



RISK FINANCING & INVESTMENT



Funded by the European Union



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GFDRR
Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery



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CASE STUDY

RISK FINANCING & INVESTMENT

Livable Pacific Cities and Towns: Urbanisation Strategies for Resilience, Sustainability, and Inclusion Report

With support from the ACP-EU Disaster Risk Management Program, implemented by the World Bank/GFDRR, Pacific Island Countries are strengthening risk-informed urban planning to address escalating climate and disaster risks. Through technical assistance, the Program supports recommendations on resilient infrastructure planning, inclusive urban growth, and climate-smart investment pathways across rapidly urbanising Pacific cities and towns.

The urban population of PICs is projected to double between 2010 and 2050

reaching **1.6M** by 2050

The Challenge

The formal urban population is set to **double by 2050**, reaching a projected **1.6 million people**

Unplanned growth leaves Pacific cities **more exposed and vulnerable to hazards**

Despite accounting for **50-70% of the GDP**, Pacific cities have not unlocked the advantages of urbanization

The main driver of urban population growth is **rural-to-urban migration**; people move for

- Better living standards
- Access to services
- Job opportunities

Urbanization in PICs brings risks

- youth unemployment
- urban sprawl
- growing vulnerabilities
- insecure land tenure

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 01 COUNTRY/REGION/LOCATION**
 11 Pacific Island Countries (PICs) including: Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Exposure assessment focuses on 10 PICs (excluding Papua New Guinea).
- 02 RISK ADRESSED**
 Sea level rise, floods, droughts, strong wind (cyclonic), volcanic activity, landslides, earthquakes, tsunami and climate-related hazards.
- 03 IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD/TIMEFRAME**
 2024–2025, supporting risk assessment and investment-oriented resilience planning.
- 04 ACTORS/IMPLEMENTING AND LOCAL PARTNERS**
 ACP-EU Disaster Risk Management Program, EU, World Bank / GFDRR, working with Pacific government.
- 05 ACTORS/IMPLEMENTING AND LOCAL PARTNERS**
 Government counterparts as well as residents and businesses in high-risk zones, public services and infrastructure systems across Pacific Island Countries

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

The growing concentration of people in urban areas is driving positive change and making cities key engines of economic activity. After decades of strong growth, the urban population of Pacific Island Countries (PICs) is projected to double between 2010 and 2050, reaching 1.6 million by 2050.

At the same time, rapid urbanisation is concentrating people and assets in coastal areas, increasing exposure to climate change and natural hazards. Informal settlements, insecure land tenure, and limited resources compound these challenges and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable.

In this context, guiding urban growth through spatial and exposure analysis, evidence-based planning, risk-informed investments, and community-driven initiatives will be essential to ensure that Pacific cities and towns strengthen urban resilience and support sustainable development goals.

WHY THIS ACTION MATTERS?

Rapid urbanization across Pacific Island Countries is concentrating people, infrastructure, and economic activity in highly hazard-prone coastal areas, where climate change, sea-level rise, cyclones, flooding, and earthquakes threaten lives and livelihoods. At the same time, many urban centers face infrastructure gaps, informal settlements, limited service delivery, and constrained fiscal capacity.

By promoting risk-informed planning, resilient infrastructure, inclusive governance, and community-based approaches, this action helps Pacific cities and towns manage growing urban pressures while protecting vulnerable populations, supporting economic growth, and reducing long-term disaster and recovery costs.

See the intervention and results on page 2 →

INTERVENTION AND APPROACH

The intervention supported the development of the **Livable Pacific Cities and Towns: Urbanisation Strategies for Resilience, Sustainability, and Inclusion** suite of reports through technical assistance delivered by the World Bank / GFDRR under the Intra-ACP DRR Programme. The initiative combined regional urban analysis and multi-hazard risk assessment across 38 urban areas in 10 PICs. Participatory stakeholder engagement was carried out with selected countries.

The methodology integrated data analysis, exposure modelling and urban resilience diagnostics to assess risks from flooding, cyclones, earthquakes and coastal hazards, while examining infrastructure gaps, settlement growth, governance systems

and vulnerable urban populations. City Scans and urban resilience diagnostics identified broad investment priorities and policy entry points for resilient urban development.

Participatory workshops with technical stakeholders between 2024 and 2025 helped validate priorities and strengthen local ownership. The approach also overlaid urban growth analysis with multi-hazard risk mapping to guide future planning, infrastructure investment and inclusive resilience strategies across PICs. These technical efforts form part of a broader framework promoted by the LPCT report to mainstream DRM and CRM into urban planning, infrastructure investment, and local governance.

