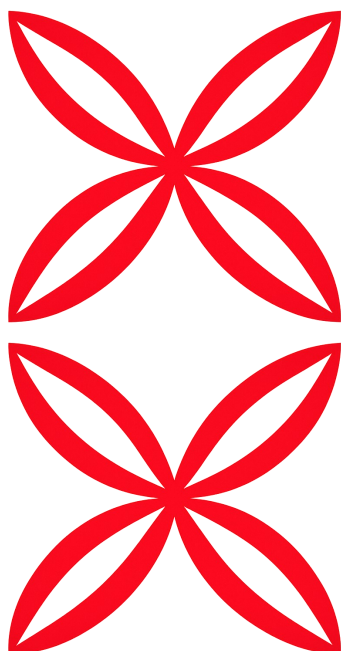




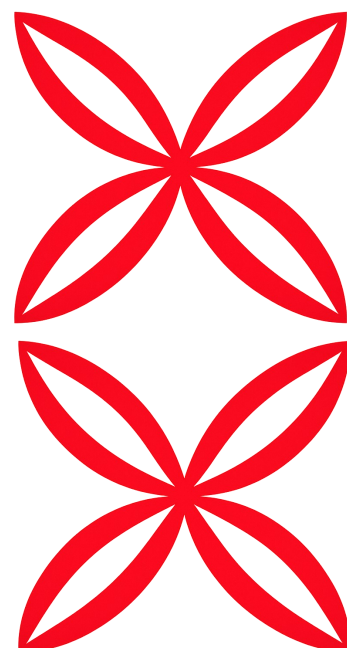
GOVERNMENT OF SAMOA

SAMOA

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

POLICY

2024-2034



FOREWORD

The Samoa Disaster Risk Management Policy 2024–2034 establishes the national policy framework for strengthening disaster risk management and building resilience across all sectors and communities in Samoa. As Samoa continues to face increasing risks from natural hazards and the impacts of climate change, strengthening disaster risk management remains a national priority. The establishment of this Policy framework reflects the Government’s commitment to providing clearer national policy direction and supporting coordinated planning, decision-making, and resource allocation for disaster risk management across all sectors and levels.



This is the first national policy framework developed specifically to guide disaster risk management in Samoa. While Samoa has previously implemented disaster management plans and coordination mechanisms under the Disaster and Emergency Management Act 2007, this Policy provides an overarching framework to strengthen policy coherence and support the integration of disaster risk management into national development planning.

The Policy also supports ongoing efforts to strengthen Samoa’s disaster risk management system including the review of the Disaster and Emergency Management Act 2007 and broader institutional strengthening initiatives to improve national preparedness, coordination, resilience, and response capacity.

Approved by Cabinet, this Policy reflects Samoa’s commitment to safeguarding lives, livelihoods, infrastructure and the environment. Aligned with national priorities and international commitments, it will guide the implementation of the National Disaster Management Plan 2025-2035 and other disaster risk management initiatives.

I commend the collective efforts and contributions of all stakeholders involved in the development of this Policy. Continued partnership and commitment will be essential to strengthening Samoa’s resilience and ensuring a safe and more sustainable future for all.

God Bless Samoa.

Hon. Ale Vena Ale

Minister

Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment



**National Emergency
Management Agency**
Te Rākau Whakamarumaru
Aotearoa New Zealand



Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific Phase II



1. INTRODUCTION

The Samoa Disaster Risk Management (SDRM) Policy provides a 10-year national policy framework for managing disaster risks in Samoa encompassing both climatic and non-climatic related disasters. The ultimate goal of the policy is to reduce multi-dimensional vulnerabilities, enhance resilience, protect and save lives and properties, using a whole of society approach.

The national policy sets out disaster risk management priorities for Samoa while the Disaster Management Plan 2024 which updates the National Disaster Management Plan 2017 – 2021, will set out the roadmap to achieve these priorities.

Disaster Risk Management (DRM) is defined by UNDRR as “the application of disaster risk reduction policies and strategies to prevent new disaster risk, reduce existing disaster risk and manage residual risk, contributing to the strengthening of resilience and reduction of disaster losses”. It provides a holistic approach to reducing the impacts of and increasing Samoa’s resilience to natural and human-induced hazards. This will be facilitated through prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery planning, as shown in Figure 1 below.

