



# PAPUA NEW GUINEA



## HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN EMERGENCIES

Papua New Guinea. Photo: Asso Myron / Unsplash



# PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is an island nation highly exposed to a complex interplay of natural hazards and socio-economic risks. The country is vulnerable to a wide range of natural disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, landslides, floods, droughts, heatwaves, and tropical cyclones. PNG was ranked 12 out of 193 countries in the 2025 edition of the World Risk Report, making it the most at risk country in this study.

Beyond its disaster risks, PNG's socio-economic landscape further amplifies its vulnerability. As the most populous and culturally diverse nation in the Pacific Island region, it faces significant challenges such as civil unrest, tribal conflict, and rising internal displacement due to migration. These issues have intensified over the past two decades, compounding the impacts of natural disasters and straining response capacities. These overlapping risks underscore the importance of a humanitarian response strategy that not only addresses the needs of the affected communities but is also adaptive to contexts involving conflict and social instability.

Disaster management in PNG is distinctive in several ways. It is primarily guided by the Disaster Management Act 1984 as the foundational legal framework. The evolution of civil-military coordination in PNG has been shaped by its colonial history, post-independence struggles with internal security, and experience with a protracted civil war. Coordination has shifted from an Australian-led model to an increasingly complex system, as the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) takes on internal security and humanitarian roles. The Southern Highlands Earthquake prompted a national State of Emergency and large-scale international humanitarian response, including deployment of the PNGDF and foreign military assets under Operation PNG Assist. This prompted a major shift in how emergency responses are managed not only at the national level but also across provincial administrations by triggering the launch of the PNG National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2017- 2030. In the context of international humanitarian coordination, PNG does not have a United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) presence, positioning the United Nation Resident Coordinator Office (UNRC) as the primary liaison with international humanitarian systems.

## KEY EVENTS IN THE RECENT EVOLUTION OF HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

- 2006-
  - Establishment of the Disaster Management Team (DMT) to replace the cluster system as PNG's national coordination mechanism for humanitarian response.
- 2010
  - PNG received support through the France-Australia-New Zealand (FRANZ) Arrangement, strengthening regional coordination for foreign military support during disasters.
- 2012
  - The PNGDF begins formal participation in regional disaster response exercises under the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM) framework.
- 2016
  - The PNGDF and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) expand cooperation under the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP), embedding ADF advisors in key locations to support disaster preparedness and logistics.
- 2018
  - The Southern Highlands Earthquake prompted a national State of Emergency and large-scale international humanitarian response, including deployment of the PNGDF and foreign military assets under Operation PNG Assist.
- 2019
  - Launch of the PNG National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2017- 2030.
- 2022
  - 2022: Launch of the PNG-Australia Policing Partnership (PNG-APP) Mission Design 2022-2026.
- 2023
  - Signing of the Australia-Papua New Guinea Bilateral Security Agreement (entered into force 2024).
- 2024
  - The Enga Landslide triggered a complex humanitarian response involving PNGDF, United Nations (UN) agencies, and foreign military support; highlighting the need for improved access planning, civil-military coordination, and conflict-sensitive approaches.
  - The National Executive Council approved the review of the Disaster Management Act 1984 and endorsed the plan to establish the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) to modernise PNG's disaster coordination framework.
  - PNG participated in the Pacific Response Group (PRG), enhancing regional military coordination for disaster response.
- 2025
  - Ongoing review process of Disaster Management Law and operationalisation of NEMA.
  - PNGDF and ADF conduct joint training and planning under the DCP, embedding 38 ADF advisors across PNG to support rapid mobilisation during emergencies.

# DISASTER RISK PROFILE

## KEY FACTS

**Official name:** The Independent State of Papua New Guinea

**Area:** 452,860 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:** 10,669, 942 (SPC, 2025)

**Capital:** Port Moresby

**Official languages:** Tok Pisin, English, Hiri Motu

**Disaster focal point:** National Disaster Centre

**Military:** Papua New Guinea Defence Force

**Police:** Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary



Source: Adapted from <https://www.unocha.org/publications/map/papua-new-guinea/papua-new-guinea-location-map-2013>

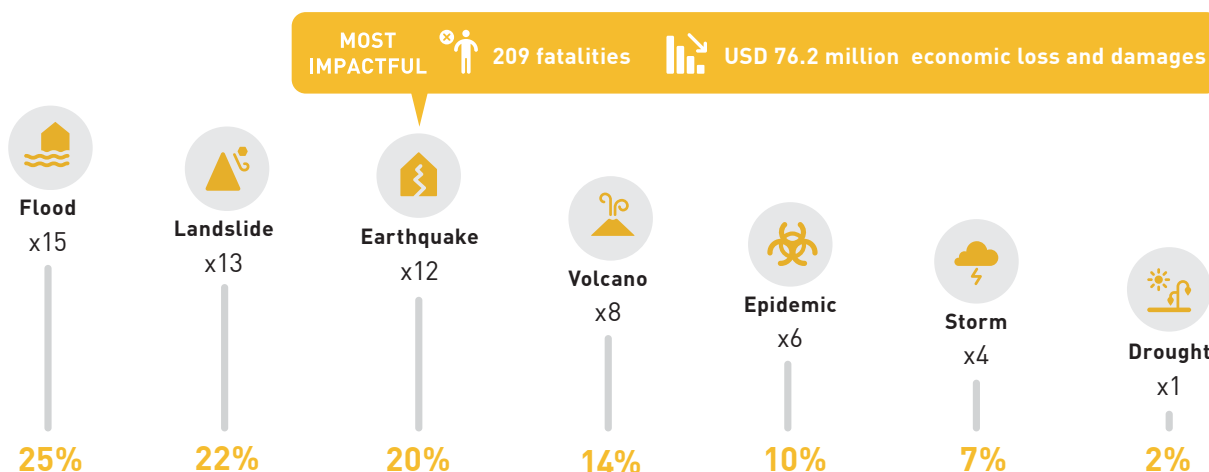
## GENERAL INFORMATION

PNG is vulnerable to a wide range of natural disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, landslides, floods, droughts, heatwaves, and tropical cyclones. Located within the Pacific Ring of Fire, one of the most geologically active regions in the world, PNG experiences daily seismic activity, frequent large earthquakes, and hosts some of the most active volcanoes in the Southwest Pacific.

## FREQUENCY AND PROPORTION OF DISASTERS BY TYPE FROM 2000 TO 2025

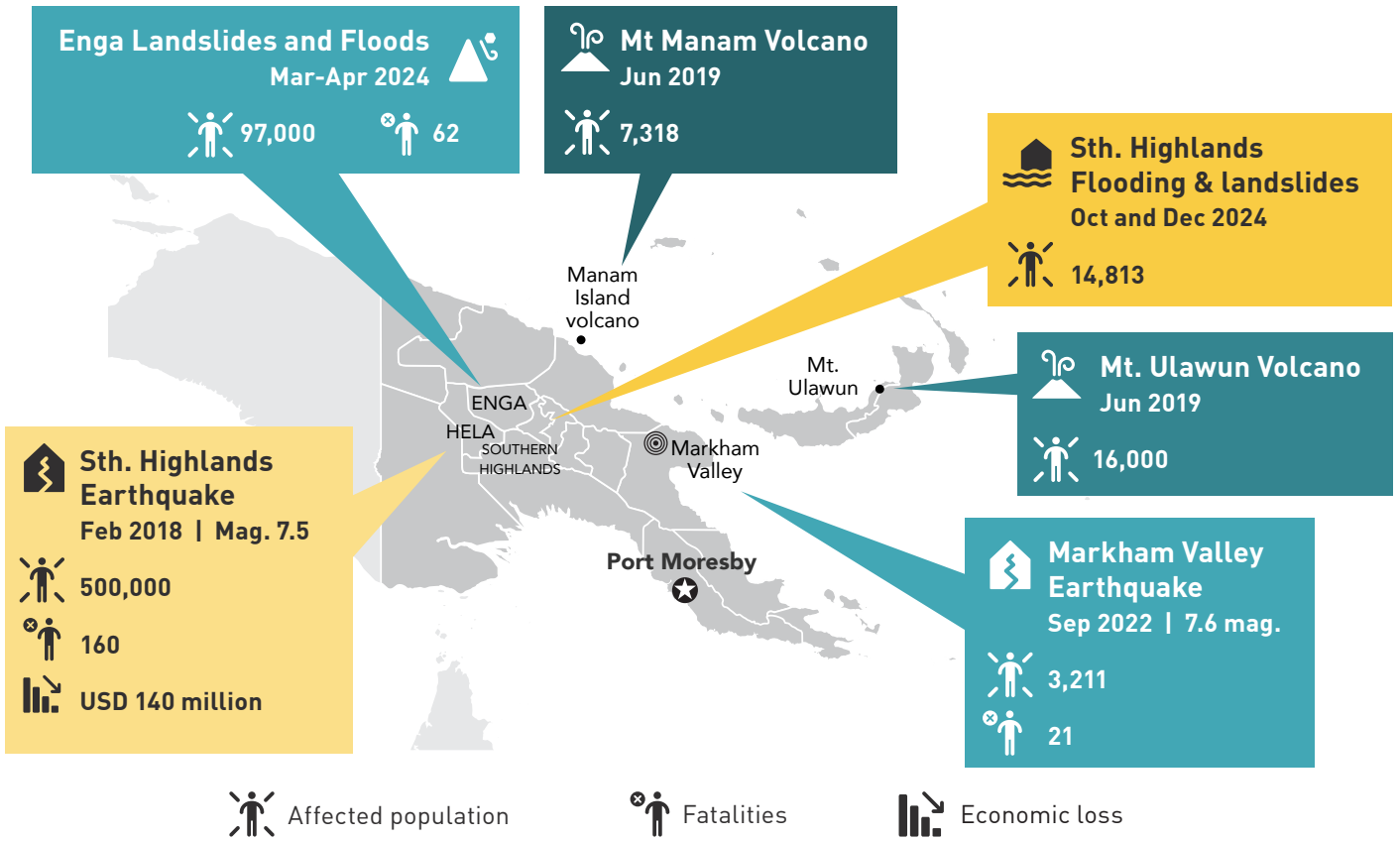
PNG has been affected by 59 natural disasters over the last 25 years.

The graph below orders PNG’s natural disasters by type according to their frequency, with the most to least frequent moving left to right, and the percentage frequency illustrated. The most impactful disaster type is identified but not ranked. Since 2000, floods (25%) have been the most frequent disaster to affect PNG, followed by landslides (22%). However, within this period, although not the most frequent, earthquakes were the most impactful, causing a significant number of fatalities and economic loss.



Source: <https://public.emdat.be/data>

### MAJOR DISASTERS (2015-2025)



### INFORM INDEX FOR RISK MANAGEMENT

INFORM Risk is an open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters. INFORM Risk gives each country a risk score of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest) for each of the dimensions, categories, and components of risk, as well as an overall risk score. The higher the score, the more at risk a country is to disasters.

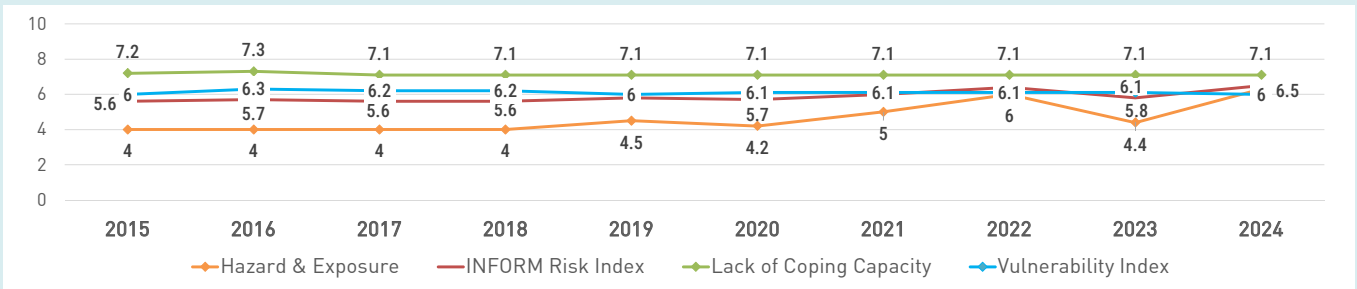
#### INFORM RISK VALUE AND RANKING 2025

PNG has a high hazards and exposure value, coupled with a high lack of coping capacity. Despite its moderate level of vulnerability value, the risk value is classified as 'high' ranking it in the top 20 globally.

INFORM Risk and dimensions of risk	VALUE (10 as the highest)	WORLD RANK (out of 191 countries)
<b>INFORM Risk</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Hazard &amp; Exposure</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Vulnerability</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Lack of coping capacity</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>18</b>

#### INFORM RISK TEN-YEAR TREND (2015-2024)

PNG's vulnerability, lack of coping capacity and risk values have remained constant since 2015; however, its hazards and exposure value demonstrates sharper rises and falls increased over the last five years due to increasing disasters. Consequently, the INFORM Risk Index has slightly increased, classifying PNG within the high-risk category.



# KEY POLICIES, PLANS AND FRAMEWORKS FOR CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION



## LAWS & REGULATIONS



### **Emergency Act 1979**

The Emergency Act 1979 made provisions for the PNG government to declare national emergencies across specified provinces (Chimbu, Eastern Highlands, Enga, Southern Highlands, and Western Highlands). It allows the appointment of a controller to uphold public order, they can restrict movement, requisition goods, regulate transport, enter property, and issue emergency directives. Failure to comply or obstructing the controller is an offence, with penalties enforceable even after the emergency ends.

### **Disaster Management Act 1984**

PNG's Disaster Management Act 1984 establishes the legal framework for disaster management. It outlines the structure, roles, and key functions of the National Disaster Committee, Provincial Disaster Committees, and the National Disaster Centre. Additionally, it provides guidance on the procedures for requesting international assistance during emergencies. The law is currently undergoing a comprehensive review to align PNG's disaster management practices with international standards. The review is expected to be completed in 2025 and will pave the way for the establishment of the NEMA, which will enhance coordination and oversight across all phases of Disaster Risk Management (DRM).



## GUIDING POLICIES



### **Emergency (Bougainville) (General Powers) Act 1989**

The Emergency (Bougainville) (General Powers) Act 1989 was originally enacted to address the security crisis in Bougainville, authorising the PNG Government, through the National Executive Council to appoint a Controller and support officers to manage emergency operations during the emergency period. Following the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the establishment of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG), Bougainville now has authority to enact its own emergency legislation and establish emergency management arrangements for declared emergencies, with the Bougainville Disaster and Emergency Service Directorate (BDDE) operating under the ABG and working with the National Disaster Centre (NDC) to respond to disasters. However, noting that a National State of Emergency declared by the National Executive Council and emergency legislation enacted by the National Parliament may still apply within Bougainville.



### **Emergency (Defence Force) Act 1994**

The Emergency (Defence Force) Act 1994 was introduced to provide special powers during declared emergencies. It authorises the government, through the National Executive Council, to deploy Defence Force personnel to assist civil authorities in maintaining public order and security. Under this Act, the Defence Force may exercise powers like those granted under other emergency acts to support law enforcement and protect communities.

