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**CAPACITY BUILDING AND DISASTER RESPONSE:  
A CASE STUDY OF NGOS' RESPONSE TO CYCLONE EVAN IN  
SAMOA**

A research report presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the degree of Masters of International  
Development at Massey University, New Zealand

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## **ABSTRACT**

With natural disasters increasing both in number and economic impact, the challenge for governments is to effectively respond to the needs of affected communities. In difficult conditions, and often with resource constraints, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have contributed to meeting the needs of affected communities during disaster responses. NGOs usually have flexible structures, which enable them to respond to a rapidly changing environment. They also often have strong links to the communities in which they work, which creates good synergies when responding to disasters. The involvement of NGOs in a disaster response has been discussed widely in the international community. The challenge is to ensure that NGOs have the capacity to respond effectively when the need arises.

This report has a particular focus on Samoa and uses a capacity building lens to investigate a disaster response. It looks closely at the ability of NGOs to assist the Samoan government in a disaster response. The report used a document analysis and semi-structured interviews, with representatives from NGOs involved in the response to Cyclone Evan in 2012, to investigate capacity building in NGOs with a view to enabling them to respond effectively in disaster.

The key finding of the report is that the ability of NGOs to form relationships with other stakeholders and to maintain those relationships between disaster responses is important to building partnerships that contribute to the effectiveness of a response.

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## **SUMMARY OF TERMS (ACRONYMS)**

ADRA	Adventist Development & Relief Agency
CDCRM	Community Disaster and Climate Risk Management
DAC	Disaster Advisory Committee
DMO	Disaster Management Office
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECDF	East Coast Development Forum
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FESA	Fire and Emergency Services Authority
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
IDA	Initial Damage Assessment
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross
MNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MWCD	Ministry of Women, Social and Community Development
NDC	National Disaster Council
NDMO	National Disaster Management Office
NDMP	National Disaster Management Plan
NEOC	National Emergency Operations Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NZMFAT	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
PDNA	Post Disaster Needs Assessment
PHT	Pacific Humanitarian Team
SAT	Samoa Tala
SOPAC	South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SRCS	Samoa Red Cross Society
SUNGO	Samoa Umbrella of Non-Government Organisations
SWA	Samoa Water Authority
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## Cyclone Evan

On Thursday 13th December 2012, Tropical Cyclone Evan crossed Samoa on its way to Fiji. The system remained stationary for 24 hours over the southern tip of Upolu Island where it intensified into a category 3 tropical cyclone (UNOCHA, 2012b:1). Figure 1 shows the path of the cyclone as it passed over Samoa. The map also demonstrates how vulnerable Samoa is, surrounded by the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean. The cyclone resulted in extensive damage to properties and infrastructure, mostly on the central and eastern regions of Upolu. Much of the severe damage was as a result of the flash floods that occurred within the Apia urban area in the Vaimauga West region (Disaster Management Office, 2013:1).