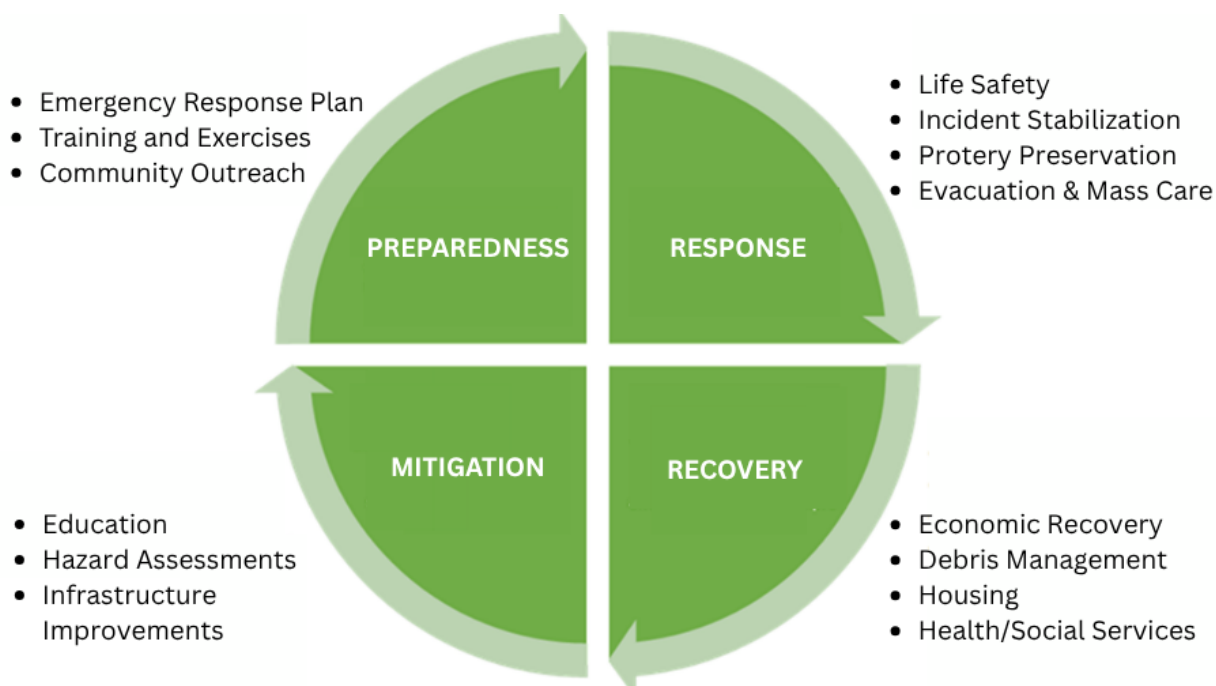


Figure 1 DRM Cycle

Disaster risks for Samoa as defined in the National Disaster Management Plan 2017 – 2020 are classified by the following hazard types in Table 1 below:

Hazard Type	Definition	Specific Hazards
Hydro-meteorological and Climatological Hazards ‘Extreme Risk’	Hazards are related to weather and atmospheric processes, as well as long-term conditions and climate change, including rising temperatures and changing weather patterns.	• Cyclone • Severe Weather • Flooding • Landslides • Drought • Coastal inundation • Storm surges • King Tides

Hazard Type	Definition	Specific Hazards
Geological/Geophysical Hazard 'Extreme Risk'	Hazards originating from geological processes or the earth's internal forces.	• Seismic events • Earthquake • Tsunami • Volcanic activities
Biological Hazard 'Extreme Risk'	Hazards caused by living organisms or their byproducts, often affecting human health.	• Pandemic and Epidemic • Emerging disease outbreaks
Human-Induced / Technological and Chemical Hazards 'Extreme Risk'	Hazards resulting from human activities or technological failures.	• Environmental pollution by waste/contaminated water • Oil slicks • Toxin releases • Large-scale industrial fires • Major road incidents • Cruise liner mishaps • Carbon emissions • Electrical accidents
Political Hazard	Hazards arising from political instability, conflicts, or acts of violence.	• Civil disturbance • Extremism

Table 1 Hazard Types for Samoa

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Samoa's economic growth depends on natural resources, international trade, aid, and remittances. However, disasters disrupt infrastructure, economic activities, and livelihoods. With a population of just over 200,000 and a small Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Samoa's economy heavily relies on agriculture, fisheries, and tourism. Economic development is challenged by geographic remoteness, limited formal employment, and vulnerability to natural hazards, with tropical cyclones alone causing substantial damage, equivalent to 29% of GDP in the case of Tropical Cyclone Evan in 2012. As clearly demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the measles epidemic, and global financial crises, Samoa is also highly susceptible to non-climatic hazards.

