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Building Resilience Capacity through Project Management Training

A USAID Climate Ready and University of the South Pacific Partnership

By USAID Climate Ready

In the Pacific, climate change is a reality that is seen, felt, and lived on a daily basis. Pacific Island Countries are among the planet's most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, each facing threats to lives and livelihoods.

Since 2017, USAID Climate Ready has been supporting Pacific Island Countries to strengthen their capacity to adapt and respond to the adverse impacts of climate change. In partnership with the University of the South Pacific's (USP) Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE), USAID Climate Ready has delivered accredited project management training courses across 11 Pacific Island Countries as part of strengthening local resilience through better management of adaptation projects.

Thus far, over 520 people have been trained in project management, including 270 women. One of them is Karen Chute from Fiji who back in 2019 had just welcomed her newborn baby into her family.

While she enjoyed the time at home with her newborn, Karen's aspiration to further her education and her humanitarian aid career was always in the back of her mind. Karen came across an advertisement for the USAID Climate Ready-sponsored Certificate IV course on Project Management Practice and it caught her interest. She applied and was successful in participating in the 2020 cohort. As a result of the qualification she gained, Karen was able to secure new employment at a humanitarian Non-Government Organization and work her way up to being a Humanitarian and Development Aid Project Manager. She credits this achievement to the Project Management training that provided her with the required knowledge and skills for the position.

"I was able to gain confidence in my ability to become a leader and a Project Manager," recalls Karen.

"We have trained and upskilled a large number of people to mitigate the factors that are affecting Pacific Islanders. I think the USAID Climate Ready Project has benefitted the Pacific a lot and certainly USP Pacific TAFE would like to continue this partnership."

*Nilesh Kumar,
Head of College, Continuing Vocational Education & Training
USP Pacific TAFE*



Karen Chute, USAID Climate Ready-sponsored Certificate IV Project Management course participant.

Susan Sela, Director of USP Pacific TAFE, agrees that the partnership between USAID Climate Ready and USP Pacific TAFE has made a positive difference in the lives of participants, particularly women.



Susan Sela, Director of USP Pacific TAFE

“After graduating with a Certificate IV in Project Management, many of these women then got themselves enrolled into the Diploma in Project Management program feeling empowered I suppose. They felt that they wanted to know more, they wanted to learn more and some of them even experienced promotions in their workplaces and we felt really good knowing that the programs that we had delivered had actually contributed positively to the lives of the women,” says Susan.

Another past course participant is Rahul Nand who works as an Engineer in Planning and Design at Water Authority Fiji. He said the USAID Climate Ready-sponsored course is vital in helping to build climate resilience in Pacific Island Countries.



Rahul Nand (middle), past course participant, with colleagues at the Water Authority Fiji head office in Nasinu, Fiji.

“In terms of having more resilient infrastructure, [the course] has helped a lot [with] execution and monitoring, so I believe the course that was funded through USAID was a very good course, and it has assisted a lot of staff on a lot of topics that are very vital,” remarks Rahul.

Nicollette Goulding, past course participant in the 2020 cohort, has a background in climate diplomacy and works as the lead consultant for an organization that provides services related to environmental management, climate change, agribusiness and sustainable tourism, and gender equality.

“I applied for the USAID sponsorship in 2020 because at the time [we] had just taken on a major project. Although I had experience in project management, I hadn’t actually been part of managing a project from initiation right to completion. The [course] was timely for me because I was looking for support to be able to ground my understanding so that I could properly implement the project. What I realized through the course is that it really gave me confidence,” said Nicollette.



Nicollette Goulding, past participant in the Certificate IV Project Management course.

Facilitating the Certificate IV Project Management course across the Pacific region is Ranju Kumar who believes the partnership has enabled USP Pacific TAFE to expand its horizon.

“The strategic partnership between USAID Climate Ready and USP Pacific TAFE challenged us to think outside the box as traditionally we were just focused on face-to-face delivery. During covid, face to face was not possible and we had to expand our capacity to [deliver] virtual cohorts.”



Ranju Kumar, USP Pacific TAFE Project Management Course Facilitator.

In course evaluations, it was seen that Pacific-based Course Facilitators like Ranju, who are from the region, understand the regional context and are patient and flexible, were essential to keeping participants engaged and enrolled.

Nilesh Kumar, Head of the Continuing Vocational Education and Training (CVET) College under the Pacific TAFE, said that through this partnership with USAID Climate Ready, USP Pacific TAFE has been able to deliver Project Management cohorts outside USP member countries for the first time, particularly in Papua New Guinea and the Federated States of Micronesia. As well, this support assisted USP Pacific TAFE to refine existing courses and design new courses which are now accessible to the broader Pacific population. Additionally, a number of course participants went on to privately pay to study the Diploma level Project Management course, a further testimony to the sustainability of the partnership.



Nilesh Kumar, Head of the CVET College at USP Pacific TAFE.

“We have trained and upskilled a large number of people to mitigate the factors that are affecting Pacific Islanders. I think the USAID Climate Ready Project has benefitted the Pacific a lot and certainly USP Pacific TAFE would like to continue this partnership,” said Nilesh.

As climate finance starts flowing into the Pacific, there will now be more men and women trained to manage adaptation projects because of partnerships like this one.

USAID Climate Ready, implemented by DT Global, supports Pacific Island countries as they adapt to climate change. The Project works with 11 countries – Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu – to achieve their climate change adaptation goals by assisting them to develop policies and legislation, access climate finance, and build capacity to manage adaptation projects.