PROGRAMME OUTPUT ALIGNMENT

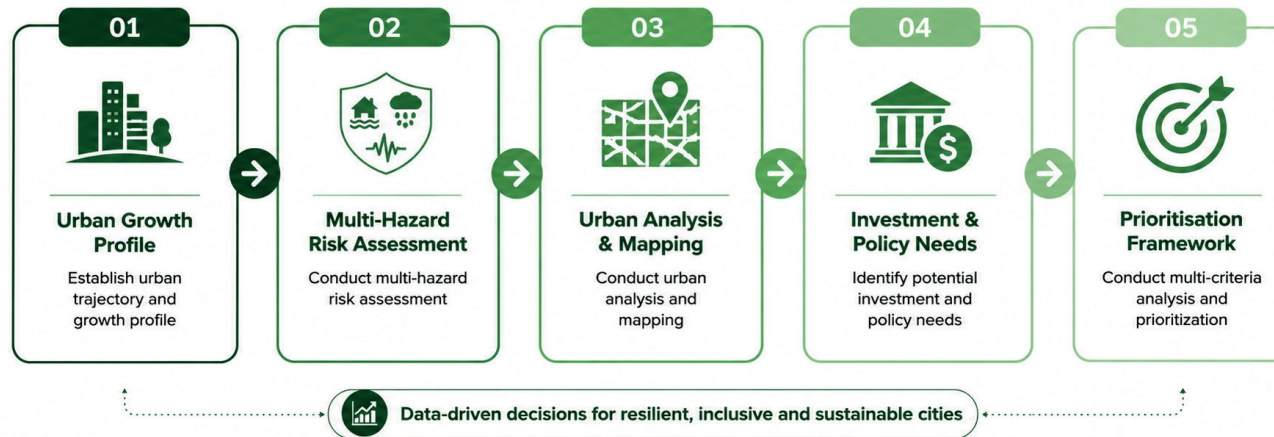


This action supports the ACP DRR Programme, by strengthening investment in DRR for resilience through risk-informed urban planning, climate adaptation and urban resilience mechanisms across PICs. It translates urban risk analysis into practical planning and investment guidance that helps PICs prioritise resilient infrastructure, safer settlement development and inclusive urban resilience strategies aligned with long-term sustainable development objectives.

The Response

Resilient Urbanization Diagnostic Tool

A five-step methodology to identify resilient investment priorities



Aerial view of Apia, Samoa



Aerial view Suva, Fiji



The report's emphasis on compact, climate-resilient urban design and participatory planning provides a roadmap for how Majuro can evolve into a safer, more livable city while preserving its cultural identity and environmental integrity."

HON. THOMAS H. HEINE
Minister of Public Works, Infrastructure and Utilities,
GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

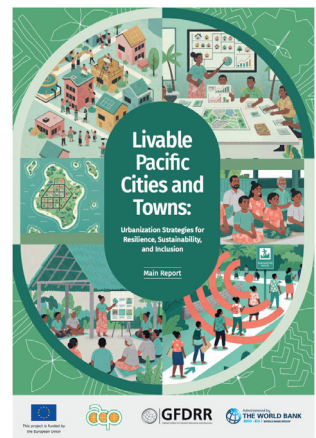
RESULTS AND CHANGE

- Stronger urban risk intelligence for planning.** Multi-hazard assessments improved understanding of flood, cyclone, earthquake and coastal risks across Pacific towns and cities, supporting evidence-based urban planning.
- Investment priorities guided by resilience analysis.** Urban resilience diagnostics identified priority infrastructure and adaptation needs, helping guide resilient urban investment strategies.
- Improved governance and institutional readiness.** The assessment highlighted policy, planning and coordination gaps, creating entry points to better integrate resilience into urban development systems.
- Greater momentum for inclusive and sustainable urbanisation.** The programme advances nature-based solutions, climate adaptation and more inclusive approaches to managing rapid urban growth across PICs.

EARLY CONCRETE UPTAKE IN ONGOING INVESTMENTS:

RECOMMENDATIONS ON RISK-INFORMED URBAN PLANNING

Under the Pacific Preparedness, Adaptation and Resilience – Samoa Project (PREPARE-Samoa), funded by the World Bank, the Government of Samoa is applying recommendations on risk-informed urban planning and resilient public facilities. The Government of Kiribati is also applying lessons learned from their report to a planned update of their national urban policy.



KEY ENABLERS OF SUCCESS

- Strong EU–World Bank–GFDRR and Government partnership
- Climate-informed and evidence-based modelling
- Stakeholder consultations
- Multi-sector collaboration
- Integration of grey + green infrastructure solutions

SOURCES

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Urbanization Prospects: the 2018 Revision, Online Edition (New York: United Nations, 2018).

World Bank, Demographic Trends and Urbanization (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2019).

Main report
Livable Pacific Cities and Towns: Urbanization Strategies for Resilience, Sustainability, and Inclusion – Main Report
<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099121725000530195>
Executive Summary
Livable Pacific Cities and Towns: Urbanization Strategies for Resilience, Sustainability, and Inclusion – Executive Summary
<https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099121725000534099>
Within the same report series, two additional spotlight reports were also launched:
Spotlight: Tides of Change – Urban Resilience Across Pacific Landscapes
<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099021226032536996>
Spotlight: Mapping Risk, Building Resilience – Exposure Analysis of Pacific Urban Areas
<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099021226150576455>
Blogs:
Seizing the urban opportunity in the Pacific
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/pacificislands/publication/seizing-the-urban-opportunity-in-the-pacific>
Pacific Cities are on the Frontline of Climate Risk: Mapping a Resilient Future
<https://www.gfdrr.org/en/blog/pacific-cities-climate-risk>