2.1 Disaster Risk Exposure

Samoa's vulnerability to natural disasters, particularly tropical cyclones and earthquakes, has been underscored by historical events. According to a UNDRR Report (2022), the period from 1965 to 2015 saw Samoa endure 56 events resulting in losses totaling USD 543 million. One significant event occurred in 2009 when an 8.0 magnitude earthquake struck near Samoa, triggering devastating tsunamis reaching 11 meters in height. The aftermath saw extensive damage across Samoa, American Samoa, and parts of Tonga, with estimated losses of USD 124 million, equivalent to 22% of Samoa's GDP, despite affecting only a portion of the country.

The economic repercussions were profound, evident in a 5.1% contraction of the GDP post tsunami. Infrastructure bore the brunt of the damage, with housing, water, electricity, transportation, and communication sectors accounting for over half of the total damages.

Approximately 70% of Samoa's population resides in coastal areas, where critical infrastructure is concentrated, exposing them to coastal hazards like erosion and flooding. Climate change exacerbates these risks, amplifying the impact of rising sea levels and intensified storms on coastal communities and ecosystems.

Tropical cyclones, in particular, have dealt severe blows to Samoa's economy. In 2012, Cyclone Evan inflicted damages and losses totaling USD 203.9 million, equivalent to 29% of the country's GDP. The economic repercussions persisted for years, resulting in job losses across various sectors, notably agriculture and tourism. Furthermore, non-climatic events such as the global financial recession, measles outbreak, and the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly affected Samoa's economy. This was evident in the consecutive GDP declines from 2019, reaching around USD 807.10 million in 2020, a drop of over 7-8% attributed to international travel restrictions, reduced trade, and diminished tourism earnings.

To tackle these challenges, Samoa's Disaster Management National Action Plan (2017-2021) has been pivotal. Aligned with national strategies and legislation, the plan fosters collaboration among government, sectors, and local communities to integrate disaster risk management and climate change adaptation into policies and practices across public, private, and community sectors. It not only enables proactive responses to impending threats but also facilitates recovery efforts post-disaster, defining clear roles and responsibilities while ensuring alignment with Samoa's broader developmental objectives.

2.2 Climatic Hazard Risks for Samoa

Samoa experiences two distinct seasons: the wet season from April to November and the dry season from May to October. Climate variability, particularly influenced by the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), significantly impacts Samoa's weather patterns.

The intensity and frequency of ENSO events have historically affected the nation's social and economic livelihoods (McGree et al., 2022).

Temperature fluctuations in Samoa are minimal throughout the year, with slight seasonal variations. However, future projections indicate a trend toward increasing temperatures, which could exacerbate sea-level rise and ocean acidification. Such changes pose risks to key sectors of Samoa's economy, including agriculture, fisheries, and tourism (IMF Fiscal Affairs Dept, 2022).

Table 2 below outlines future climate projections for Samoa, including possible impacts.

Table 2 Climate Projections for Samoa

	Current Climate	Future Climate Projections	Possible Impacts
El Niño & La Niña	Significant rainfall variability, particularly during the wet season, influenced by ENSO.	Continued occurrence of El Niño and La Niña events, with uncertain changes in intensity or frequency. Impact of ENSO more pronounced in the wet season.	Past events, such as flooding from tropical cyclones and strong La Niña events, have caused widespread damage, particularly in Apia.
Temperature	Minimal seasonal temperature differences.	Continued rise in annual mean and extreme daily temperatures, attributed to rising greenhouse gas concentrations.	Anticipated increase in hot days and the likelihood of drought, particularly in north-west regions.
Rainfall	Significant year-to-year variability, influenced by ENSO. Wet season (November–April) projected to increase; little change in dry season (May–October). Intensity and frequency of extreme rainfall events expected to rise	Uncertainty in rainfall projections; wet season rainfall likely to increase, driven by the intensification of the South Pacific Convergence Zone (SPCZ). Little change expected in dry season rainfall. Total annual rainfall projected to increase.	Inclement rainfall could lead to localized flash flooding and landslides, impacting property and livelihoods.
Sea Level	Sea level rise observed at approximately 4 mm per year.	Continued sea level rise, projected to reach 7-17 cm by 2030 under high emissions scenarios. Ocean acidification and coral bleaching expected to increase. Changes in wave period projected, with potential impacts on coastal areas.	Compounded effects on reef ecosystems due to acidification, coral bleaching, and storm damage. Increased risk of storm surges and coastal flooding
Tropical Cyclone	Samoa experiences an average of 10 tropical cyclones per decade, mainly between November and April.	Projected decline in tropical cyclone numbers in the South Pacific Ocean basin over the 21st century.	Historical damage from cyclones includes infrastructure damage and disruptions to water supplies.