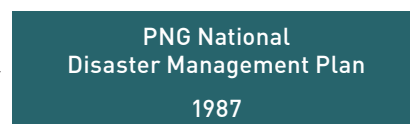


### **Emergency (General Powers) Act 2018**

The Emergency (General Powers) Act 2018 originated following the 7.5 magnitude earthquake in February 2018, covering the provinces of Enga, Hela, Southern Highlands and Western. It allows the government, through the National Executive Council, to appoint a controller, along with deputies and assistants, to coordinate emergency response and issue emergency orders. These orders include powers similar to those in other emergency legislation, such as restricting movement, requisitioning goods, vehicles, labour and property, regulating transport, and entering premises. The main difference from the Emergency Act 1979 is that it introduces a more structured coordination framework, with deputy and assistant controllers as part of the structure.



## KEY PLANS



### PNG National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2017- 2030

PNG has developed further DRM efforts with the endorsement of the National Disaster Risk Management Framework 2017–2030. Led by the National Disaster Centre, the framework aligns with the global Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and guides national and local stakeholders in prioritising risk reduction through 2030. This framework applies to partners at all levels of government including provincial, district, and local, to ensure coordinated implementation.

### PNG National Disaster Management Plan 1987

The PNG Disaster Management Plan was first introduced in 1987 and is currently under review. The National Disaster Committee oversees programming and project planning to align with the plan’s objectives. The plan provides strategic guidance for all stakeholders both government and non-government, across all levels, to integrate self-reliance in disaster management. The plan is supported by key documents such as the Mitigation Policy, Corporate Plan, standard operating procedures (SOPs), Response Plans, and the National Framework for Action 2005–2015.

## KEY CIVILIAN RESPONSIBILITIES IN DISASTERS

### NATIONAL DISASTER FOCAL POINT

In PNG, the National Disaster Centre serves as the country’s central authority for disaster management, responsible for coordinating national efforts in disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. The National Disaster Centre was established under the Disaster Management Act of 1987 and is overseen by the Ministry of Defence. It provides technical guidance, formulates DRM policies and plans, and facilitates collaboration with provincial administrations, local level governments, and communities. The National Disaster Centre also acts

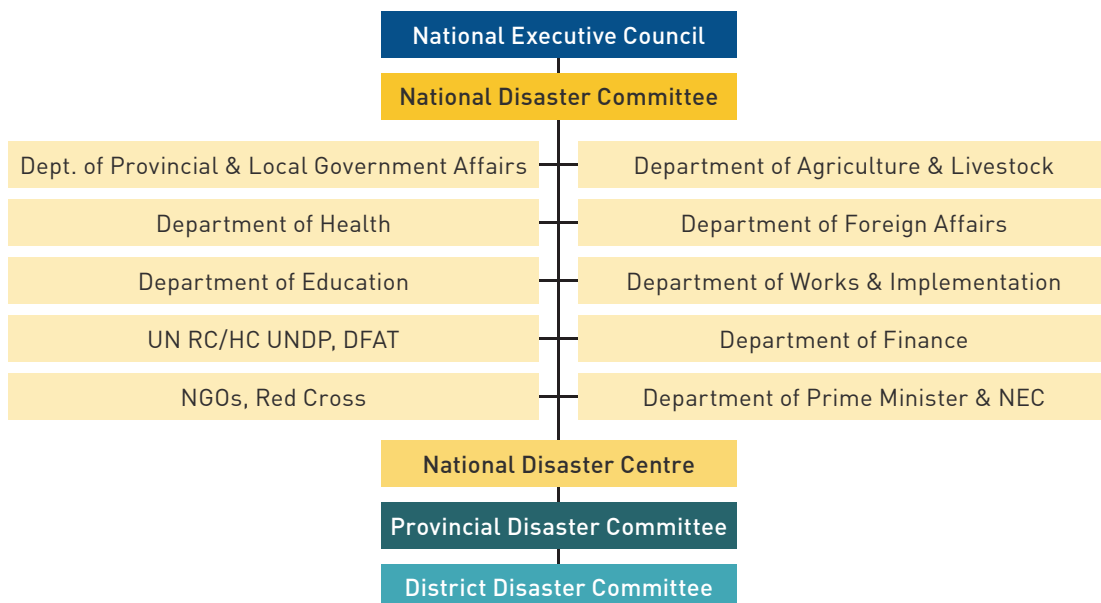
as PNG’s official liaison with regional and international disaster management bodies, including the Pacific Islands Forum, the Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance, United Nations agencies, and bilateral partners. It serves as the Secretariat of the National Disaster Committee (NDCOMM), a multi-agency body that sets policy direction. Operationally, the National Disaster Centre works in close partnership with the PNGDF, police, health services and other key agencies during emergency situations.

### DISASTER MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE


#### THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC)

The National Executive Council (NEC), comprising of


ministers, is the decision-maker for any disaster related policy issues. The NEC receives consolidated advice from key government agencies who oversee disaster




management coordinated through the National Disaster Committee (NDCOMM).

 **Established by:** Disaster Management Act 1984

 **Leadership:** Prime Minister


 **Key functions:**

- Act as the Cabinet and highest executive authority
- Provide high-level policy decisions, including the formulation and implementation of national development plans and the annual budget
- Monitor the implementation of government decisions and reforms
- Declare national emergencies and authorise powers
- Coordinate inter-ministerial actions and crisis response


 **Composition:** The Prime Minister and secretaries of all cabinet departments.

## THE NATIONAL DISASTER COMMITTEE

The National Disaster Committee leads PNG's disaster management system, reporting to the NEC via the Minister for Defence. The Committee acts as the operational decision-making body for emergencies and disaster-related matters. While its core membership is fixed, the Committee has the authority to co-opt additional organisations including NGOs and faith based organisations when needed.


 **Established by:** Disaster Management Act 1984

 **Leadership:** The Secretary of Defence

 **Key functions:**


- Supervise the national state of preparedness for emergencies and disasters and report to the NEC
- Maintain the national emergency plan
- Assign responsibilities for disaster related activities to departments and other bodies
- Advise NEC if assistance required
- Provide guidelines for the preparation and format of provincial disaster plans
- Approve grants


- Foster public awareness of the effects of natural hazards and measures which can be taken to reduce their effects
- Maintain stockpiles of relief supplies
- Advise the national executive council in declaring a national emergency


 **Composition:** The Commander of the PNGDF, the Police Commissioner, and Departmental heads of various government departments including the Prime Minister's Office, Finance, Health, Works, Defence, Police, Foreign Affairs, National Planning, and Provincial and Local Governments.

## THE NATIONAL DISASTER CENTRE

This government agency is responsible for coordinating responses to all disasters across the country. In performing its coordination role, the National Disaster Centre works in consultation with the National Disaster Committee, also serving as its secretariat. The National Disaster Centre operates under the Ministry of Defence and is organised into two main divisions: Risk Management, which focus is on disaster risk management and reduction activities and programmes, and the Community and Government Liaison Division which oversees disaster response, emergency management, and corporate affairs.

 **Established by:** Disaster Management Act 1984

 **Leadership:** Director who is appointed by the National Executive Council (NEC)

 **Key functions:**

- Develop policies, frameworks, plans, and SOPs
- Provide technical advice on all disaster management and risk reduction matters
- Lead and coordinate national disaster relief operations including mobilising and deploying assessment teams
- Manage a network of disaster management liaison officers to facilitate communication and coordination including managing donor and government relief funds
- Report annually to the National Disaster Committee
- Provide disaster management training for various sectors and levels
- Design and conduct community awareness and education on disaster management
- Record and report incidents

## SUBNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

Subnational disaster management in PNG is coordinated through Provincial Disaster Committees (PDCOMMs), established under the Disaster Management Act (1984).

Chaired by Provincial Administrators, these committees are responsible for preparing emergency plans, assessing local hazards, coordinating relief efforts, and advising provincial governments. There are 22 subnational committees: one in each of the 20 provinces, with equivalent arrangement in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and the National Capital District (NCD).


Each PDCOMM has a Provincial Disaster Office (PDO) which acts as the PDCOMM's secretariat, manage emergency operations centres, and facilitates communication with national and district authorities although the capacity of the PDO will vary depending on the level of funding allocated by the respective provincial administration.

### THE PROVINCIAL DISASTER COMMITTEES


PDCOMMs are responsible for preparing emergency plans for the provinces and coordinating relief operations. They report to the Provincial Executive Councils (PECs). PDCOMMs may seek national assistance for an emergency that has overwhelmed the capacity of provincial authorities to respond through the National Disaster Committee

 **Established by:** Disaster Management Act 1984

 **Leadership:** Provincial Administrator


 **Key functions:**


- Provide advice to the PEC through the Governor on development plans for the province for specific hazards
- Conduct hazard assessments for commonly occurring hazards in the province
- Prepare provincial contingency plans for these hazards and supervise the state of preparedness for emergencies in the province
- Foster public awareness and mitigation measures; including the training of provincial relief workers who receive requests for assistance
- Coordinate prepositioning of emergency supplies and relief operations.


 **Composition:** Provincial Police Commander, Provincial Works Manager, and representatives from health, agriculture, education, and other relevant departments

### PROVINCIAL DISASTER OFFICE

As with the national level, the PDO serves as the secretariat to the Provincial Disaster Committee. This structure is used to best channel information and resources in disaster response. PDOs are also increasingly supporting work to develop community integration strategies to ensure civil society organisations are involved in preparedness, mitigation, and response processes.

 **Established by:** Disaster Management Act 1984

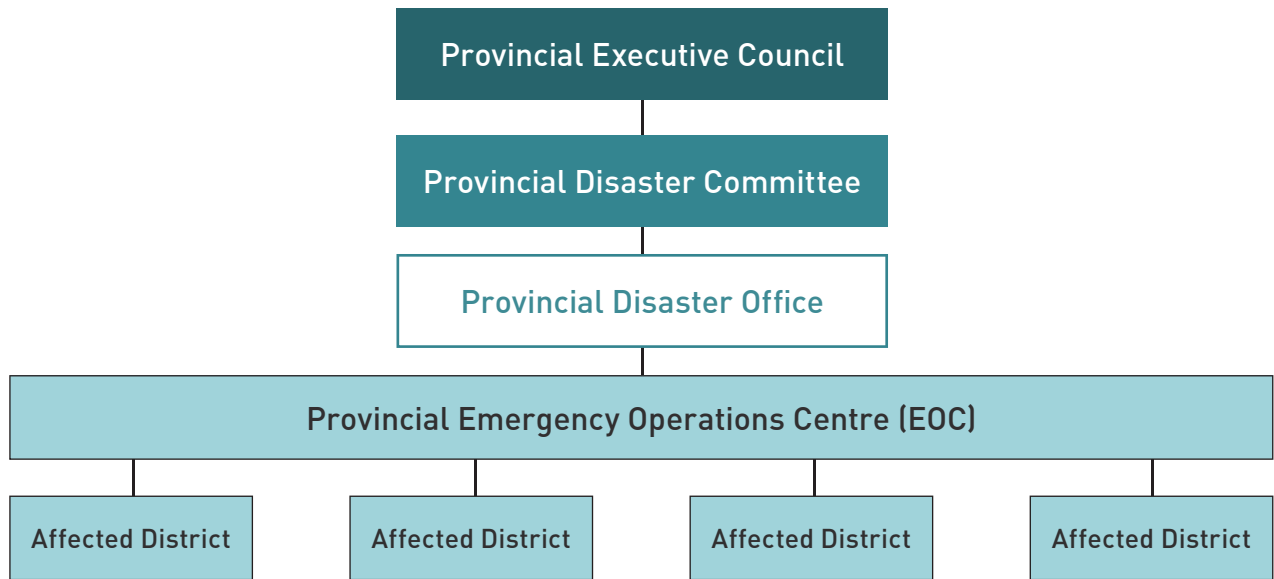
 **Leadership:** Provincial Disaster Coordinator/Director/Manager/Adviser

 **Key functions:**

- Establish and maintain emergency operations centre (EOC)
- Coordinate and communicate with the affected districts, NDC, and other stakeholders particularly the DMT.



## SUBNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



## ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS IN PNG

The administrative levels in PNG are divided into 20 provinces plus the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, and the National Capital District (NDC) in Port Moresby. Each Province is further divided into districts, which are subdivided into sub-districts and local level government (LLG).



	NAME	LEAD AUTHORITY	NUMBER
FIRST LEVEL	National	NDCOMM	1
SECOND LEVEL	Provincial	Provincial Disaster Committees	19 and 4 functioning
THIRD LEVEL	District	District Disaster Committees	89



## KEY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

### DEPARTMENT OF PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL-LEVEL GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS (DPLGA)

The DPLGA is one of the principal government authorities responsible for disaster management in PNG. It plays a critical role, alongside decentralised governance systems, in connecting the national government with grassroots communities across the provinces and districts. It is mandated to empower provincial and local-level governments to ensure that essential services, resources, and development initiatives reach populations most in need.

### THE DEPARTMENT OF PRIME MINISTER AND NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (PMNEC)

The PMNEC is the central policy and coordination mechanism for disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response, and recovery in PNG. It plays a central role in disaster management by advising the Prime Minister and Cabinet on disaster policies, endorsing national disaster frameworks, and making key decisions on emergency declarations and recovery. It supports the National Disaster Committee to ensure disaster risk reduction is integrated into national planning and provincial disaster committees' activities, linking national directives with local disaster management efforts. Furthermore, it monitors the national state of preparedness and supervises the implementation of disaster management activities to ensure timely and effective response during emergencies.

### THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

The National Disaster Committee and its Secretariat are under the Ministry of Defence. The Minister responsible for Defence is also responsible for disaster management and emergency services. The Secretary for Defence serves as Chair of the National Disaster Committee.

### DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

In the context of disasters, the Department of Finance advises on and develops sustainable financing mechanisms to address disaster funding needs, support resilience and risk reduction initiatives, and manage the financial impacts of disasters on government, businesses, and households.

### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

In disaster contexts, through the Department of Health and Provincial Health Authorities, public health personnel are deployed as part of the emergency management teams. These teams deliver emergency medical care, disseminate critical health information, and ensure access to essential services such as medicines, treatments or surgeries, and mental health support.

### DEPARTMENT OF WORKS AND HIGHWAYS (DoWH)

The DoWH is the government agency responsible for development, management, and maintenance of public Infrastructure. Emergency and Disaster Response is recognised as one of the key service areas under the DoWH. The Department acts as a frontline responder, rapidly deploying resources to restore damaged infrastructure such as roads and bridges affected by floods, landslides, or earthquakes. Additionally, it rapidly intervenes to minimise disruption to communities by re-establishing essential transport routes, thereby supporting both humanitarian relief and economic continuity.

### DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DFA)

The DFA serves a vital coordination, protocol, and diplomatic function when international assistance is required in disaster response. The DFA acts as the primary channel of communication between the government and foreign entities, including embassies, international organisations, and donor countries. It facilitates diplomatic clearances for foreign relief personnel, supplies, and equipment entering PNG, working closely with the National Disaster Centre, Department of Defence, and Customs. Additionally, to facilitate engagement and collaboration with international partners, the DFA supports coordination of high-level visits and donor missions during major disasters.

### DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

The Department of Transport, which includes the National Weather Service (NWS), plays a central coordination and enabling role during disaster response by supporting safe and effective movement, communication, and early warning systems. During a disaster, the Department works closely with the NDC and other agencies to coordinate transport logistics, maintain infrastructure operability where possible, and ensure that emergency responses are guided by accurate meteorological information.



## DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL PLANNING AND MONITORING (DoNPM)

In the context of disasters, DoNPM does not operate as a frontline responder. Instead, it holds a strategic and coordination role in supporting disaster management efforts. This includes integrating DRR, preparedness, and climate resilience into PNG's Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs) and Vision 2050 (PNG's long-term development blueprint), to ensure that recovery and reconstruction efforts are aligned with national and sectoral development priorities. Another key responsibility of the DoNPM is collaborating with the Department of Treasury and Finance to mobilise both domestic and international funding. This includes securing access to climate and resilience funds, grants, and concessional loans. Additionally, under one of its flagship initiatives, the department manages the Environmental Data Portal, which provides access to national environmental datasets. These datasets support the monitoring, evaluation, and analysis of environmental conditions and trends, thereby informing environmental planning, forecasting, and reporting at all levels.

## COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The Secretary of Defence, as the chair of National Disaster Committee, holds overall responsibility for coordinating disaster management, including disaster risk reduction, DRM, and emergency response. The DFA oversees the coordination of international assistance, while liaison with provincial authorities is managed by the DPLGA.

During emergencies, the Government and Community Liaison Coordinator within the National Disaster Committee facilitates response coordination. When a national emergency is declared, the Prime Minister typically appoints an Emergency Controller, who is responsible for overseeing national-level personnel, resources, and activities in accordance with the constitutional provisions for emergencies. In several instances over the past decade, SOE Controllers have been appointed from outside the NDC, representing key stakeholder agencies.

The SOE Controller may request support from other national bodies such as the PNGDF via the NEC, depending on the nature of the emergency. The Controller may also engage the National Disaster Committee to activate the National Emergency Operations Centre, which serves as the central hub for communications and operational control during the response.

## THE ROYAL PNG CONSTABULARY (RPNGC)

The primary role of the RPNGC is to uphold law and order and ensure public safety. During a disaster, it continues with these functions and supports coordinated emergency response. The RPNGC engages in disaster management through two key mechanisms:

- **Committee Membership:** The Commissioner of Police serves as a member of the National Disaster Committee, which oversees national preparedness and assigns responsibilities during emergencies
- **National Emergency Declaration:** When a National Emergency is declared under the PNG Constitution, an Emergency Controller is appointed. Under this arrangement, the police force operates under the direction of the Emergency Controller to support the national disaster response.

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT TEAM (DMT)

In PNG, sectoral coordination for humanitarian and disaster response is overseen by the DMT and includes the NDC alongside the United Nations and international NGOs operating in the country. The DMT also engages national NGOs and faith-based partners. Operational coordination is overseen by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), which coordinates key sectors including the Health sector and the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector, Education, Protection, and Logistics. Each sector is led by a designated government agency and co-lead partner agency, ensuring a structured and collaborative approach to emergency preparedness and response. The following figure depicts the DMT structure within the humanitarian architecture in PNG.

## SUBNATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATION CENTRES (EOCS)

EOCs coordinate any response that requires resources above those available at the local level. The EOC allows the Provincial Disaster Coordinator to communicate with affected districts and locations, as well as with the NDC and other stakeholders, especially from the DMT or the private sector. Depending on the PDC location and whether the PNGDF has a large-scale presence nearby. Based on the Disaster Management Act, the PDCOMM may seek national assistance for an emergency exceeding the capacity of provincial authorities to respond. This request goes to the NDCOMM, which can determine the pathway through which the Government of PNG will assist the affected province for example through NDC support or by appointing an SOE Controller.

## MOBILISATION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

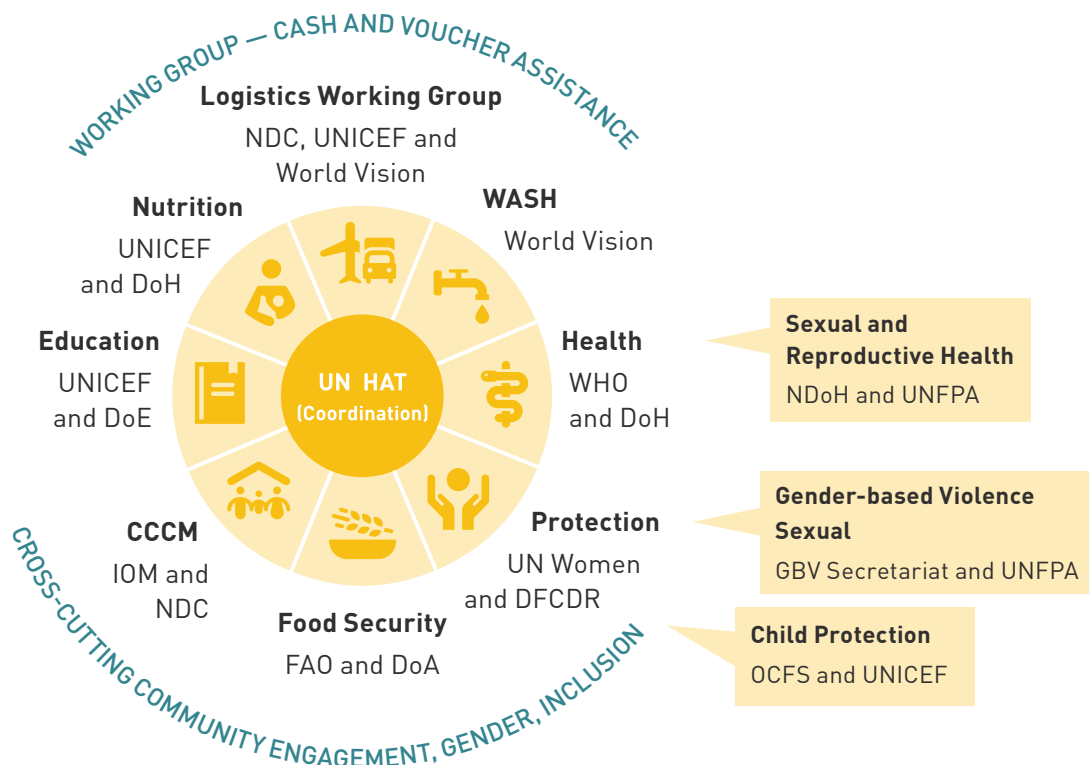
The National Disaster Coordinator advises the NEC on whether international assistance is required and is the focal point for international and bilateral support. The DMT brings the National Disaster Coordinator together with the leaders of international organisations, NGOs, and donor representatives. To strengthen mechanisms for mobilisation of international assistance, the National

Disaster Coordinator and provincial authorities, with support from UN agencies develop disaster risk management (DRM) plans and SOPs.

## COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

The Disaster Management Team (DMT) is PNG’s highest-level strategic coordination body for international humanitarian assistance. It facilitates decision-making and oversight for the coordination of international support, including the development and implementation of joint strategies among key national and international humanitarian actors. In all emergency situations, regardless of whether the Government of PNG has requested, accepted, or declined international assistance, the DMT complements national efforts by coordinating the activities of international organisations in alignment with national and local authorities. To support this function, the DMT is co-chaired by the the Director of the National Disaster Centre and United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC). It brings together a broad coalition of stakeholders, including UN agencies, international NGOs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, faith-based organisations, private sector representatives, and key development partners. Outside of emergency response operations, the DMT routinely monitors hazard events each year and typically coordinates a response to at least one major incident.

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT TEAM (DMT) SECTOR CO-LEADS



## INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION SYSTEM

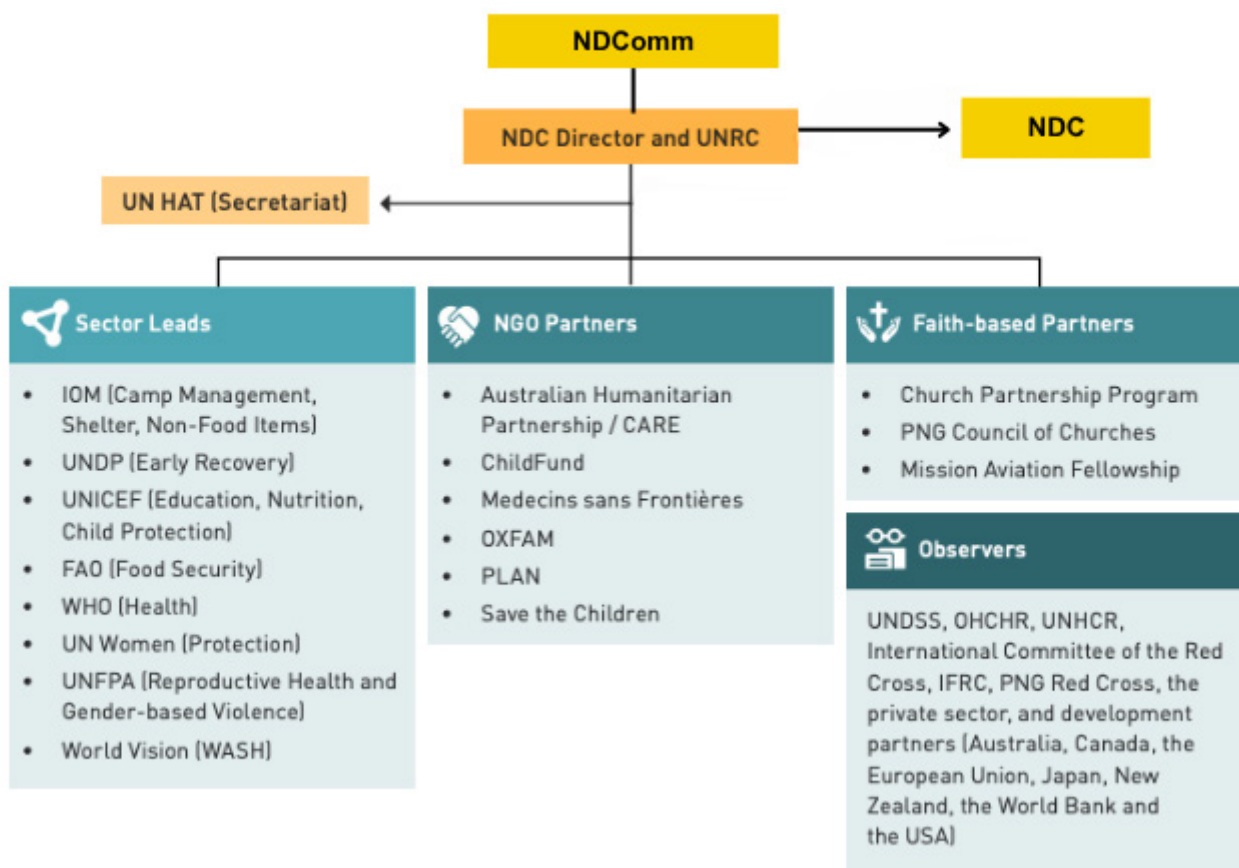
There are 14 UN system agencies operating in PNG, delivering programmes across a wide range of sectors, including education, food security, health, migration, livelihoods, and human rights. Under the leadership of the UNRC, these UN agencies collaborate to ensure effective coordination among agencies.

UN agencies also play a key role in emergency response, primarily through the DMT. As the UNRC also serves as the Humanitarian Coordinator, the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office (UNRC Office) includes a dedicated Humanitarian Advisory Team (UNHAT). This team supports the UNRC’s leadership in preparedness and response coordination and ensures the effective functioning of the DMT secretariat.

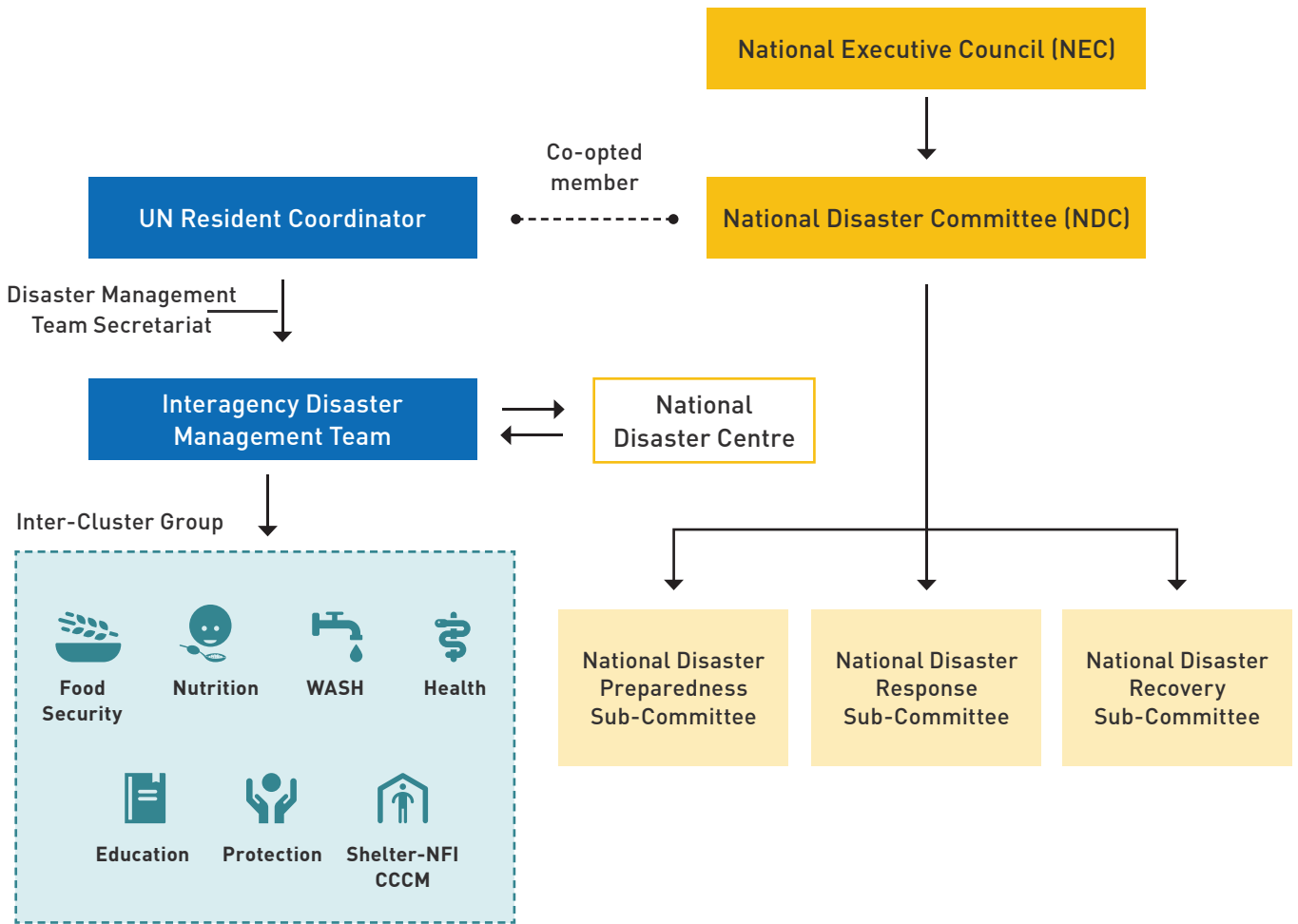
The UNHAT contributes to various aspects of humanitarian response, including coordination, impact and needs assessments, logistics, early recovery, and long-term recovery planning. It works closely with the National Disaster Centre, the PNGDF, and the Provincial Disaster Committees of affected provinces particularly in managing humanitarian data and information.