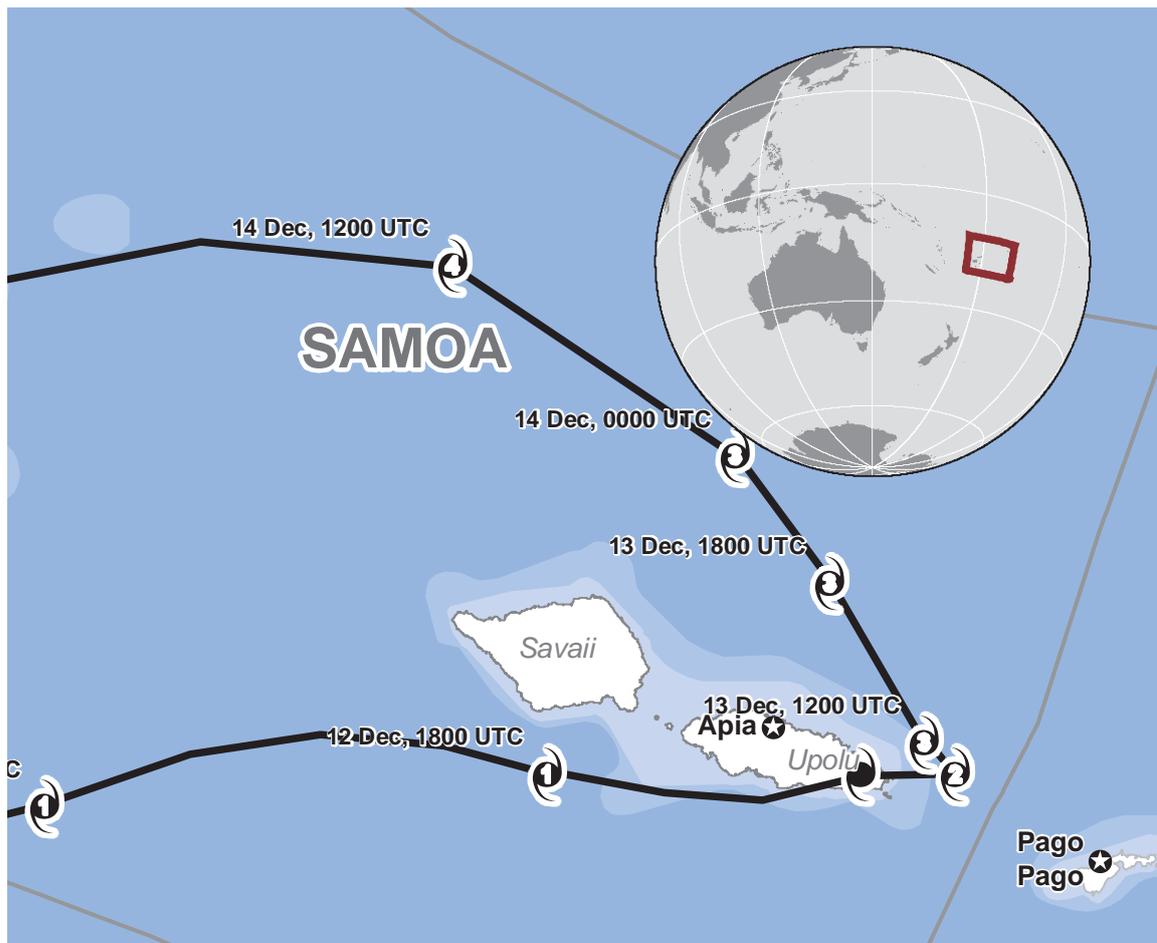


FIGURE 1: CYCLONE EVAN TRACK MAP .....

Source: (UNOCHA, 2012d:6)

The aftermath of the cyclone was a reminder of the devastation caused by Cyclones Ofa and Val in the early 1990's and to many the destruction left by the flash floods brought back memories of the 2009 tsunami (Disaster Management Office, 2013:1). A Declaration of Disaster was first issued on 13<sup>th</sup> December and was followed by a second Declaration of Disaster on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> December (UNOCHA, 2012c:2). These declarations were in force for 48 hours each, as prescribed in the National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP). During this time initial assessments were completed and government officials and other agencies began to understand the magnitude of the situation. On Monday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2012, a State of Emergency was declared (UNOCHA, 2012d:1). The State of Emergency meant that the government was asking for international assistance and a full-scale humanitarian relief operation began. The initial damage assessment found 1,634 houses damaged in some way and 12,492 people affected over the island of Upolu (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2012:1). The total cost of the damage amounted to SAT 465 million (US\$203.9 million). This represented about 29% of the total value of goods and services produced in the country in 2011 (The Government of Samoa, 2013:13).

The Pacific is one of the regions most prone to natural disasters (Asian Development Bank, 2013:1). Pacific Island countries experience frequent and intense disasters with disproportionately high economic, social and environmental consequences (Pacific Humanitarian Team Website, 2014). After each disaster, governments work to meet their people's basic survival needs. Usually the task of meeting the needs of affected communities overwhelms the government's resources and assistance from outside donors and NGOs is sought. Many countries in the Pacific face challenges that limit their ability to effectively manage disasters (Jha & Stanton-Geddes, 2013:31).

This research report is placed within the development discourses of NGO capacity building and disaster response. Using a lens of NGO capacity building it examines one disaster in the Pacific Island nation of Samoa. The report explores the importance and relevance of the contribution of NGOs to the Cyclone Evan response in December 2012 and investigates the capacity of Samoan NGOs to assist government in future disasters. The next section describes the wider context of this disaster and explains the response structures that are in place, both within Samoa and the wider region.