	Current Climate	Future Climate Projections	Possible Impacts
Drought	Past droughts and floods associated with ENSO have impacted Samoa.	Little change projected in drought incidence over the 21st century, with stable frequency of moderate and severe droughts.	Droughts could affect agricultural productivity, water availability, and livelihoods, particularly in rural areas.

2.3 Socioeconomic Vulnerabilities

Samoa's reliance on sectors like agriculture, tourism, and fishing makes it vulnerable to natural disasters and global crises. Urban areas rely on wage income, while rural areas mostly depend on subsistence livelihoods.

Informal social protection mechanisms help mitigate risks, but economic changes and climate related shocks strain these systems, leading to worsening well-being and gender-based violence. Recent events like the measles outbreak and COVID-19 pandemic have further strained Samoa's economy, leading to job losses and disruptions in tourism.

These vulnerabilities interact with climate hazards, posing significant risks to Samoa's economy, infrastructure, and population. Disasters disrupt social structures, increase domestic violence, and disrupt essential services, further exacerbating vulnerabilities in communities.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles below are the foundation of the SDRM Policy, aimed at enhancing resilience and reducing community vulnerabilities.

3.1 Risk Reduction and Disaster Preparedness:

Risk reduction, disaster preparedness, response, and recovery are fundamental responsibilities shared by all sectors at every level of governance. These efforts are not standalone initiatives but integral parts of the broader development process. Strengthening sectoral capacities to mitigate risks and manage emergencies demands, sustained commitment and well-designed SDRM programs. Moreover, fostering a culture of safety and resilience necessitates leveraging knowledge, innovation, and educational outreach.

An inclusive approach that addresses all hazards is paramount. Whether facing natural disasters, epidemics, or technological accidents, planning processes, risk assessments, and response strategies remain consistent. Thus, it's imperative to enhance sectoral capacities comprehensively, drawing upon existing expertise and external guidance.

3.2 National Collaboration and Multi-Sectoral Approach:

Within national borders, all actors share accountability for disaster management. Ministries serve as lead agencies, collaborating with entities such as the Samoa Red Cross, NGOs, private sector entities, communities, and donors. Disaster risk management, spanning preparedness, response, and recovery, requires a holistic, multi-sectoral approach. From land use planning to infrastructure design, various sectors play pivotal roles in reducing the impact of emergencies.

Efforts to strengthen mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction across sectors, through priority actions should include systematic and visible integration of commitments to gender equity and women's empowerment, disability, human rights considerations building on the existing body of knowledge concerning recommendations, guidelines and best practices for sector specific gender mainstreaming.

Public health and safety rely on the preparedness of interconnected sectors, including law enforcement, transportation, lifeline services, public works, and social services. A cohesive strategy encompassing these domains is crucial for effective disaster mitigation and response efforts.

3.3 International Cooperation and Governance:

At the international level, Samoa seeks collaboration with agencies specializing in risk management and disaster preparedness. This includes entities like the UNDRR, UNDP, OCHA, ISDR, UNICEF, international financial institutions, donors, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and relevant NGOs. Such partnerships facilitate knowledge exchange, resource mobilization, and capacity building, enhancing Samoa's resilience to global risks.

To ensure effective governance, Samoa adopts a tailored approach consistent with whole-of government policies. This framework emphasizes capability-building, program implementation efficiency, and adaptability to emerging challenges. It includes strategies for norm and standard development, advocacy, capacity-building, knowledge transfer, and technical support. Flexibility is integral, enabling timely responses to evolving responsibilities and threats.

4. DETAILED STATEMENT OF THE POLICY

4.1 Policy Goal

The overarching goal is to strengthen coordination and management of disaster risk management (DRM) for climatic and non-climatic disasters, with the aim to save lives and protect properties by building resilience at the national and local levels.

4.2 Policy Objectives and Strategies

- 1) Strengthen legislations, policies, strategies and planning to promote coherence by mainstreaming climate-related disaster risks and non-climatic risks into disaster risk management plans;
- 2) Build resilience of people and institutions to climate-related and non-climatic disaster risk management;

- 3) Increase financial investment in disaster risk management at the sector level and agency level;
- 4) Promote effective and efficient means of communication in disaster risk management;
- 5) Strengthen existing forums for monitoring sector performance and harmonize reporting on disaster risk management.