During disaster response, the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), led by NDC with co-lead from UNHAT, brings together sector co-leads from humanitarian organisations and government bodies, the Australian Humanitarian Partnership, the PNG Disability Sector Coalition, the Church Partnership Programme, and private sector partners.

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT TEAM STRUCTURE



## INTERFACE BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL COORDINATION STRUCTURES



Source: Consultation with key stakeholders

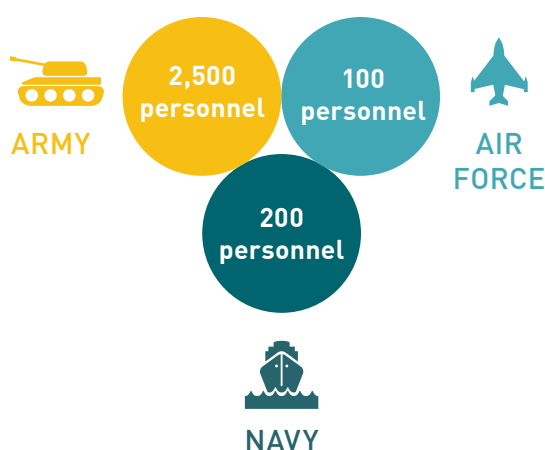


## KEY MILITARY RESPONSIBILITIES IN DISASTERS

### THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA DEFENCE FORCE (PNGDF)

The PNGDF, the national military of PNG, is responsible for the defence of Papua New Guinea. It has origins in the Australian Army land forces of the territory of Papua New Guinea before independence, coming into being in January 1973 and having its antecedents in the Pacific Islands Regiment. The PNGDF is a small force, numbering around 2,800 personnel, and consists of land/army (around 2,500 personnel), air (around 100 personnel) and maritime (around 200 personnel). It is a joint force tasked with defending PNG and its territories against external threats, as well as having secondary functions including nation-building and internal security tasks.

#### COMPONENTS OF THE MILITARY FORCES



The responsibility for DRM policy design lies with the Minister for Defence, however, the PNGDF, in collaboration with the National Disaster Coordinator, supports its implementation. This is carried out under the strategic direction of the National Disaster Committee with coordination facilitated through the NDC. In accordance with the Constitution, the PNGDF are responsible for supporting civilian-led Disaster Response activities, primarily for logistics capabilities. Additionally, during emergencies, the PNGDF is deployed to restore law and order, ensure public safety, and provide security for humanitarian operations for humanitarian workers. Their presence in disaster-affected areas has been essential to enabling effective emergency relief operations. Their presence in disaster-affected areas has been essential to enabling effective emergency relief operations.



**Established:** Defence Act 1974



**Leadership:** Chief of the Defence Force (CDF)



**Headquarters:** Murray Barracks, Port Moresby



**Key Roles:**

- Search, rescue, and evacuation: Locating and evacuating affected people
- Transportation and logistics: Moving supplies and personnel using military vehicles, boats, and aircraft; delivering, prepositioning, and transporting relief assistance
- Engineering and infrastructure restoration: Clearing debris, repairing roads, restoring essential services, and building temporary facilities like shelters or bridges
- Security and law enforcement support: Assisting police and civil authorities in maintaining order, crowd control during aid distribution, and property protection
- Regional cooperation and preparedness: Participating in joint exercises with regional partners and supporting humanitarian operations under Pacific frameworks.
- Medical support: Providing field medical teams and emergency health services

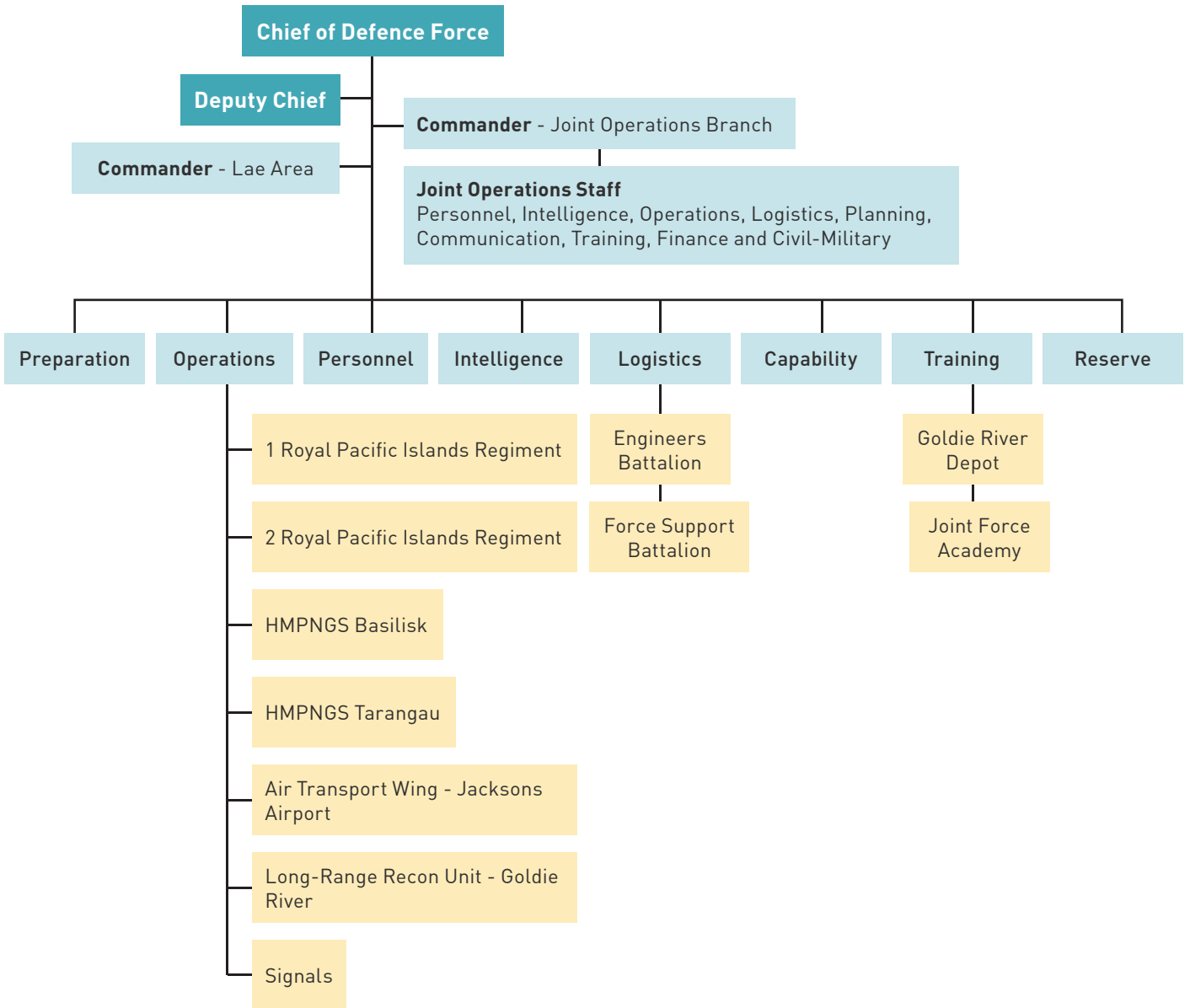


**Coordination mechanisms:** PNGDF coordinates disaster response primarily through the National Disaster Centre



**Components:** Land, air, and navy

## PNGDF STRUCTURE

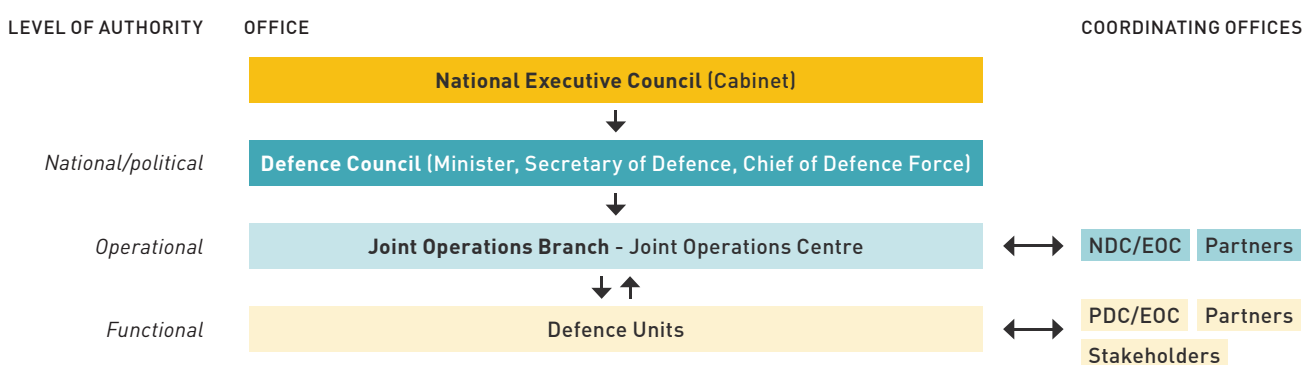


# HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION MECHANISMS

Civil-military coordination for humanitarian response in PNG is structured across three levels: National (political), operational, and functional. At the national level, the National Executive Council is the highest authority and delegates command to the Defence Council, comprising the Minister for Defence, the Secretary for Defence, and Chief of the Defence Force. The Defence Council directs the Joint

Operations Branch through the Joint Operations Centre, which coordinates with the National Disaster Centre and other partners in disaster response through the national EOC. At the functional level, Defence Units implement on-the-ground response activities in collaboration with Provincial Disaster Committees and other key stakeholders, coordinated through subnational EOCs.

## NATIONAL MILITARY CALL-OUT AUTHORITY FOR EMERGENCIES



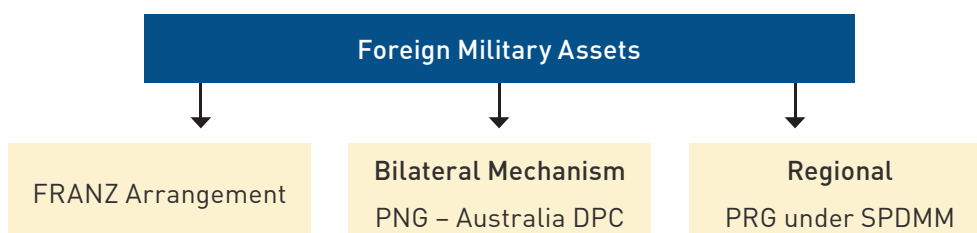
## COORDINATION OF FOREIGN MILITARY ASSETS

Foreign military coordination in support of PNG is structured through longstanding bilateral and multilateral frameworks that enable rapid, organised deployment of defence assets during crises.

On the multilateral side, PNG is a partner supported by the FRANZ Arrangement, a disaster response arrangement involving Australia, France, and New Zealand whereby their foreign military assets coordinate through their respective foreign affairs ministries. When PNG requests international assistance, the FRANZ partners coordinate their military deployments such as reconnaissance aircraft, naval vessels, and logistics units to support PNGDF operations. Coordination occurs both bilaterally and trilaterally, ensuring that all foreign assets operate in a unified and complementary manner alongside PNGDF and each other.

At the bilateral level, Australia plays a central role through its DCP, which embeds 38 permanent advisors from the ADF within the PNGDF. These advisors, stationed in Port Moresby, Lae, Wewak, and Manus Island, work directly with PNGDF units. This ensures that Australian military assets can be mobilised quickly and in close coordination with PNGDF during emergencies. Some key initiatives to support this include ongoing joint training, planning, and operational integration.


Additionally, the PNGDF participates in the PRG, an initiative under the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM). This regional mechanism further enhances coordination among Pacific militaries, allowing for shared planning and resource pooling during large-scale disaster relief efforts.



## CASE STUDY: ENGA LANDSLIDE 2024

 May 2024

 9,000 affected

 670-2,000 fatalities

 Not available



These joint efforts included providing essential items, coordinating evacuations, restricting access to the disaster site, and identifying new settlement areas.

### CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION

Civil-military collaboration was instrumental in disaster response, particularly in addressing access constraints, managing evacuations and displacement, and delivering relief. The PNGDF led search and rescue operations, however, the site's remoteness and damaged access roads prevented heavy machinery from reaching the area delaying recovery efforts. To support this, UN agencies and partners coordinated with local and national authorities to mobilise engineers and earth-moving equipment to improve access, though unstable debris continued to pose safety risks. Efforts to establish alternative routes were also hindered, with the Porgera-Lae Road only nearing completion four months after the disaster.

The UN Coordination Team was established in the provincial capital Wabag to support the Provincial Disaster Committee in coordinating the response. Security became a major concern due to ongoing clan disputes, particularly in Tambitanis, which resulted in further casualties and property damage. The PNGDF provided escorts to ensure the safe passage of relief convoys as many humanitarian personnel were stationed away from the affected area and relied on these escorts for safe travel.

To support displaced communities, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), in collaboration with the Enga Provincial Disaster Response Team, established a Displacement Tracking Matrix across the affected wards, Yambali, Pokolip, Kuandak, and Yuyango, between June and July 2024. Two tented evacuation sites (Care Centres) were established and initially managed by PNGDF personnel to accommodate displaced communities.

Furthermore, UN agencies (IOM, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA) and INGOs (World Vision, Care International) supported response efforts at the Mulitaka Care Centre by providing basic needs through the local government. The Provincial Administration distributed emergency food, household supplies, water containers, and purification tablets. Food remained a critical need, as many residents had lost farmland and livestock in the landslide. Host families also supported displaced individuals.

### OVERVIEW

Between 23 and 24 May 2024, a devastating landslide struck the Tulpar community in Yambali village, Enga Province, PNG. The disaster caused widespread destruction, severely impacting homes, livelihoods, and thousands of lives. An estimated 7,850 people were directly affected, with around 1,680 people displaced. Casualty figures varied significantly, with UN estimates at around 670 and PNG Government up to 2,000.

The response to the disaster was notably complex, driven by several compounding challenges. These included severely disrupted access caused by blocked highways, remote locations, unstable terrain and the lack of reliable demographic data for the affected area. Security was also a major concern for the humanitarian responders including PNG Red Cross Society (PNGRCS) due to tribal clashes linked to the volatile security situation driven by competition over resources and longstanding inter-communal tensions. This complexity delayed and disrupted relief assistance. Another key challenge was coordination with multiple international actors and civil-military actors which required a strong coordination mechanism to allow quick deployment.

As part of the initial response, the government initiated the immediate evacuation and resettlement of affected populations. The Enga Provincial Disaster Office worked closely with the DMT secretariat which led the coordination of humanitarian responders on the ground including the PNGDF, the RPNGC, and UN agencies.





Foreign military forces also contributed to the response, notably from Australia and New Zealand. Australia played a key role, providing assets to support the deployment of technical expertise and supplies to PNG. The ADF supported the movement of personnel and supplies between Port Moresby and Enga Province, deploying a number of military assets such as a C-27 Spartan, a C-130J Hercules aircraft, and a C-17A Globemaster to deliver relief supplies from Brisbane to Port Moresby. New Zealand provided approximately NZD 900,000 in aid, deploying a Defence Force C-130 aircraft and emergency personnel to support relief operations.