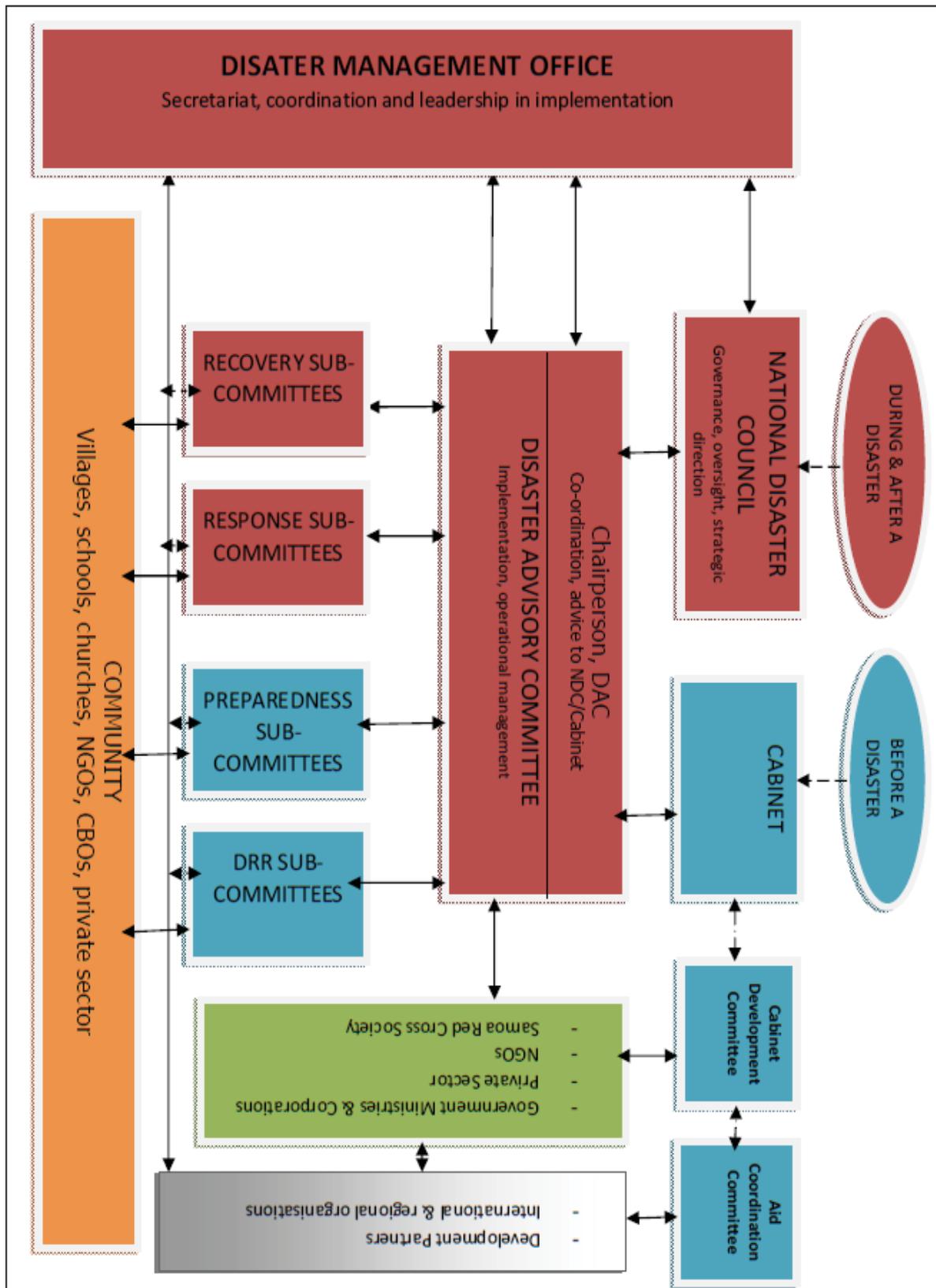
## **SAMOA, NATURAL DISASTERS AND DISASTER RESPONSE STRUCTURES**

Samoa is a small island nation in the South Pacific Ocean and has experienced a number of natural disasters (The Government of Samoa, 2012:20). Key disasters in Samoa over the past 25 years include cyclones in 1990, 1991 and 2004, an earthquake followed by a tsunami in September 2009, and Cyclone Evan in December 2012. In September 2009 there was an earthquake measuring 8.0 on the Richter scale followed by a tsunami that caused catastrophic damage in the affected areas and killed 143 people in Samoa (The Government of Samoa, 2009:2). A big international response effort was launched to assist the affected communities.

In terms of the number of people killed, the tsunami in 2009 was the most devastating to Samoa. In addition, when natural disasters occur they have a big impact on the small island economy. The tsunami in 2009 incurred damages equivalent to 22% of GDP (The Government of Samoa, 2009:xi). Cyclone Evan caused damages that were the equivalent to 29% of GDP (The Government of Samoa, 2013:13). The frequency of natural disasters and the impact to the small island economy, suggests that effective structures and processes to respond to these disasters are important in order to minimise the effects of a disaster on the development of both the communities, and the wider economy.

In Samoa the overall responsibility for disaster management rests with the Samoa National Disaster Council (NDC) (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2011:13). It is also responsible for reviewing the National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP). A Disaster Advisory Committee (DAC) meets to implement the response on behalf of the NDC and to advise cabinet during non-disaster times. The DAC consist of several government agencies such as the Fire and Emergency Services Agency, the Samoa Water Authority and several government ministries including the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) and the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. The process for a response to a disaster in Samoa is set out in part five of the Disaster Management Act 2007 ("Disaster And Emergency Management Act ", 2007:14).