Policy Objectives	Strategies
1) Strengthen policies, planning legislations, strategies to and promote coherence by mainstreaming climate-related disaster risks and non-climatic risks into disaster risk management plans;	• Review the Disaster and Emergency Management Act 2007 • Update the National Disaster Management Plan 2017 – 2021 • Ensure effective communication of DRM roles and responsibilities for all sectors, response agencies and all members of DAC in relation to prevention (mitigation), preparedness, response and recovery • Integrate climate change and disaster risk management (where possible) and mainstream into development planning including policy making, planning, financing, implementation, to build resilience. programming and • Mainstream DRM into Community Integrated Management (CIM) Plans and District Development Plans (DDPs) • Alignment and coherence of legislative, policy, and planning frameworks across all sectors • Alignment of integrated national climate and disaster risk priorities with relevant global frameworks in the best of the country.
2) Build resilience of people and institutions to climate related and non-climatic disaster risk management;	• Conduct functional analysis and review organizational structures and responsibilities for all DRM stakeholders • Review and Finalise Disaster Response Plans for all the Sectors. • Develop and implement a targeted Capacity Development Plan for all Response Agencies • Review and Finalise all the required Standard Operating Procedures for DAC to approve • Strengthen Coordination of climate related and non-climatic disasters • Increase bilateral and multilateral collaboration and investment financing • Improve disaster response and coordination for Savaii, Manono and Apolima Islands • Improve the capacity of the National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) to respond to all disasters, particularly for non climatic disasters. • Improve DRM early warning capacity • Strengthen Institutional and Operational Framework for DRM to

Policy Objectives	Strategies
3) Increase financial investment in disaster risk management at the sector level and agency level;	• Set up and operationalise a DRM Development Partner Roundtable • Develop DRM Investment Plan for development funding • Ensure DRM strategies mainstreamed in Sector Plans supported by Local Budget allocations. • Mainstream DRM in DDPs and CIM Plans for financing under the District Development Initiative • Review of Community Disaster and Climate Risk Management Program (CDCRM) to include relevant non-climatic disasters, for example, epidemics and pandemics. • Roll-out of Community Disaster and Climate Risk Management Program
4) Promote effective and efficient means of communication in disaster risk management;	• Develop an Inclusive communication strategy for disaster management. • Develop appropriate DRM communication tools • Improve DRM data and information management systems Develop and disseminate targeted DRM awareness and educational materials targeting schools, communities, private sector, civil society and government stakeholders • Develop quality DRM materials including mapping, incident reporting, signs for evacuation routes etc • Develop a partnership arrangement with all media outlets to enhance DRM messages and communications relating to prevention (mitigation), preparedness, response and recovery
5) Strengthen existing forums for monitoring sector performance and harmonize reporting on disaster risk management.	• Establish a Biennial Climate and DRM Symposium for all stakeholders including development partners • Undertake annual reviews of DRM initiatives as part of the sector annual review process • Undertake necessary DAC site visits • Develop Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting for DAC as part of the updated National Disaster Management Plan • Strengthen community engagement in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development • Strengthen collaboration amongst DAC members.

Table 3 SDRM Policy Objectives and relevant Strategies

5. LINKAGES TO NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS

The Samoa Disaster Risk Management Policy closely aligns with the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) 2017-2030, the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, BOE Declaration, the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015 – 2030, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and the Paris Agreement 2015-2030. At the national level, the Policy framework will reinforce Samoa's Pathway to Development (PDS), guided by the vision of "Fostering social harmony, safety, and freedom for all." This policy notably recognizes the importance of Key Strategic Outcome (KSO) 4: Secured Environment and Climate Change, aiming to achieve results across key performance areas (KPA), namely:

- KPA15: Building Climate Resilience;
- KPA16: Effective Environmental Protection and Management Frameworks;
- KPA17: Enhanced Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources; and,
- KPA18: Sustainable Energy Development Enhanced.

6. KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Key stakeholders who will continue to be involved in implementing the SDRM Policy are categorized under four key sectors, comprising government agencies, non-government organizations, the private sector, local communities, and civil societies as follows:

SECTORS	SUB-SECTORS & LEAD AGENCY	SECTOR MEMEBERS
Economic	• Agriculture & Fisheries – MAF • Trade & Commerce – MCIL • Finance – MOF • Tourism – STA	CBS, CoC, SBEC, MFAT, MCR, MOH, MCIL, SHC, SAME, SOEs, CSSP, AO, MPE, MWCSO, MWTI, MESC, Women Business Development Tourism Association, Aleipata Tourism Alliance, SROS, NOLA, MNRE Association, FAO, Inc, Samoa Farmers Conservation International, SPREP, SNPF, SBS, DBS, Commercial Banks, Insurance companies, Local Financial Institutions, ACC, PPS, BOC Samoa, Origin Energy, STA, SFESA, ADRA, SRCS, SHA, Tourist Operators, SBEC, Savaii Tourism Association, Aleipata Tourism Alliance, SROS, NOLA, MNRE
Social	• Community – MWCSO • Health – MOH • Education – MESC • Public Administration – PSC • Law & Justice – MJCA	MPPC, SUNGO, Local villages & communities, UNICEF, UN-Women, NOLA, Council of Churches, Doctors Association, Nurses Association, Private Health Services, Family Health, Women CBOs, MJCA, SLRC, Legislative Assembly, Private Law Firms, OAG, Law Society, SRCS, SFESA, ADRA, Caritas, MAF, MCIL, SQA, MWTI, MOH, NUS, ECE, Missions Schools, Private Schools, Post-Secondary Technical Institutions, SBS, NKF, Samoa Victim Support, SROS, MNRE