## Key Learnings

- **Access constraints require pre-planning:** Blocked highways and unstable terrain significantly delayed relief operations. Future disaster preparedness should include contingency plans for alternative access routes and pre-positioned supplies in remote areas.
- **Accessibility and availability of data are critical:** The lack of reliable demographic and geographic data complicated response coordination and resource allocation. Strengthening local data systems and conducting regular assessments can improve emergency response efficiency.
- **Security risks can undermine humanitarian efforts:** Ongoing tribal clashes and inter-communal tensions posed serious risks to responders and displaced communities. Integrating conflict-sensitive approaches and enhancing civil-military coordination are essential in volatile environments.
- **Civil-military collaboration enhances operational capacity:** Civil-military collaboration played a vital role in the response efforts, contributing significantly to search and rescue operations, securing access routes, and delivering humanitarian aid. Establishing a more predictable and structured civil-military coordination mechanism is essential to enable rapid deployment and effective collaboration during emergencies. This also includes coordination with foreign military forces, particularly in situations where the scale of the response exceeds the capacity of domestic resources.



## CASE STUDY: SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS EARTHQUAKE 2018

 **February 2018**       **544,000 affected**       **160 fatalities**       **USD 140 million**

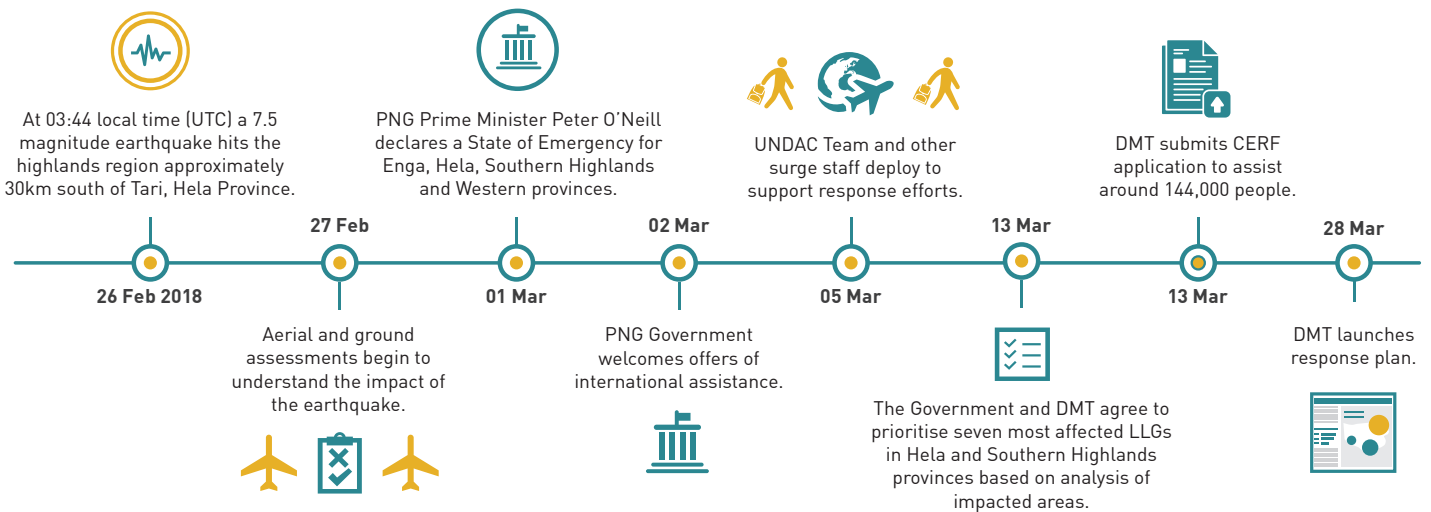
In 2018, a powerful 7.5 magnitude earthquake struck the remote Southern Highlands of PNG, affecting over 544,000 people and displacing nearly 18,000. The earthquake and hundreds of aftershocks caused widespread destruction to roads, bridges, homes, schools, and hospitals, further isolating an already insecure region. Aerial surveys revealed extensive landslides that severed access to entire villages, isolating them from aid for days and even weeks. As a result of these hazardous conditions and ongoing safety concerns, many residents opted to sleep outdoors to avoid further risk.

Together, with humanitarian partners and the private sector, the UN mobilised over \$20 million to aid 200,000 people in need of immediate relief. The humanitarian response faced significant challenges including damaged infrastructure, limited access, and ongoing inter-communal violence. Clan conflicts led also to further displacement, loss of services, reduced economic activity, and heightened tensions. Access to clean water, food, shelter, and medical care became urgent priorities, with

many displaced people living in informal camps lacking adequate water and sanitation.

Security concerns affected the delivery of humanitarian assistance and clashes and escalating tensions led to a temporary suspension of operations. In Hela Province, multiple incidents prompted humanitarian organisations to halt their activities. On 14 June, violent protests erupted in Mendi, Southern Highlands Province, following a court ruling on an election dispute. In response, the Prime Minister declared a State of Emergency. International humanitarian agencies collaborated with the PNG Government to identify safe locations for scaled-down operations, aiming to resume the response as soon as conditions allowed. Meanwhile, relief efforts continued in areas unaffected by the unrest. Besides delivering the humanitarian assistance, the the HAT and UNDAC also supported the National Disaster Centre with information management and coordination of assessments.

### TIMELINE OF FOREIGN DISASTER RELIEF AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN 2018



Source: Adapted from <https://reliefweb.int/report/papua-new-guinea/papua-new-guinea-highlands-earthquake-disaster-management-team-response-plan>

## CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION

During the earthquake response, the PNG Government was simultaneously managing multiple overlapping emergencies, creating one of the most complex humanitarian coordination contexts in PNG. The humanitarian response to the earthquake was led by the National Government through a designated Disaster Controller, supported by the Disaster Management Committee (DMC) and DMT. Coordination at the provincial level was carried out by the Southern Highlands and Hela Provincial Disaster Coordination Offices, alongside the PNGDF.

The response efforts were overseen by the Disaster Controller, who also served as Acting Provincial Administrator. Meanwhile, the response to a concurrent polio outbreak was led by the National Department of Health, with support from WHO and UNICEF, and implemented through emergency operations centres within provincial health departments.

For earthquake response, a UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team was deployed within the first week to assist the PNG Government and humanitarian partners. The UN facilitated coordination through the PNG DMT which quickly mobilised to define priorities and support government-led efforts. To strengthen field operations, the UN also established coordination offices in both Southern Highlands and Hela provinces. PNGDF played a key role in the earthquake affected area clearing armed roadblocks and working with local communities to ensure a safe relief distribution.

Foreign militaries were also involved, with the ADF launching Operation PNG Assist 2018 to support earthquake relief efforts. Over 110 ADF personnel, along with aircraft including a C-130J, a C-27 Spartan, and CH-47F Chinooks, delivered essential supplies to remote areas. A C-17A Globemaster also transported aid from Brisbane to Port Moresby. ADF teams supported the PNGDF in distributing medical supplies and conducted early damage assessments of key infrastructure.

## Key Learnings

- **Prepositioned supplies play a critical role:** Prepositioned emergency items such as shelter kits and WASH items enabled a rapid initial response, allowing immediate distributions while additional resources were mobilised.
- **Surge capacity and ready personnel were instrumental:** The rapid deployment of surge personnel from within the UN system and standby partners was instrumental. Their expertise, commitment, and resilience under challenging conditions significantly strengthened the response.
- **Access, infrastructure challenges, security, and conflicts disrupted the aid delivery:** Damaged roads, bridges, and airfields, combined with the region's remoteness and landslides severely restricted access to affected areas, delaying aid delivery. Moreover, the conflict also contributed to temporary suspensions of operations in Hela province and a declared State of Emergency in the Southern Highlands.
- **Strong civil-military coordination is essential:** Strong collaboration between the PNGDF, ADF, and humanitarian actors was essential for ensuring effective logistics, security, and aid distribution, particularly in hard-to-reach areas. This coordination was especially critical in the context of overlapping emergencies, where integrated and flexible mechanisms were required to manage complex and evolving response needs.

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACMC	Australian Civil-Military Centre
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AHP	Australian Humanitarian Partnership
CPP	Church Partnership Programme
DCP	Defence Cooperation Program
DMT	Disaster Management Team
DPLGA	Department of Provincial and Local Government Affairs
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
FRANZ	France-Australia-New Zealand
ISCG	Inter-Sector Coordination Group
LLG	Local Level Government
NDC	National Disaster Centre
NEC	National Executive Council
NEMA	National Emergency Management Authority
PDC	Provincial Disaster Centres
PEC	Provincial Executive Council
PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Force
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PRG	Pacific Response Group
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RPNGC	Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPDMM	South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting
UNHAT	United Nations Humanitarian Advisory Team
UN-OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator

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# SOLOMON ISLANDS



## HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN EMERGENCIES

Inlets and passages in the south east of Choiseul island, Solomon Islands.  
Photo: Gilmore Tana / Shutterstock



# SOLOMON ISLANDS

Solomon Islands is highly susceptible to natural disasters. The country has eight active volcanoes, with approximately 17% of the population residing within 30 kilometres of one. In addition, Solomon Islands is exposed to earthquakes, tsunamis, tropical cyclones, floods and droughts. Solomon Islands was ranked 34th out of 193 countries in the 2025 edition of the World Risk Report, the second highest after Papua New Guinea in this analysis. This diversity of hazards and high vulnerability emphasises the need for effective coordination across all stakeholders in disaster response.

Recognising the connection between climate change and disasters, the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) has placed strong emphasis on responding to climate change in disaster management strategies, key policies and government structures. Solomon Islands' disaster management framework build upon the National Disaster Council Act of 1989. Its coordination is led by the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), and overseen by the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster

Management and Meteorology (MECDM). Furthermore, the National Disaster Management Plan 2018 provides strong operational guidance by establishing institutional arrangements that enable the SIG to coordinate disaster management. This national coordination system integrates a wide range of stakeholders, including national agencies, provincial authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Red Cross movement, United Nations (UN) agencies, and regional partners.

Solomon Islands is one of many Pacific nations without a standing military that can be assigned to disaster response and humanitarian operations. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) acts as the counterpart for foreign military related support. In addition, the SIG has cultivated strategic relationships with foreign defence and military partners to ensure support is available when needed. These partnerships are facilitated through mechanisms such as the FRANZ Arrangement and the Australia-Solomon Islands Bilateral Security Treaty, which enable coordinated international assistance during emergencies.



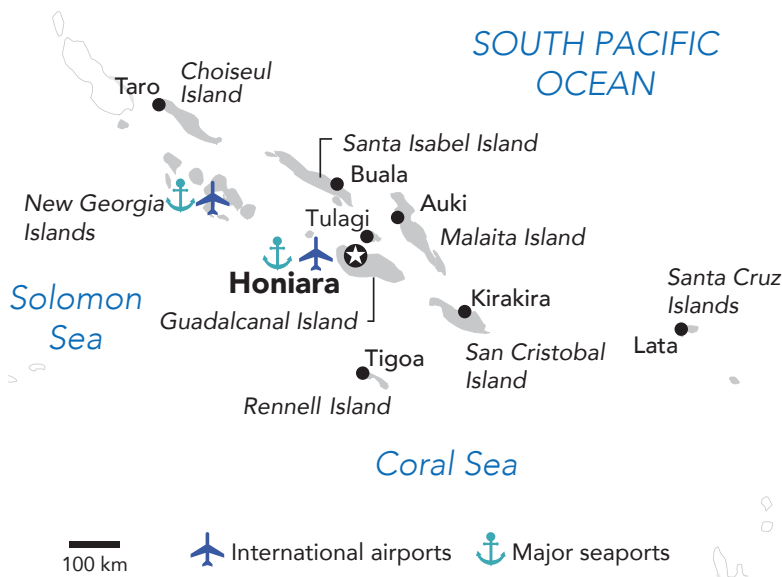
## KEY EVENTS IN THE RECENT EVOLUTION OF HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION IN SOLOMON ISLANDS



# DISASTER RISK PROFILE

## KEY FACTS

- Official name:** Solomon Islands
- Land Area:** 27,990 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population:** 828,857 (SPC, 2025)
- Capital:** Honiara
- Official Languages:** Solomon Islands Pidjin, English
- Disaster Focal point:** National Disaster Management Office
- Police:** Royal Solomon Islands Police Force



Source: Adapted from reliefweb.int Solomon Islands location map

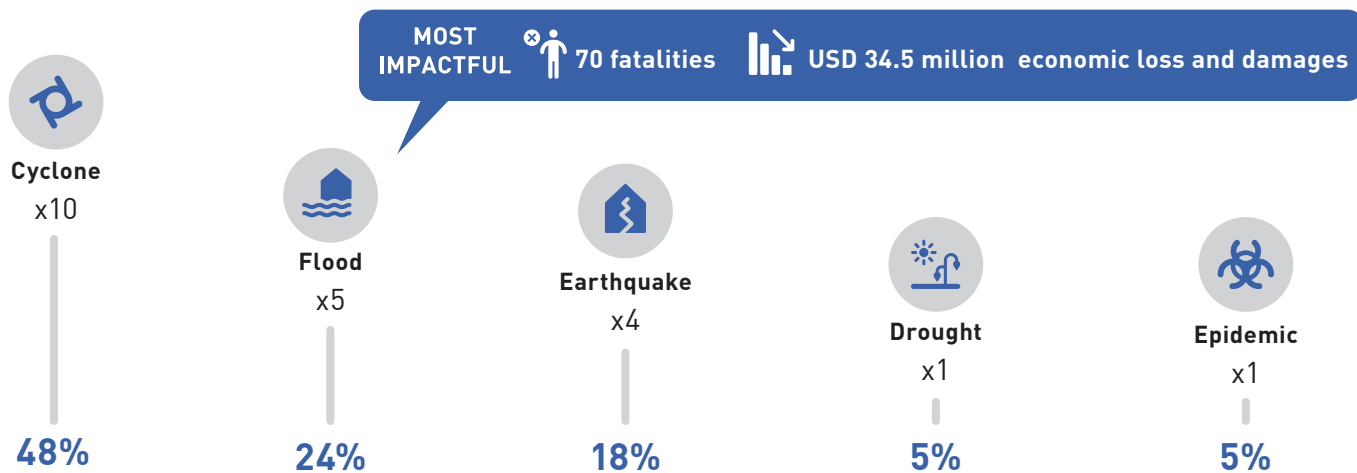
## GENERAL INFORMATION

Solomon Islands is an archipelagic state situated in the southwest Pacific Ocean west of Papua New Guinea and northeast of Vanuatu. Solomon Islands faces significant and multifaceted natural hazards, including tropical cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, droughts, and volcanic activity. The SIG currently maintains separate policies and governance arrangements for climate change and DRR, but its Disaster Risk Mitigation (DRM) plans are being increasingly linked to climate considerations.