FIGURE 2: NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT CORE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



Source: Original Document of the (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2011:11)

The organisational structure of national disaster management in Samoa is depicted in Figure 2. It demonstrates the linkages between the various committees and stakeholders. The red squares on the left show how the structure operates during and after a disaster. It demonstrates the governance being managed by the NDC and the implementation of the response as managed by the DAC. On the right, the blue squares list the committees that operate before a disaster. NGOs are represented during both phases on the relevant committees. The green demonstrates the NGO contribution to the Cabinet Development Committee and the DAC, while the orange depicts their contribution to the various sub-committees before, during and after a disaster.

While varying words or phrases are used throughout the sector, Disaster Risk Management (DRM) essentially means all activities undertaken in relation to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), preparedness for disasters, response to, and recovery from disaster (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2011:6). Country-specific disaster management capacities vary widely amongst Pacific countries (Haque, 2003:465). At the regional level, the mandate for the overall coordination and monitoring of DRM activities currently rests with the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, a division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). This includes the responsibilities for the implementation of relevant technical programs (Hay, 2013:8). In addition, the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT) responds to disasters within the Pacific region (Pacific Humanitarian Team Website, 2014). It responded to five emergencies during the 2013-2014 year (UNOCHA, 2014:9). The PHT operates a cluster approach designed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). This cluster approach divides the various agencies operating in eight different sectors (for example, health, water, and shelter) into so-called 'clusters' (UNOCHA, 2012a:1). These clusters consist of stakeholders who then work within their respective sectors and report to a centralised coordination body. The coordination body is usually an affected country's government or UNOCHA if the government requires assistance in this area.

The report from the annual PHT meeting in October 2014 called for greater utilisation of NGOs within the PHT structure (UNOCHA, 2014:6). The World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in January 2005 in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan, adopted the present

Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. This has become known as the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) (UNISDR, 2007:1). As part of this framework, each country reviewed their DRR procedures and policies. Samoa conducted an HFA monitoring and review through a multi-stakeholder engagement process in August 2012. The HFA review recommended that there be more direct NGO representation on DAC (UNISDR, 2013:14).

The Samoan Umbrella for Non-Government Organisations (SUNGO) is the most recognised body for coordination of NGOs in Samoa. There are 139 NGOs registered with SUNGO (SUNGO Website, 2014). SUNGO provides information, opportunities for training, and advocacy for civil society in Samoa (SUNGO Website, 2014). Its goal is to strengthen NGOs in achieving their goals by coordinating all national, civil-based NGOs, providing close networking and easy accessibility to information (Commonwealth Network Website, 2014). In terms of disaster response, SUNGO has a representative on the DAC and represents the voice of NGOs to the various cluster sub-committees (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2011:20).

Two NGOs, plus the Red Cross, are registered with DAC and they participate in DAC meetings on an, 'as invited' basis (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2011:20). In Samoa the government is the primary response agency. Under the National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP), the DAC meets as required by the chair, which is the head of the Disaster Management Office (DMO). DAC is the primary coordination body during a disaster and activates the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) to coordinate operations. This will come into effect when the threat or impact is imminent or has already occurred (with no warning). Once the NEOC is operational, DAC members will undertake their disaster responses as per their agency response plans and the existing DAC sub-committee plans (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2011:49).

There are few NGOs that respond to the needs of the wider population in a disaster in Samoa. The Samoa Red Cross Society (SRCS) and faith-based organisations including Latter Day Saints, Caritas and the Adventist Development & Relief Agency (ADRA) all contribute in disaster responses along with international NGOs with no

direct local office. The SRCS has a major role to play during a disaster response. SRCS is identified as a key support agency within the NDMP and is part of the first response and initial assessment sub-committee (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2011:35). This subcommittee convenes immediately a disaster is imminent (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2011:36). Expanding on this, the next section will introduce the role of NGOs in a disaster response.

### **The Role of NGOs**

Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) have an important role to play in a humanitarian response (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:51; Haque, 2003:481). This was true in Samoa after Cyclone Evan hit in December 2012. The literature reveals that there are typically several issues that arise at the time of a disaster. These issues include; the lack of local capacity to assist government agencies, one-sided partnerships between local and external NGOs, and a lack of coordination between all stakeholders (Coles, Zhuang, & Yates, 2012:68; Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:57). These issues present the challenge of how NGOs build the required capacity and maintain it. There is a disconnect between the government requiring assistance from NGOs with the capacity to respond effectively upon disaster, and the funding of NGOs to build and maintain that capacity during non-disaster times. This challenge is compounded by the nature of project funding. Projects, including those designed to build capacity for disaster response, have limited life spans that will usually end before the next disaster. While NGOs seek to build capacity as a strategy to increase their impact there are limited funds available between events to ensure this happens adequately (Rex, No Date:1).