SECTORS	SUB-SECTORS & LEAD AGENCY	SECTOR MEMEBERS
Infrastructure	• Transport – MWTI • Energy – MOF • Communication – MCIT • Water & Sanitation – MNRE	LTA, SWA, SAA, SPA, SSC, SSS, EPC, OOTR, Digicel, Vodafone, TV & Radio Stations, Postal, ISP Provider, SRCS, ADRA, SFESA, PPS, MWTI, MOH, MWCSO, Samoa Plumbers Association, Independent Water Scheme, MOF, SROS, PPS, NOLA, IPES
Environment	• Environment – MNRE	SWA, LTA, MAF, SLC, STEC, Environment Societies, MOF, SRCS, ADRA, SFESA, MWCSO, MOH, SBS, MAF, MWTI, SUNGO, UNDP, CI, SPREP, METI, O le Siosiomaga Society, SROS, NOLA, SPC

Table 4 Sectors and relevant members

7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The updated National Disaster Management Plan will articulate the roadmap for the implementation of the SDRMP. The Disaster Advisory Committee (DAC) will continue to oversee the implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the SDRMP. The DAC reports to the National Disaster Council and / or Cabinet as illustrated in Figure 2 below. The MNRE through the Disaster Management Office (DMO) will work closely with all Response Agencies and Sector Coordinators across all phases of DRM including risk reduction (prevention/mitigation), preparedness, response and recovery.

7.1 Governance Arrangements

The National Disaster Council (NDC) chaired by the Prime Minister will be the decision-making body during disaster response and will preside over recommendations from the DAC. The NDC on the advice of DAC will provide advice to the Head of State whether a proclamation of emergency is warranted.

The DAC is responsible for developing policies and plans and is authorized to approve plans by response agencies, other agencies and community plans to facilitate and coordinate the performance of response functions, roles and responsibilities in line with Part IV of the DEM Act 2007. The DAC includes representatives from government agencies, civil society organisations, academia, the private sector and development partners.

The sector wide planning approach will continue to be utilized to facilitate sectoral and cross sectoral coordination, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and report of DRM across all 14 sectors of sustainable development as defined under the PDS 2022 – 2026.

The DMO is responsible for ensuring the ongoing coordination, development and implementation of disaster risk management programs and activities in close collaboration with response agencies. The DMO is responsible for administrative, secretarial and other arrangements for the efficient functioning of the NDC and DAC.

The Village Council and village organisations or the village disaster and climate committees will be responsible for coordinating disaster mitigation and preparedness programmes and activities at the community level, and for coordinating the various village response teams for specific threats.

The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development will continue to support, monitor and liaise with Village Councils and organisations through the “Sui o le Nu” and “Sui Tamaitai o le Nu” as they implement disaster management activities, to enhance the level of village preparedness. The establishment of the Fono-Faavae or District Offices under the government’s district development initiative will also greatly enhance coordination of DRM activities as part of the ongoing Community Disaster Climate Risk Management Program (CDCRM) Program.

Figure 2 below depicts the governance arrangement for DRM during peace times (prevention/mitigation and preparedness – highlighted blue) and when in response mode during a disaster (highlighted yellow).

