Disaster Preparedness (DIPECHO)	
Partner	Amount (EUR)
VANUATU	
CARE Netherlands	350 000
Save the Children	250 000
OXFAM GB	202 585
VANUATU & SOLOMON ISLANDS	
French Red Cross	501 161
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	
ADRA	1 400 000
REGIONAL	
IFRC	350 220
TOTAL	3 053 966

Emergency Response	
Partner	Amount (EUR)
SAMOA	
ADRA	280 000
OXFAM GB	437 000
UN-HABITAT	168 000
FAO	314 711
FIJI	
ADRA	500 000
IFRC	100 150
MARSHALL ISLANDS	
IFRC	150 000
SOLOMON ISLANDS	
World Vision	238 023
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	
MSF-NL	1 500 000
TOTAL	3 687 884



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Examples of humanitarian projects in the Pacific region



On the island of Gaua, Vanuatu, the villagers, together with the Vanuatu and French Red Cross, received EU humanitarian funds to construct emergency shelters in several locations using traditional knowledge to protect their inhabitants during tropical storms and cyclones. Men and women of the villages are also being trained in planning for disasters by designating evacuation routes, reinforcing their homes and educating children. These are some of the measures to make communities more resilient against natural calamities which strike the Pacific islands frequently. The project will run until end 2014.

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On the Solomon Islands, volunteers have received training from the French Red Cross, under a 2013-2014 EU-funded project, to help their friends and neighbours in times of disasters. This makes men, women, the youth and the elderly aware of what they can do to make their villages more resilient to natural calamities, thus making recovery faster. Regular disaster simulation exercises help to improve the skills of the volunteers and to ascertain whether the disaster management plans are being effectively implemented.

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In Papua New Guinea, family, sexual and gender based violence is widespread. According to research, nearly two-thirds of women have experienced beatings and some form of sexual violence. A third of the men interviewed experienced sexual abuse as children. The EU's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) has recognised this violence as a "Forgotten Crisis" and is supporting Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Holland in a project aimed at establishing Family Support Centres (FSC) where abused women and children can receive life-saving medical treatment and counselling.

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