### FREQUENCY AND PROPORTION OF DISASTERS BY TYPE FROM 2000 TO 2025

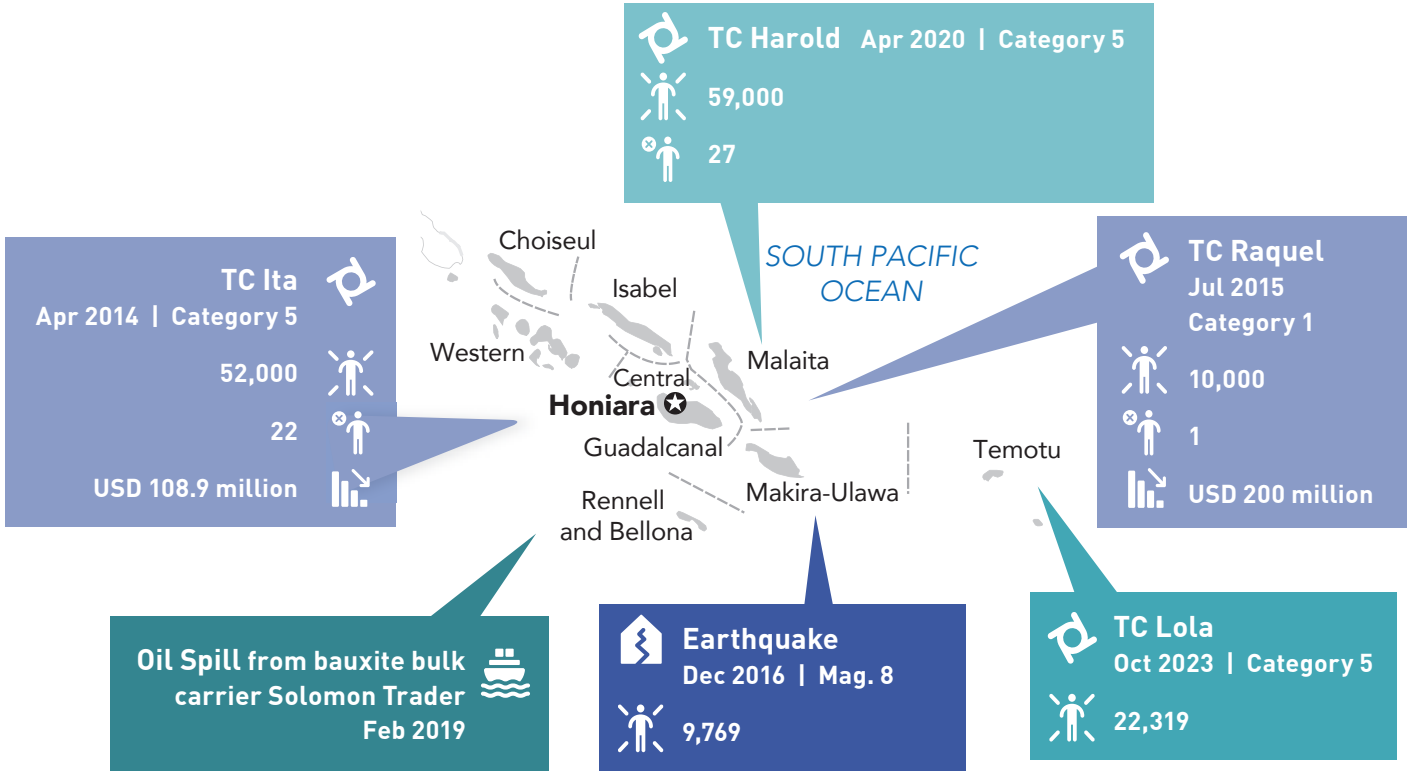
Solomon Islands has been affected by 21 natural disasters over the last 25 years. Its location in the "Pacific Ring of Fire" and the cyclone belt ranks it as 34th most at-risk country for natural disasters, the highest risk ranking in this analysis.

The graph below orders Solomon Islands' natural disasters by type according to their frequency, with the most to least frequent moving left to right and the percentage frequency illustrated. The most impactful disaster type is identified but not ranked. Since 2000, cyclones (48%) have been the most frequent disaster to affect Solomon Islands, followed by floods (24%). Floods were the most impactful, causing a significant number of fatalities and economic loss.






Source: <https://public.emdat.be/data>

## MAJOR DISASTERS (2014-2025)



Divisions on the map represent the 9 provinces of the Solomon Islands.

 Affected population
  Fatalities
  Economic loss

### INFORM INDEX FOR RISK MANAGEMENT

INFORM Risk is an open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters. INFORM Risk gives each country a risk score of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest) for each of the dimensions, categories, and components of risk, as well as an overall risk score. The higher the score, the more at risk a country is to disasters.

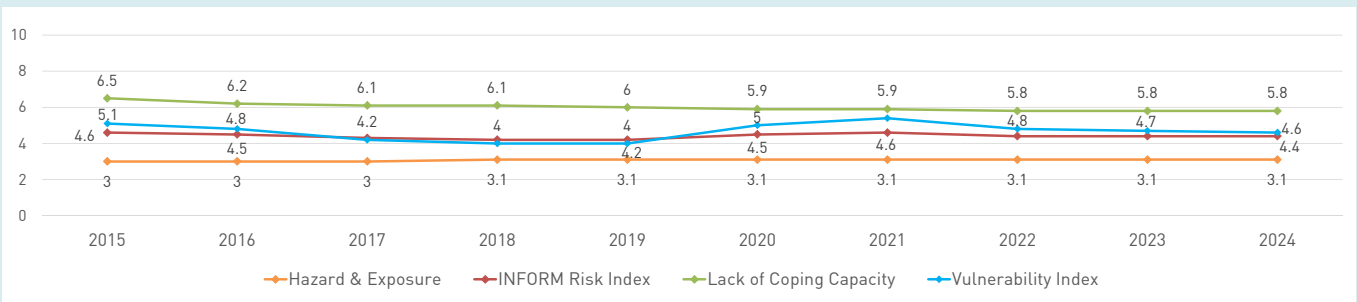
#### INFORM RISK VALUE AND RANKING 2025

The Solomon Islands has a low to medium hazards and exposure value, a medium vulnerability value and a high lack of coping capacity. It has a medium risk.

INFORM Risk and dimensions of risk	VALUE (10 as the highest)	WORLD RANK (out of 191 countries)
<b>INFORM Risk</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Hazard &amp; Exposure</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Vulnerability</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Lack of coping capacity</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>51</b>

#### INFORM RISK TEN-YEAR TREND (2015-2024)

Solomon Islands' hazards and exposure indicator has remained stable, however, coping capacity and risk indicators show more variation, with a relative decrease in coping capacity. The vulnerability index shows more variation and an overall decrease and therefore Solomon Islands remains at medium risk.



Source: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

# KEY POLICIES, PLANS AND FRAMEWORKS FOR CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION



## **National Disaster Council Act 1989**

The [National Disaster Council Act](#) outlines the national framework for disaster management by establishing the National Disaster Council as responsible for coordinating national efforts in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. The act established the MECDM which forms a National Disaster Management Committee, Provincial Disaster Committees (PDCs), which develop both national and provincial disaster plans. It provides a legal basis for the National Disaster Council to perform its mandates during emergencies, including exercising authority, issuing directives and mobilising resources through the National Disaster Council Fund, and legal protections and mechanisms for accountability such as financial audits and reporting to Parliament.

## **National Development Strategy 2016–2035**

The [National Development Strategy](#) maps out a strategic direction for the development of policies, priorities, and programmes for Solomon Islands. It sets out a framework for their use as an integrated reference for both government and non-government stakeholders.

## **National Disaster Risk Financing Strategy 2024–2027**

The [National Disaster Risk Financing Strategy](#) helps identify strategic financial enhancements to enable the country to respond to and recover from disaster events more effectively. This strategy complements initiatives already underway, such as those contained in the [Solomon Islands Roadmap for Improving Access to Climate Finance and Public Spending 2022–2027](#).

## **National Disaster Management Plan 2018**

The [National Disaster Management Plan](#) sets the DRM arrangements and establishes processes for implementation and capacity strengthening. Rooted in the National Disaster Council Act 1989, the Plan outlines roles and responsibilities across national, provincial and community levels, emphasising coordination through bodies like the National Disaster Operations Committee (N-DOC) and the Recovery Coordination Committee (RCC).



# KEY CIVILIAN RESPONSIBILITIES IN DISASTERS

## NATIONAL DISASTER FOCAL POINT

The National Disaster Council (NDC), established under the Disaster Council Act 1989, provides strategic leadership for disaster risk management in Solomon Islands. It advises all ministries and coordinates national preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. The National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) supports the Council by serving as its secretariat and leading planning, coordination, and public awareness across all levels of government. Operational and recovery functions are carried out by the N-DOC and the RCC, while the proposed Climate and Risk Resilience Committee will integrate disaster and climate risk management.



**Composition:** Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Relations, Ministry of Transport, Works and Public Utilities, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Ministry of Posts and Communications, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Ministry of Provincial Government, Commissioner of Police, Secretary to Cabinet.

## NATIONAL DISASTER COUNCIL

The National Disaster Council reports to the Cabinet and leads the development of disaster management policies and strategic planning. It oversees disaster response and coordinates international, regional, and bilateral support during emergencies. There are three committees under the National Disaster Council: The National Disaster Operations Committee (N-DOC), the Recovery Coordination Committee (RCC), and the Climate and Risk Resilience (CRR) Committee.



**Established by:** Disaster Council Act 1989



**Leadership:** Permanent Secretary of MECDM



**Key functions:**

- Overseeing the establishment and maintenance of structures for preparedness and response operations at the national, provincial and local levels
- Advising Cabinet on strategic institutional, policy and funding issues necessary for effective disaster management
- Providing management oversight of the activities of the National Disaster Council committees, approving annual committee programs and recommending committee initiatives for funding where appropriate
- Managing relationships with international, regional and bi-lateral partners to coordinate and optimise external support for DRM activities
- Receiving annual reports from the National Disaster Council committees – in the event of a disaster provide strategic oversight of the response to and recovery from the event.

## NATIONAL DISASTER OPERATIONS COMMITTEE (N-DOC)

The N-DOC is responsible for coordinating disaster management operations for both preparedness and response. It supports planning and coordination at the national, provincial and local levels. It consists of committees on health, education, protection, livelihood, infrastructure and camp management.



**Established by:** National Disaster Management Plan 2018



**Leadership:** Director of NDMO



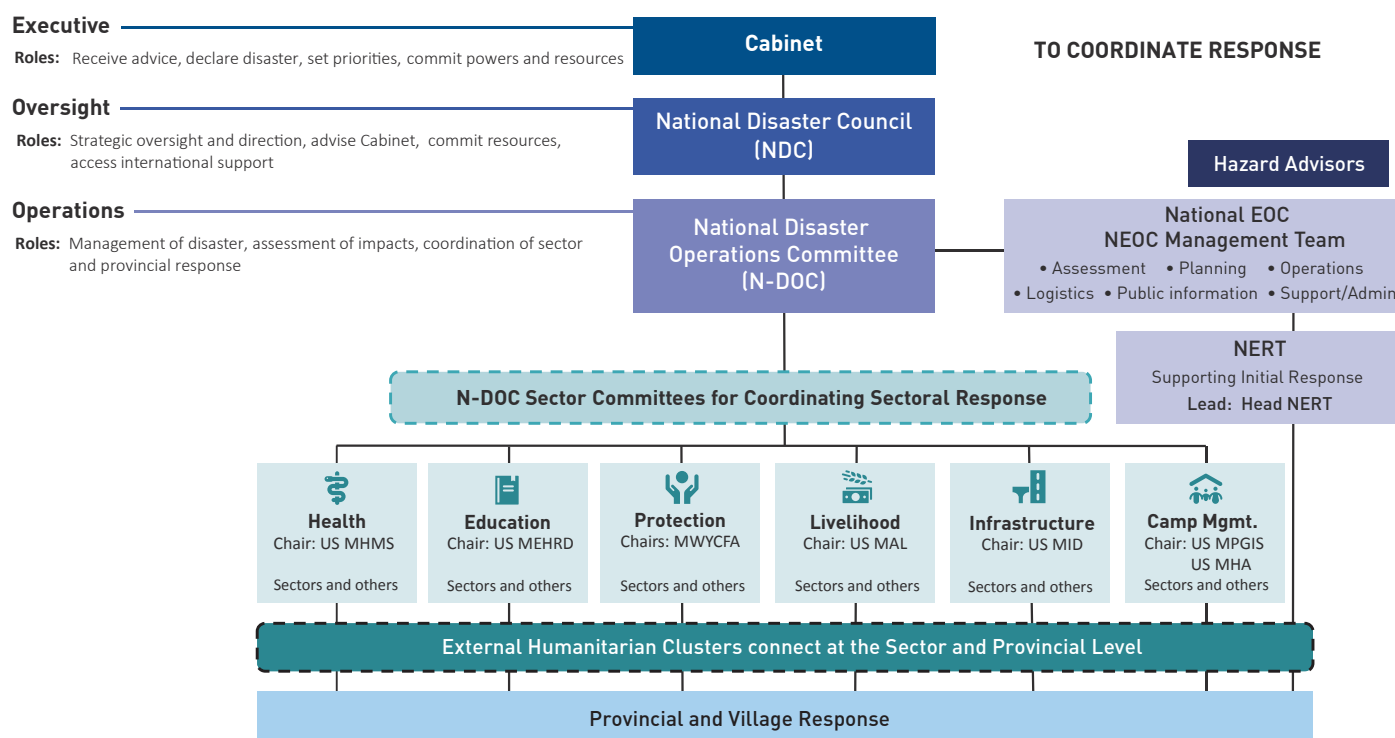
**Key functions:**

- Providing public awareness and training, issuing early warnings
- Managing impact assessments for the sectoral committees
- Delivering sectoral responses (health, education, protection etc.) to disasters.



**Composition:** Deputy Commissioner of Police Operations and Under Secretaries from the Ministries of Finance and Treasury; Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs; Health and Medical Services; Education and Human Resources Development; Agriculture and Livestock; Infrastructure Development; Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening; and Home Affairs. It also includes representatives of the RCC, the UN and the Solomon Islands Red Cross Society.

## N-DOC STRUCTURE: DISASTER MANAGEMENT OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENT



Source: Adapted from <https://www.rcrc-resilience-southeastasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/National-Disaster-Management-Plan-2018.pdf>, p. 42

## RECOVERY COORDINATION COMMITTEE (RCC)

The RCC was established following the April 2014 floods and is led by MDPAC. The RCC is responsible for the national recovery action plan and supporting a coordinated national response to recovery efforts. Its responsibilities include establishing arrangements, policies and procedures at the national, sectoral and provincial levels to guide and coordinate recovery and rehabilitation following disaster events. This involves a transition of coordination responsibilities from the NDMO to MDPAC between the response and recovery phases, intended to integrate recovery more closely with national development planning.

**Established by:** National Disaster Management Plan 2018

**Leadership:** Permanent Secretary or Under-Secretary of MDPAC

**Key functions:**

- Managing and coordinating the recovery and rehabilitation planning process following disasters and for overseeing sector implementation
- Developing recovery funding arrangements for recommendation to Cabinet through the National Disaster Council. This includes reallocating sector budgets, international partner and stakeholder

support and commitment through national development planning as appropriate.

**Composition:** Representatives of various government ministries and agencies, with its leadership and specific composition based on the nature of the disaster.

## CLIMATE AND RISK RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Proposed to be established under the resilient development framework, with responsibility for the promotion of risk resilience and the integrated management of disaster and climate risk.