The introduction to this report has explored the impact of Cyclone Evan, the disaster response structure in Samoa and the role of NGOs. The following sections explain the research objectives, the research aim and the research questions this report will address and describe the methodology used in this report.

## RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

As mentioned above, the role of NGOs in a disaster response is internationally recognised as important and necessary (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:51). However, little attention is paid specifically to how an NGO builds and maintains the capacity that is required to perform adequately the role that is expected of it. This study has come about due to my observations of the role of NGOs as they respond to disasters particularly in Samoa. The aim and research questions were built from my connection with a Samoan NGO that responded to Cyclone Evan, combined with my interest in NGO capacity building.

Therefore, the research aim is to **investigate the effect of Cyclone Evan on the organisational and financial capacity of the NGOs that responded in Samoa**. The study will answer the following research questions:

1. How do NGOs in Samoa build their organisational and financial capacity in order to respond to disasters?
2. What are the successes and challenges of effective and sustainable capacity building in NGOs operating in Samoa for disaster response?
3. What was the effect of donor-funded Cyclone Evan projects on the organisational and financial capacity of NGOs operating in Samoa to respond to future disasters?

## LIMITATIONS

The study has been limited to Samoa, and the number of key informants is limited to those with direct experience in responding to Cyclone Evan in Samoa. It does not address the disaster's social impact on a community, nor address all the aspects of the process of disaster recovery, nor analyse responses to other disasters. It does however seek to gain an understanding of the capacity NGOs require for a successful implementation of a disaster response project and seeks to understand how to build that capacity. While this research investigates the response to Cyclone Evan, it could also provide insights that are useful for wider application, as NGOs seek strategies to build their capacity in order to respond effectively to a disaster.

## **METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

This section explores the concept of qualitative research along with the methodology and research design of this thesis. The goal of this study is to gain an understanding of the effect that donor-funded disaster response projects had on the organisational and financial capacity of selected NGOs responding to Cyclone Evan. Qualitative methodologies provide the ability to gain this understanding of organisations and situations (O'Leary, 2010). It is in this way that qualitative studies are explorative (Diefenbach, 2008:877). To explore the concepts of capacity building within NGOs responding to disaster, and in order to answer the specific research questions, the strategy was to carry out a desk-based study supplemented by semi-structured interviews. Seven representatives from organisations responding to Cyclone Evan in Samoa were interviewed during the research period. In addition a document analysis was used to assess the contribution of NGOs and the future of their involvement. A literature review has been used to gain an understanding of the environment and general challenges faced by NGOs in building the capacity required to respond effectively to disasters.

This study has used a qualitative methodology based on an interpretive approach. This methodology enabled me to gain a breadth of understanding of the reasons and challenges involved in capacity development in general and specifically within individual NGOs that responded to disasters in Samoa. An advantage of using a case study as part of the report is to provide the ability for in-depth analysis within a real-life context (Yin, 2003:13). While using qualitative methods contributes to the depth of knowledge, a weakness of qualitative studies can include debate over credibility and the drawing of inappropriate generalisations from small studies (Denscombe, 2003:25). Small studies however, can also provide focus. This study focuses on Samoa and the role NGOs played in Cyclone Evan. This focus leads to specific conclusions about the capacity of NGOs in Samoa to assist in a disaster response. The literature review on capacity building and NGOs who respond to disasters provides a wider context for these conclusions. Credibility can be enhanced by ensuring that subjectivities are managed, the methods are applied consistently, the findings are applied appropriately and that the processes can be verified (O'Leary, 2010). As recommended by Yin (2003:14) this report seeks to increase its credibility

by using multiple sources of evidence. The evidence to support the discussion and conclusions will be covered by literature review, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews with representatives from NGOs who responded to Cyclone Evan in Samoa.

### **Data Collection Methods and Analysis**

This study was foremost a desk-based study that applied a context analysis of documents. In addition, a small case-study approach using semi-structured interviews was taken. These semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven key informants within organisations that had responded to Cyclone Evan. The strength of using this approach included, among other things, its adaptability. The key informants were project managers and heads of organisations. Each interviewee received an information sheet, included in Appendix 3, prior to the interview. The interviews were conducted in person rather than by email or sent by post due to the interactive nature of the information required. The interviews were conducted using a defined interview plan. However, the line of questioning was adapted for each interviewee, as applicable and as the answers overlapped each other, in order to follow the natural flow of conversation. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview style enabled unanticipated information to be revealed while at the same time ensuring that the intended data was collected (O'Leary, 2010). This unanticipated information further informed the study and provided insights into the impact of the disaster response on the NGOs. Publicly available information on the response to Cyclone Evan has been obtained from internet searches and government documents.