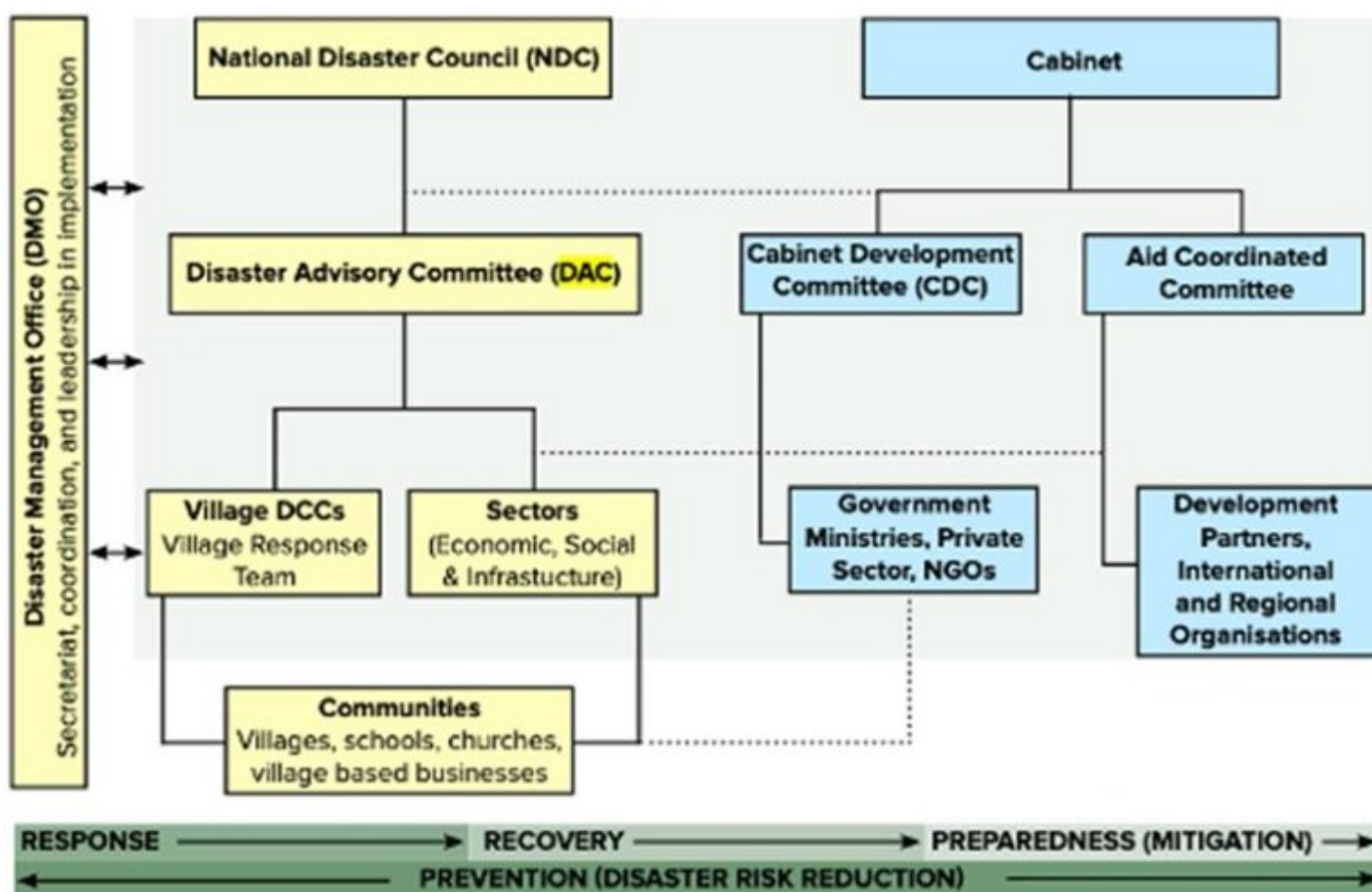


Figure 2 DRM governance arrangements for Samoa

Figure 3 illustrates the response arrangements during a disaster, highlighting the new roles by DMO when the National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC) is activated during a response operation.

The Prime Minister will preside as Chair of the National Disaster Council (NDC), the Chair of DAC becomes the National Controller for NEOC and the DMO assumes the role NEOC Manager and Response Coordinator.

DMO staff will assume new roles for logistics and support, planning and operations. These roles will revert to normal roles as soon as the NEOC is deactivated.