**Established by:** National Disaster Management Plan 2018

**Leadership:** Permanent Secretary or Under-Secretary of MDPAC

**Key functions:**


- Coordinating the activities of agencies for disaster and climate risk purposes
- Coordinating policy development and the management of programs for resilient development and disaster and climate risk.

## NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT OFFICE (NDMO)

The NDMO, operating under MECDM, hosts the NEOC and serves as the Secretariat to the National Disaster Council. It plays a central role in coordinating national DRR and emergency response. The NDMO is responsible for leading and overseeing DRM planning at the national level, ensuring that strategies are effectively coordinated and monitored. It also supervises the implementation of DRR initiatives by NGOs and other partners, fostering collaboration across sectors. In addition, the NDMO supports communities to reduce their vulnerability and manage the impacts of disasters.

 **Established by:** Disaster Council Act 1989

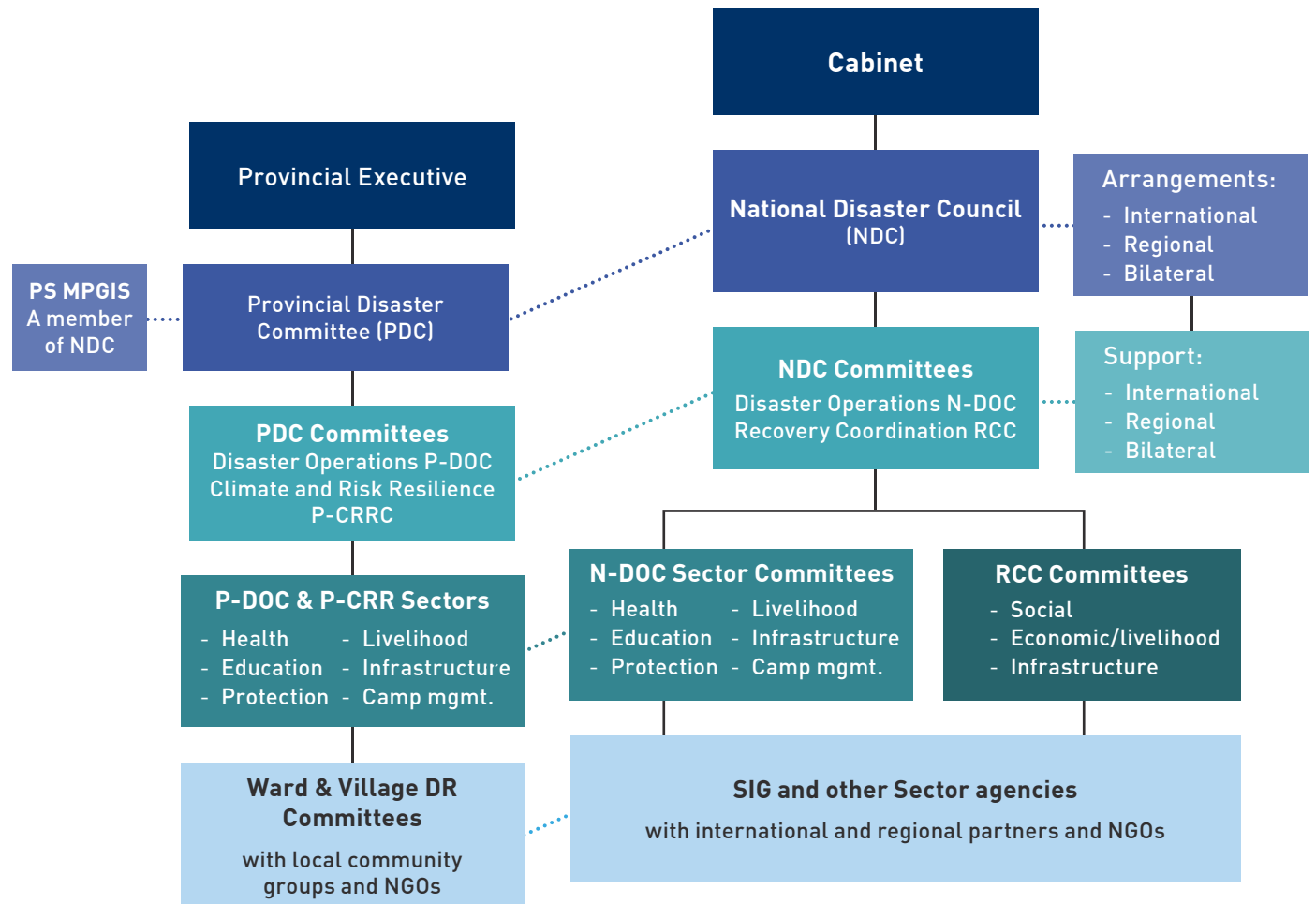
 **Leadership:** Director of NDMO

 **Key functions:**

- Advising the Minister and the National Disaster Council on all matters relating to DRM

- Developing policy and providing leadership and advocacy across the DRM sector
- Providing planning for DRM at the national level
- Coordinating, supporting and monitoring planning and operations for DRM at the sector, provincial, and community levels
- Coordinating the national response to and recovery from disasters
- Developing and supporting public awareness of DRM and their role within it
- Engaging with partners, NGOs, and civil society to ensure their involvement in DRM is integrated with the arrangements of the National Disaster Management Plan
- Establishing and maintaining a database for DRM information, including hazard and vulnerability maps, planning documents and disaster information
- Monitoring disaster risk mitigation efforts and reporting to the National Disaster Council.

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



Source: Adapted from <https://reliefweb.int/report/solomon-islands/solomon-islands-disaster-management-reference-handbook-october-2023>

## SUBNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

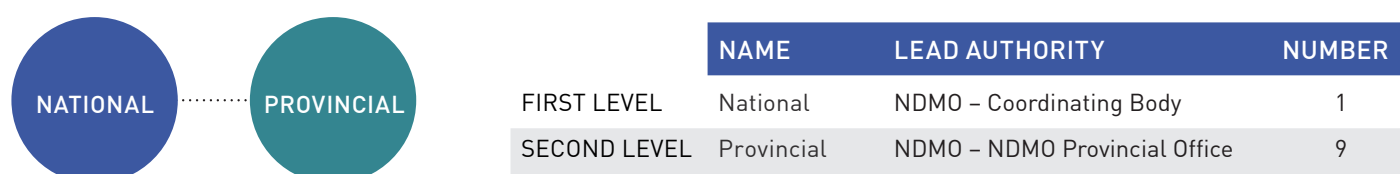
Subnational disaster management in Solomon Islands operates at two levels: provincial and community. At the provincial level, PDCs lead disaster planning and coordination, guided by the National Disaster Council and supported by technical working groups. At the community level, Ward and Village Disaster Committees coordinate direct support to affected communities.

The disaster committee structure is reflected at the provincial level through the establishment of PDCs. These committees operate under the guidance of the National Disaster Council and are responsible for implementing and managing the Provincial Disaster Plan. Additionally, each committee at the provincial level is supported by a Provincial Technical Working Group. The Provincial Government serves as the lead authority in disaster coordination at the local level, with its members drawn from various provincial offices. Each PDC is chaired by the Provincial Secretary.

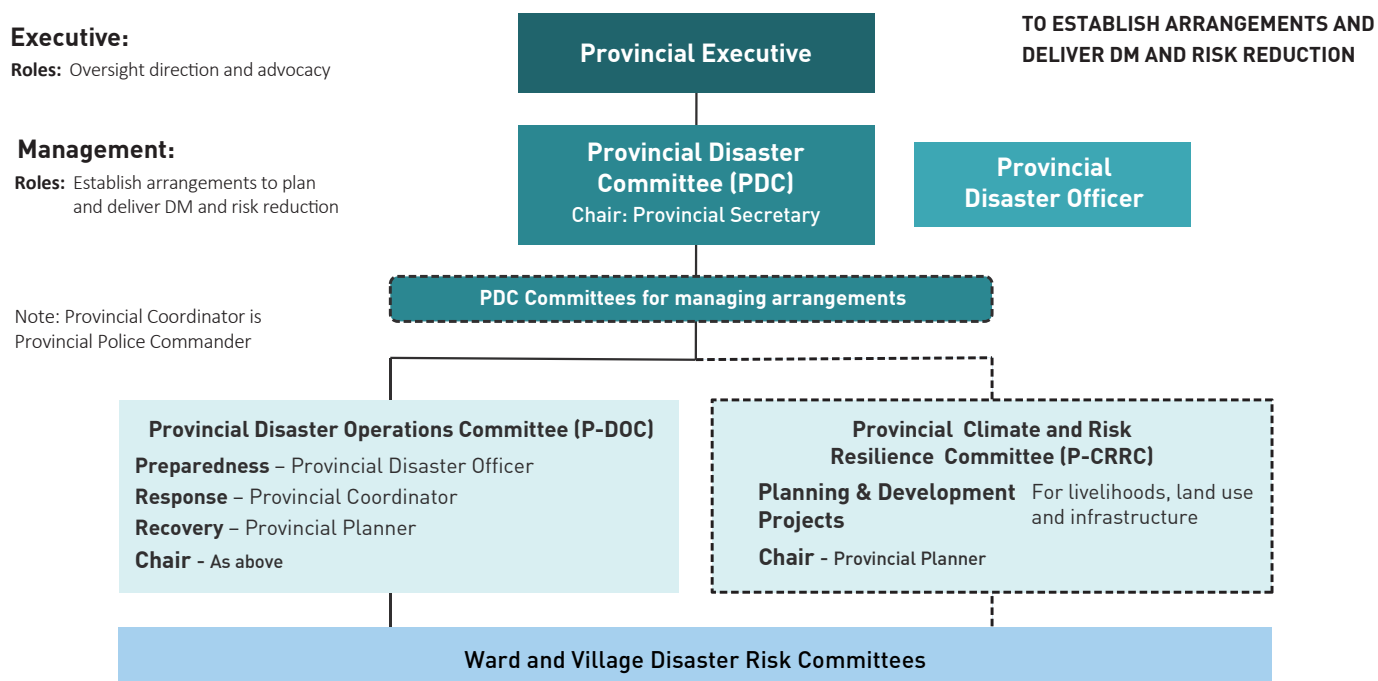
At the community level the National Disaster Council has established Ward and Village Disaster Risk Committees, which work closely with sector committees to provide resources and other support to households and individuals during and after disasters.

## ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

Solomon Islands is a unitary state with two levels of government, the national government and provincial governments.



## SUBNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



Source: Adapted from <https://www.rcrc-resilience-southeastasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/National-Disaster-Management-Plan-2018.pdf>, p. 40

## KEY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

### MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND METEOROLOGY (MECDM)

The MECDM comprises four technical divisions: Environment and Conservation, Climate Change, Disaster Management, and Meteorology. It leads disaster management across prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, with the NDMO and Climate Change Division serving as key implementing bodies for disaster risk reduction and climate-related policies.

### MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

The Ministry of Home Affairs is one of the major ministries under the Government for National Unity and Transformation. It coordinates functions that shape the welfare of Solomon Islands citizens. In coordination with the NDMO, it participates in disaster management through its role as a member of the National Disaster Council and the N-DOC.

### MINISTRY OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

The key mandates of the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening (MPGIS) are to strengthen provincial governance by overseeing government departments, delivering community services, and managing resettlement schemes to support effective decentralisation and improve service delivery. It helps build provincial capacity for DRM, working closely with other ministries such as MECDM to ensure a coordinated approach. MPGIS collaborates with provincial governments and stakeholders to align disaster management with national priorities, while facilitating access to financial resources, including the Provincial Capacity Development Fund, to support climate resilience and risk reduction initiatives.

### MINISTRY OF POLICE, NATIONAL SECURITY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

The Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services coordinates national security, policing and correction services to ensure a safe and secure Solomon Islands. It is mandated to support the corporate functions and the operations of the RSIPF and the Correctional Services of Solomon Islands (CSSI). In disaster management, its role focuses on maintaining law and order, security, and providing assistance during emergencies. This includes coordinating national security efforts, supporting the RSIPF and CSSI, and assisting in disaster response and recovery.

### MINISTRY OF TRADITIONAL GOVERNANCE, PEACE AND ECCLESIASTICAL AFFAIRS

The Ministry of Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs was tasked to implement frameworks such as the National Reparation Policy and the National Reintegration Policy. Its mission is to enable an inclusive and resilient state for the future. The Ministry implements peacebuilding initiatives, such as facilitating reconciliation ceremonies and community dialogues, while fulfilling its broader mandate to contribute to social stability. It also works with communities recovering from disasters to restore social stability.



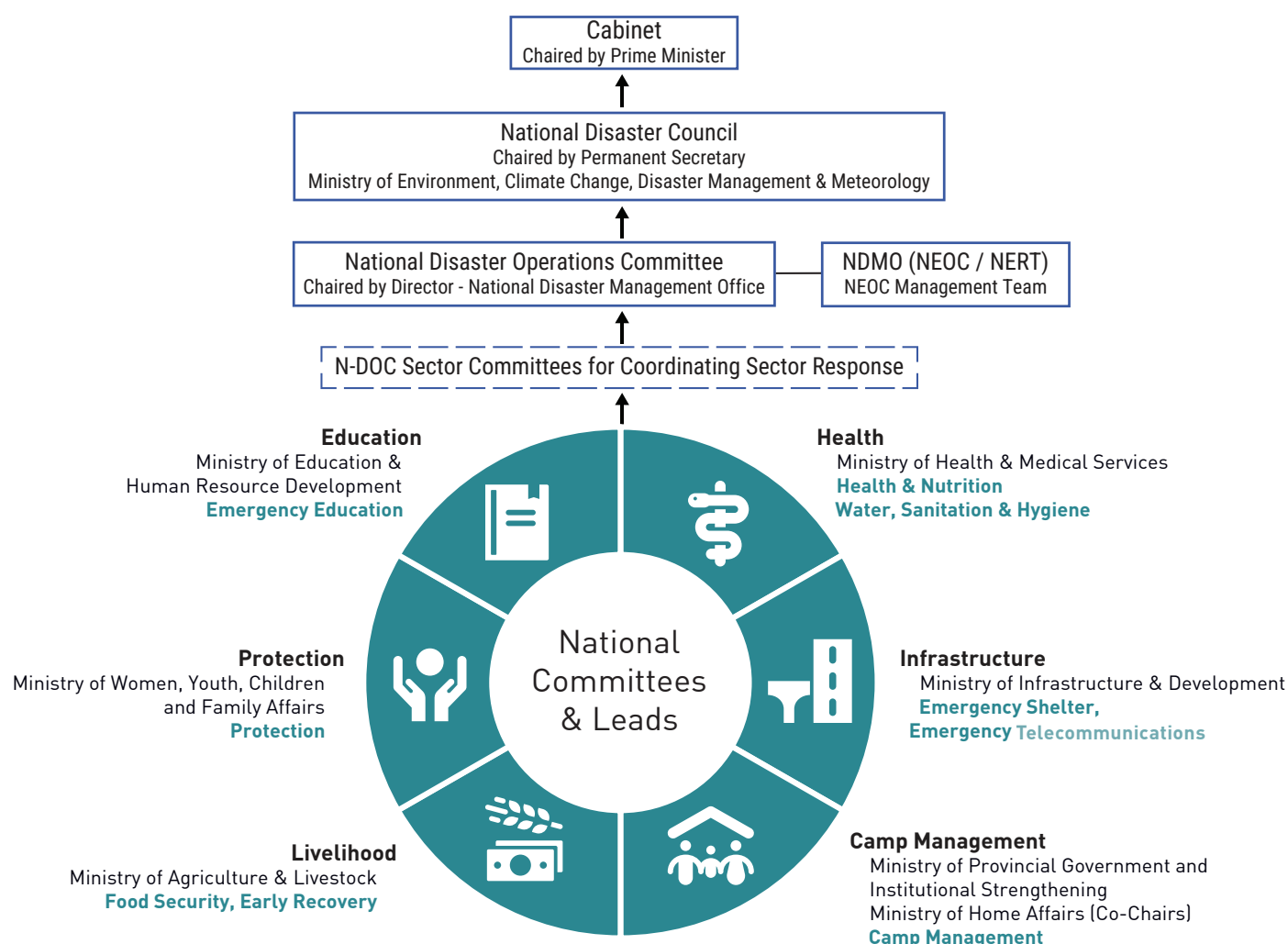
## COORDINATION MECHANISMS

### NATIONAL CLUSTER SYSTEM

The National Disaster Operations Committee and its sectoral committees can be described as the cluster system of Solomon Islands. The SIG uses the term committee instead of cluster. As presented in the disaster management structure, the SIG devolves the coordination function to two committees: the N-DOC, which handles emergency coordination, and the Climate Risk and Resilience Committee which handles long term resilience and risk reduction.