### **The Interviewees**

After attempting to contact nine organisations, seven people agreed to be interviewed. Each semi-structured interview took between one hour and one and a half hours. All interviewees were involved in their organisation's response to Cyclone Evan. Their combined experience in the humanitarian sector is vast. Their discussion of the Cyclone Evan response in Samoa offered valuable insights for this report. To ensure confidentiality they, and the organisations they represent, are not referred to by name. In chapter 4, participants' comments are credited with an interviewee number. A

table of the interviewees' organisations, positions and date of the interview is listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Participant Table**

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date of Interview 2014</b>
Interviewee #1	Samoa NGO	Country Director	17 November
Interviewee #2	NZ INGO	International Humanitarian Manager	20 October
Interviewee #3	Samoa NGO	Consultant	13 November
Interviewee #4	Samoa NGO	Country Director	13 November
Interviewee #5	Govt Rep	ACEO of Govt Ministry	13 November
Interviewee #6	NZ INGO	CEO	7 November
Interviewee #7	NZ INGO	Humanitarian Director	11 November

### **Ethical Considerations**

In conducting the interviews, ethical considerations included the need to respect how the data was interpreted. Care was taken with how the research was written up to ensure that it was presented sensitively (Denscombe, 2003:56). This study was preceded by an ethics application process to MUHEC and was considered low risk. Confidentiality of key informants and the organisations they represent has been maintained. In addition to not referencing the comments of interviewees by name, each interviewee did not know who the other participants would be. The key informants signed a consent form, included in Appendix 4, verifying that they consented to participating in this study.

My employment potentially provided a source of conflict between my role as a researcher and as an employee. The impact of this conflict was limited by pursuing interview questions that centred on the specific research questions relating to the capacity of NGOs and their response to Cyclone Evan. Keeping the focus tightly framed also helped to avoid the potential for sensitive information to be revealed by interviewees. In addition, permission was obtained from my employer prior to carrying out this study. The information from the interviews was kept in a safe place and was not used for any other purpose other than this report.

## **RESEARCH REPORT OUTLINE**

This report has five chapters. Chapter 1 has provided a background to Cyclone Evan and the disaster response structures in Samoa. It has also explained the research aim and questions and the methodology, including limitations and ethical considerations. Chapter 2 and 3 review the literature on capacity building and the role of NGOs in a disaster response. These chapters also look at the challenges NGOs face when attempting to build capacity in order to respond to disasters effectively. Chapter 4 includes the information gained from the semi-structured interviews and discusses the specific projects relating to Cyclone Evan. The final chapter, chapter 5, discusses the research questions in light of the literature, interviews and document analysis. In addition, it discusses the implications for NGOs and their capacity building attempts. The last section of chapter 5 provides concluding remarks to this research report.

## **CHAPTER 2: CAPACITY BUILDING IN DEVELOPMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter explores the concepts of capacity building and the role of NGOs as they intersect and relate to international development. This chapter will clarify the definitions of capacity and NGOs used in this research report. It will look at the requirements of organisational and financial capacity of NGOs in general and identify the broader challenges of building their capacity. The first section defines capacity and discovers what is meant by organisational and financial capacity. The second section investigates what NGOs require in terms of organisational and financial capacity and how NGOs go about building that capacity. The final section will look at the particular challenges that NGOs face in order to operate sustainably.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING DEFINED**

Capacity Building has become a term used to mean everything and nothing and has often become just another term to gain favour when seeking funding from donors (Cornwall & Eade, 2010:205). This does not mean that capacity building is an irrelevant term or that the act of capacity building is meaningless. To many organisations the idea of capacity building is predominantly training and technical assistance (International Monetary Fund, 2014:2). When looking closely at the definitions of capacity building, a bigger picture in the idea of capacity building emerges. The Fourth High Level Forum on aid effectiveness in Busan 2011 highlighted the importance of capacity building in creating sustainable institutions (High Level Forum, 2011:1). This statement mirrored similar outcomes from the previous High Level forums on aid effectiveness in 2005 in the Paris Declaration and in the 2008 Accra Agenda.

In addition to the High Level Forums, and in response to the recognition of the

importance of capacity building, development institutions and various collectives have formed specialised capacity building organisations, conferences and websites to disseminate information and aid good practice in this area. Table 2 lists these websites in Appendix 1 and includes the UN agencies, multi-lateral organisations such as the World Bank, and academic institutions. While there is agreement on the importance of capacity building, how it should be carried out, and its effectiveness, are questions that raise debate. Another complicating factor is that both capacity and capacity building have varied meanings. The next section looks at the definitions and identifies that a key commonality among the definitions is the concept of capacity building as a long-term process.