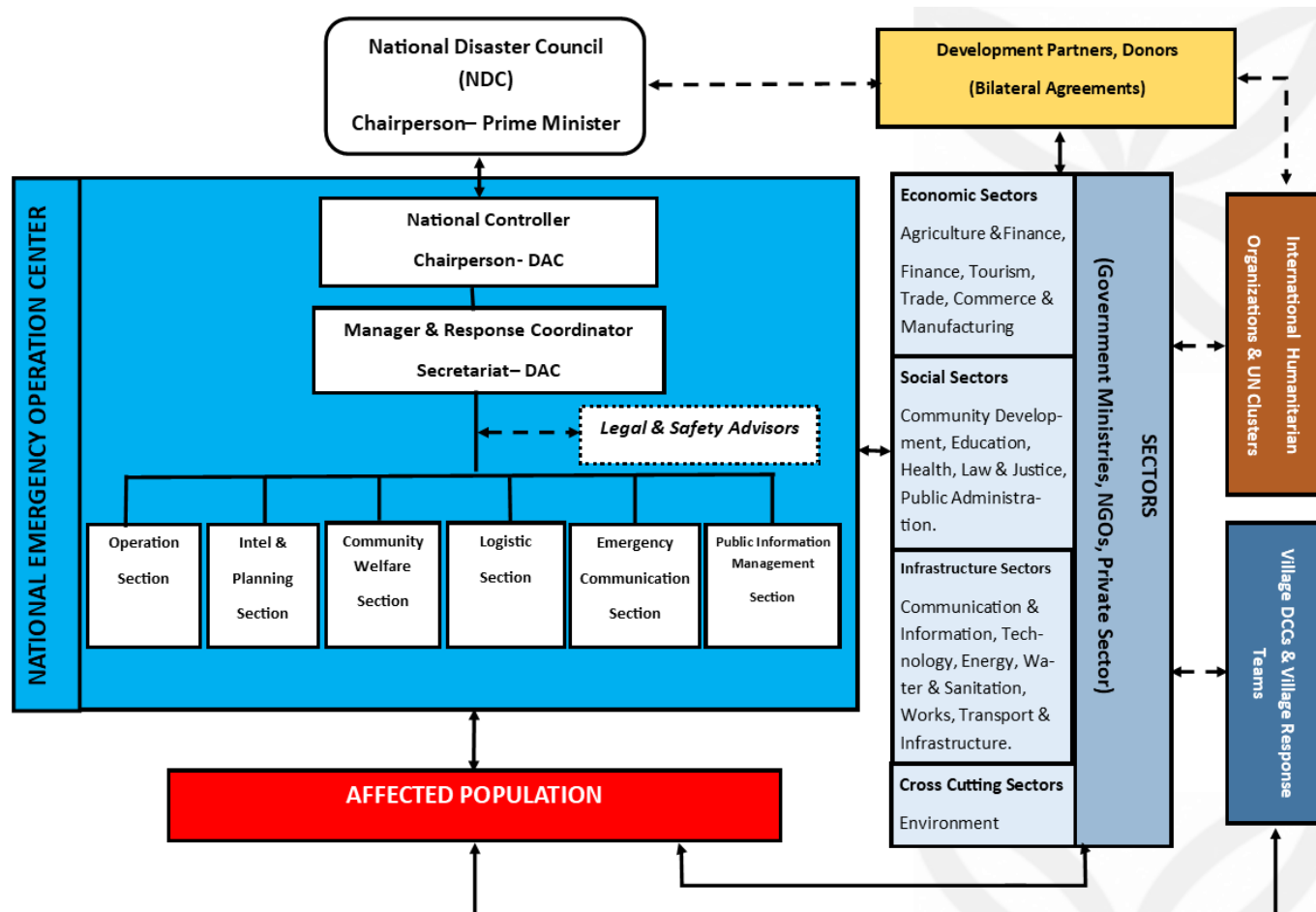


Figure 3 Disaster Response arrangements for Samoa

7.2 Financial Implications

Implementation of the Policy will require financial resources. Access and availability of financial resources remain critical for implementation of the SDRMP across all phases of DRM including prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Contingency emergency response funding is crucial given the increased frequency of severe weather events and the need to respond quickly when needed. Development funding remains an integral aspect of policy implementation including public private partnerships, civil society, villages and diaspora.

7.3 Human Resources Implications

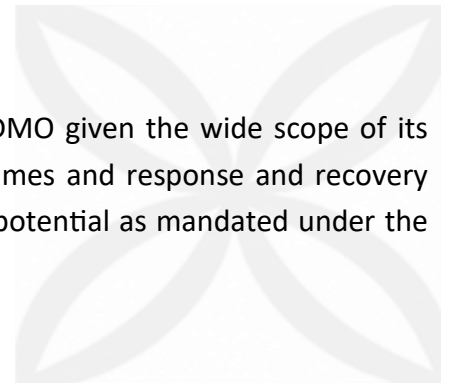
There is a great need to strengthen the existing limited capacity of DMO given the wide scope of its functions which involve prevention and preparedness during peace times and response and recovery during disasters. A review of DMO and staffing needs to meet its full potential as mandated under the Disaster and Emergency Act 2007 is urgently needed.

7.4 Legislative Implications

The Disaster and Emergency Management Act 2007 will be reviewed and amended accordingly.

7.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

There is a great need to strengthen the existing limited capacity of DMO given the wide scope of its functions which involve prevention and preparedness during peace times and response and recovery during disasters. A review of DMO and staffing needs to meet its full potential as mandated under the Disaster and Emergency Act 2007 is urgently needed.



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