Within this framework, sectoral committees on Health, Education, Protection, Livelihood, Infrastructure, and Camp Management coordinate disaster response efforts. These committees are led by the relevant ministries and are coordinated under the overall leadership of the NDMO. International humanitarian actors and CSOs are expected to align their support with their respective sectors of activity and operate within the sectoral framework. The following figure depicts the link between the sectoral committees with the national coordination mechanism.

### NATIONAL COORDINATION STRUCTURE



Source: Adapted from <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/solomon-islands/solomon-islands-humanitarian-coordination-structure-23-october-2025>

## MOBILISATION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Coordination of international humanitarian assistance is facilitated through the structure illustrated below and managed by the NDMO. Furthermore, the Ministry of Finance and Treasury oversees financial accountability and tracks funds.



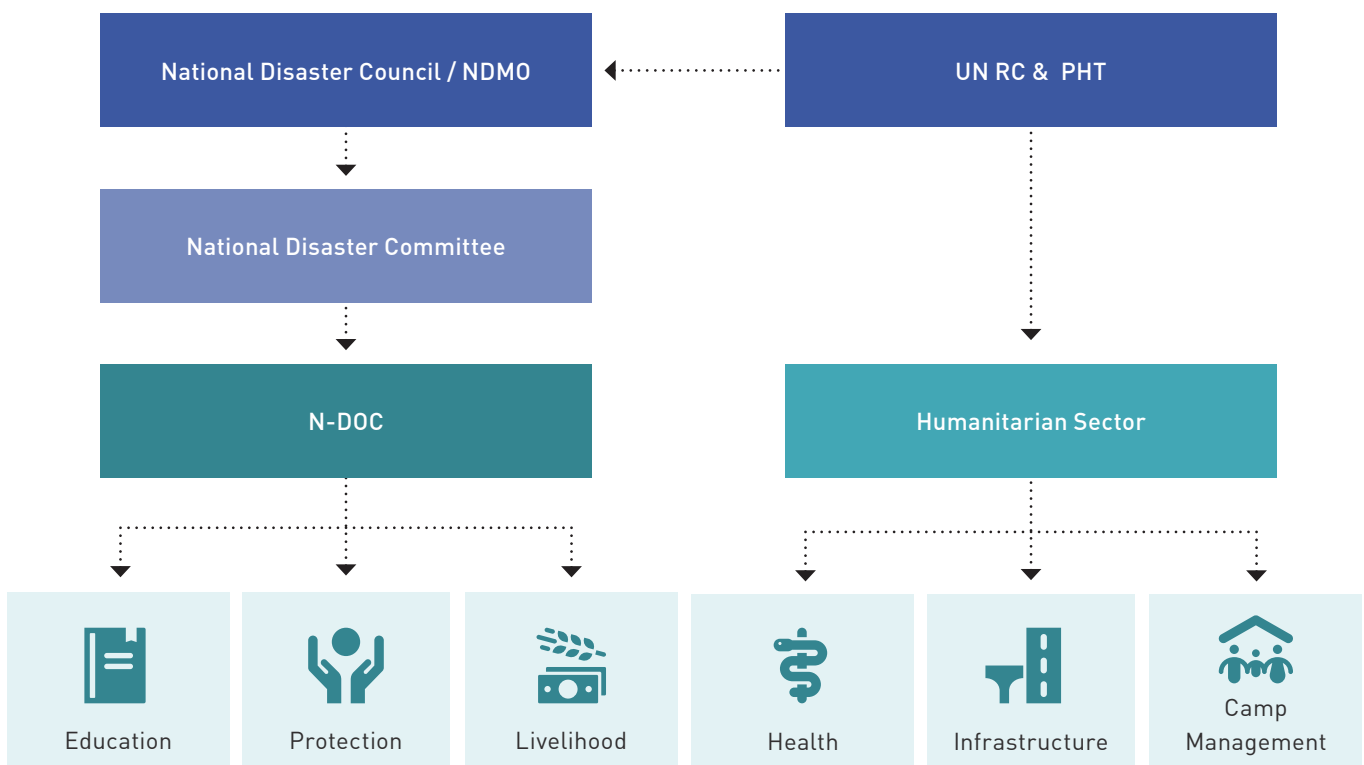
## COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

During disasters, international coordination is managed by the N-DOC, and during recovery by the RCC, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acting as the primary point of contact for international partners. The National Disaster Management Plan 2018 also outlines coordination through the donor mechanism led by the UN JPO, and operational support via the PHT and Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster arrangements.

## INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION SYSTEM

In Solomon Islands, UN agencies coordinate through the Resident Coordinator based in the Multi-Country Office in Fiji. The RC also oversees other Pacific countries including Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. As part of this regional framework, a dedicated country coordination specialist supports and coordinates UN efforts specifically for the Solomon Islands. The Resident Coordinator also leads the Pacific Humanitarian Team in these countries with secretariat support provided by UN-OCHA. The PHT is a function of the Global Cluster system and includes UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations.

The following figure illustrates the connections between the international coordination system and the national coordination framework through the UN RC (HC) and the PHT.




## KEY POLICE RESPONSIBILITIES IN DISASTERS


### ROYAL SOLOMON ISLANDS POLICE FORCE


The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) is part of Solomon Islands' national disaster management structure. It contributes to national coordination arrangements as a member of the NDC and N-DOC.

 **Established:** 1954


 **Leadership:** Commissioner

 **Headquarters:** Honiara

 **Key role:** The RSIPF coordinates with other agencies, including the NDMO to provide disaster relief and support to affected communities

 **Key functions:**

- maintaining a liaison presence in the NEOC through the Operations Function Team, contributing information to the assessment of the situation
- providing transport and logistic support to initial response and assessment through the NERT
- being the Solomon Islands civil/military focal point for foreign armed forces providing support to disaster situations. Support is provided through the NEOC with RSIPF.

 **Composition:** RSIPF operates as a single mobile unit with specialised functions including fire and emergency response. It also has a maritime division which carries out operations across the nation's Exclusive Economic Zone and national borders to support fisheries enforcement, immigration control, and national security.

 **Coordination mechanism:** N-DOC

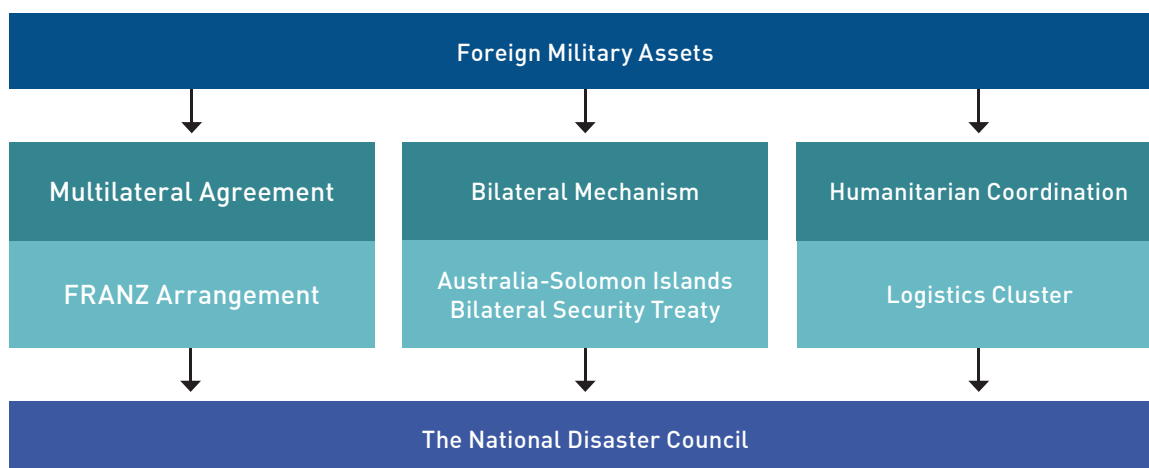
## HUMANITARIAN CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION MECHANISMS

### COORDINATION OF FOREIGN MILITARY ASSETS

Foreign military assistance to SIG is facilitated by agreements such as the Australia–Solomon Islands Bilateral Security Treaty, the FRANZ Arrangement, and other international security agreements under HADR. The assistance includes providing personnel and resources for search and rescue operations, conducting damage assessments and supporting initial clean-up efforts, and contributing to broader DRM initiatives.

Coordination takes place either directly with the NDMO or through the Ministry of Police.


#### COORDINATION OF FOREIGN MILITARY ASSETS



## CASE STUDY: TROPICAL CYCLONE ITA | FLASH FLOOD 2014

 3 April 2014

 50,000 affected

 23 fatalities

 USD 108 million

### OVERVIEW

In April 2014, Solomon Islands experienced some of the worst flooding in its history. After two weeks of heavy rain, a low-pressure system developed into TC Ita. The heavy rain caused severe flooding in Honiara and the surrounding Guadalcanal Plains, bursting the banks of the Mataniko River and washing away bridges and the homes of riverside communities. Large areas of Honiara were submerged, affecting over 50,000 people and resulting in 23 fatalities. Significant infrastructure damage left large areas of the city without water, sewerage, and electricity.

Access roads to Honiara were closed due to fallen debris and damaged or destroyed bridges. The government declared a state of emergency and set up 13 evacuation centres in Honiara city, temporarily sheltering about 10,000 people.

Overcrowding and contamination of water supplies became major health concerns in some evacuation centres. Additionally, because the Guadalcanal Plains include World War II battlefields, flooding posed a risk of displacing and exposing unexploded ordnance, significantly increasing hazards.



Destruction alongside the Mataniko riverbank in Honiara after flash floods. Photo: Janna Hamilton / New Zealand Red Cross

Source: <https://floodlist.com/australia/thousands-affected-by-floods-in-solomon-islands>

### CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION

The NDMO led the flood response, supported by the Solomon Islands Red Cross Society and the wider Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Australian Red Cross, Fiji Red Cross Society, French Red Cross, New Zealand Red Cross, and Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society), alongside the RSIPF, NGOs, UN agencies and donor partners. The NDMO activated National and Provincial Emergency Operations Centres in Honiara City and Guadalcanal respectively. Australia and New Zealand sent military aircraft to deliver supplies and personnel and provided financial assistance for flood relief.

#### Key learnings

- **Pre-established protocols and clear disaster management roles for government, humanitarian actors and local authorities are critical.** This is particularly important during the transition from the declaration of a state of emergency to initiating early response measures, such as establishing evacuation centres, which require robust coordination.
- **Coordinated planning should account for multiple overlapping risks,** such as health emergencies, infrastructure damage and unexploded ordnance. Cross-sector collaboration enables more comprehensive and effective management of complex disaster situations.
- **Blocked roads, damaged bridges and disrupted utilities hindered relief efforts.** Coordinated logistics planning – including transport, communications, and supply chain management – is essential to reach affected areas rapidly and deliver aid efficiently.

## CASE STUDY: TROPICAL CYCLONE HAROLD 2020



2-3 April 2020



Category 1



59,000 affected



27 fatalities



Solomon Islands coastal regions after being hit by TC Harold. Source: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/cyclone-harold-intensifies-to-category-two-storm-aims-for-vanuatu-and-solomon-islands/ZQEZT3ZEHXAQ6H3S3QFR2AX7NI/>

### OVERVIEW

TC Harold, a Category 1 storm, made landfall in the Solomon Islands on 2 April 2020, causing widespread flooding.<sup>1</sup> During the storm, 27 people died after being swept overboard from a ferry. The Australian Government and humanitarian agencies provided the NDMO with emergency funding to support damage assessment and initial clean-up. Communities in Western Province, Guadalcanal, Makira, and Rennell & Bellona were severely affected, with widespread damage to farms and homes. Buildings and roads across Honiara sustained significant damage. The NDMO led response coordination, focusing on immediate needs such as food security, shelter, health, and water and sanitation services.

### CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION

Following TC Harold, the Solomon Islands NEOC worked closely with the PDCs in the four affected provinces to coordinate and carry out initial damage assessments. The disaster further strained communities already grappling with the state of emergency restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The RSIPF played a critical role in enforcing COVID-19 restrictions, quarantine measures, and border protocols throughout the relief

operation. Its logistical assets, including patrol boats and vehicles, were used to transport assessment teams and deliver supplies to remote islands. The UN, international NGOs and other humanitarian partners, including those under the Australian Humanitarian Partnership, worked alongside the SIG to conduct assessments and distribute emergency relief. This included shelter materials, hygiene kits, and water, sanitation, and hygiene supplies. Operating under the NDMO, the RSIPF coordinated with Australian, New Zealand and other partners' armed forces to facilitate technical and operational assistance. The ADF provided vital support during the response, primarily through logistics including the transportation of relief supplies.

### Key Learnings

- **Disaster preparedness should include contingency planning for multi-hazards response**, such as to a concurrent cyclone and pandemic.
- **Investment in logistics and communications infrastructure is essential prior to disasters**, especially to ensure timely access to and support for remote and hard-to-reach areas.

<sup>1</sup> The storm gained strength and hit Vanuatu as category 5; it continued to move southeast to Fiji, where it displaced 10,000 people before reaching its full capacity in Tonga

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADF	Australian Defence Force
AHP	Australian Humanitarian Partnership
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FRANZ	France–Australia–New Zealand Arrangement
JPO	Joint Presence Office
MECDM	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology
MDPAC	Ministry of Planning and Aid Coordination
MPGIS	Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
N-DOC	National Disaster Operations Committee
NEOC	National Emergency Operations Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PDC	Provincial Disaster Committee
PHT	Pacific Humanitarian Team
RCC	Recovery Coordination Committee
RSIPF	Royal Solomon Islands Police Force
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SIMS	Solomon Islands Meteorological Services
TC	Tropical Cyclone
UN	United Nations
UN-OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO	World Health Organization
WFP	World Food Organization

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