### **Capacity Building Definitions**

Capacity building is defined by many organisations in terms of the definition of capacity (Brown, LaFond, & Macintyre, 2001:4; Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2014; Kaplan, 1999:9; OECD, 2006; The World Bank Group, 2012) Capacity is defined as the ability to carry out objectives using available resources (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2014; OECD, 2006; The World Bank Group, 2012). It follows then, that capacity building is increasing the ability of an organisation to carry out their objectives. Capacity building is defined as a ‘locally-driven’ process. A process of unleashing, strengthening and maintaining of such capacity (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2014; OECD, 2006). It has been defined as a process to increase the ability to carry out objectives (Angeles & Gurstein, 2000:454; Brown et al., 2001:iii; UNESCO, 2006:1). Similarly, as a deliberate process to create, strengthen and maintain capacity over time (Simister & Smith, 2010:3). Finally, Fruchter (1998) defines it as the tools and skills for creating effective management strategies for change (Fruchter, Cahill, & Wahl, 1998:23). The common thread in the definitions of capacity building is process and change management.

More specifically, organisational capacity is the capability of the organisation to achieve effectively what it sets out to do (Fowler, Goold, & James, 1995:3). Organisational capacity also reflects the organisations’ ability to effectively define and achieve its own goals (Simister & Smith, 2010:3). It reflects the desire to

strengthen organisations and the people in those organisations. A key subset of organisational capacity is financial capacity. Increasing organisational and financial capacity requires a detailed understanding of exactly what strengths exist that can be built on, and requires identifying the limitations that the organisation faces when trying to achieve its goals (Fowler et al., 1995:1). Once these strengths and limitations have been identified, organisations can build on their particular capacities and focus on their specific priorities to achieve long-term goals. The concept of capacity building as a process over time, and therefore one that indicates organisational change, will now be explored further.

### **Capacity Building as a Process**

As the definitions above state, capacity building is a complex process that involves change and is most useful as a long-term iterative process (High Level Forum, 2011:2; Simister & Smith, 2010:3). It is not a static, one-off event. If capacity building is regarded as a process, then one-off training by external advisors becomes less significant. A capacity building process is more likely to be sustainable if there is good local ownership and commitment by the local organisation (James, 1994:43). These attributes are more likely to be seen if capacity building is a long-term process.

Organisational and financial capacities change over time from both internal and external influences, such as government or donor policy changes and key staff changes (Simister & Smith, 2010:7). In this way NGOs must identify the capacity gaps within their organisations for themselves and seek to address them (Land, 2000:10). What the gaps are and how they are addressed may vary in different organisations depending on the culture of the organisation, its history and its long-term strategy.

Capacity building has sometimes been integrated with other development principles. For example Angeles and Gurstein (2000) discuss the use of participatory approaches in capacity building. They argue that often, capacity development is carried out without employing participatory approaches. The starting point of capacity building processes should be to ask the question whose capacities are we building and why? This type of participatory development approach involves investing time in trust-

building activities, and the dissemination of good and complete information to guide participation (Angeles & Gurstein, 2000:474).

To conclude this section, capacity encompasses physical resources, organisational development, financial viability, human resource development and institutional and legal framework development (Hudock, 1999:33; UNESCO, 2006:2). The next section introduces NGOs and describes how they build these capacities to achieve their own development ends.

## **NGOS AND CAPACITY**

### **Defining NGOs**

This section will define civil society and NGOs and determines how they build capacity. Non-governmental organisation (NGO) is an unusual term, in that its literal meaning is different from its most commonly understood meaning. A literal look at the words ‘non-governmental organisation’ implies that it is any organisation that is not a government ministry or government operated enterprise. However a closer inspection reveals that it is a term relegated to civil society and the non-profit or the ‘third’ sector (Lewis & Kanji, 2009:8). NGOs have been labeled as ‘the third sector’ after government was labeled as the first sector and the second being the private sector. When taken literally the private sector could be described as an NGO but it is distinct in its profit motive. The third sector is non-profit and usually civil society or development orientated. Like the other two sectors, maintaining the effectiveness of third sector organisations, or NGOs, requires increasing and maintaining organisational and financial capacity to achieve its goals (Fowler et al., 1995:1).

NGOs form a part of civil society as defined by the World Bank on their website (The World Bank Group, 2013). As a subset of civil society, NGOs are often associated with development activities. While the definition of an NGO is complex and often vague (Lewis & Kanji, 2009:6) the definition by James used for this report explains the concept succinctly;

*“NGOs are non-profit organisations, serving others than its constituency and operating specifically in the field of international*

*relief and development. In most NGOs the organisation and the target group are two separate entities” (James, 1994:6).*

NGOs have the following characteristics: They are formal, private, non-profit, self-governing and voluntary (Lewis & Kanji, 2009:10). These characteristics leave the concept of NGO wide open to incorporate a number of agendas from advocacy to the provision of services in development or humanitarian response (Havrda & Kutilek, 2010:158). In development many NGOs begin with relief efforts and as they mature they begin more long-term development efforts. Korten would argue there are three generations of NGO; relief and welfare, small scale self-reliant local development, and sustainable systems development (Korten, 1987:147). To increase the performance of NGOs, organisational capacity must also be increased. Each of these generations or stages over an NGOs lifetime will present challenges to organisational capacity (Korten, 1987:154).

Using these definitions, the next section explores the topic of how NGOs build capacity and investigates some of the processes involved in capacity building.

### **NGO Capacity Building**

With the increasing realisation that poor performance may be linked to internal organisational problems, attention is being focused on assessing the organisational capacity of NGOs to do development work effectively (Fowler et al., 1995:1). In order to maximise their impact NGOs need to focus on building capacity for the entire organisation (McKinsey and Company, 2001:27). Many capacity building efforts are aimed to assist NGOs to build their capacity to progress through the generations of the NGO life cycle and achieve sustainability (Korten, 1987:147). Organisational capacity includes an NGOs capability to satisfy or influence its stakeholders (Fowler et al., 1995:4). These stakeholders comprise donors, members and government agencies, each having their own agendas to fulfill.

The management of organisations is the subject of a great deal of literature. Authors such as Kaplan suggest the elements of organisational life include; a conceptual framework, organisational attitude, vision and strategy, organisational structure, acquisition of skills and material resources (Kaplan, 2000:518). Managing NGOs and

their unique characteristics is also a large topic in itself and there is no general blueprint for either understanding, or managing an individual NGO and its activities. The diversity of the NGO sector means that methods of capacity building must reflect this diversity (James, 1994:37). NGOs lack a clear bottom line and face distinct management challenges (Lewis, 2007b:165).

Increasing the sustainability of NGO management requires the strengthening of the organisational capacity of NGOs, in order to fulfill its role effectively. Strengthening NGO organisational capacity involves local control, accountability, initiative and self-reliance (Korten, 1987:145). The demand for the type of management support services required to increase capacity in this way, is greater than supply. One-off training activities are more widely available than institutional support (James, 1994:22). Management support services are necessary in order for an NGO to have the capacity to operate for 10 or 20 years. This requires an investment in capable leaders with well-developed skills in strategic management (Korten, 1987:148).

The sustainability of NGOs is affected when the approach to capacity building lacks local ownership. This lack of ownership occurs when external stakeholders, including donors, exert influence over the objectives of the organisation (Hudock, 1999:32). Capacity building then becomes focused on donor expectations and less focused on what the organisation wants to achieve (Edwards, 2005; Hudock, 1999:38). Edwards and Hudock criticise the current NGO practice of 'international development' where the main focus is on the transfer of resources and ideas from an NGO in a developed country to NGOs in less developed nations. The challenge is to ensure that local ownership and identity of NGOs is maintained, while at the same time operate sustainably in order to carry out their stated purpose. Exacerbating this challenge is that operating sustainably often requires external funding. In order to fulfill contractual obligations to donors under project-based funding, capacity building is often neglected in favour of investing in programs (McKinsey and Company, 2001:27). Interviewees in chapter 4 saw project funding for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) projects as a way of building organisational capacity for disaster response. This approach incorporates capacity building within the project-funding framework that NGOs are often limited to and links directly to disaster response capabilities.

There are various models that have been developed in order to assess organisational capacity in NGOs. The European Centre for Development Policy Management has developed the 5CCs model. This model identifies five core capabilities that form part of the overall capacity of an organisation and its ability to generate value for others. These are the capability to act and self-organise, generate development results, relate to stakeholders, adapt and self-renew, and to achieve coherence (Greijn, 2011:1). These capabilities then comprise of factors that determine the NGO capacity, factors that include human competencies, non-human resources, effective relationships, learning from results (Fowler et al., 1995:6). The factors contribute to each of the capabilities of an NGO and therefore to their overall capacity. The benefit of having effective organisational relationships in a disaster response is also a reoccurring theme brought out by interviewees in chapter 4.

When looking to strengthen organisations there are many frameworks and approaches an organisation could take. The UN describes proven ‘Levers of Change’ that are required to strengthen national institutions. These revolve around institutional arrangements, leadership, knowledge, and accountability (United Nations Development Programme, 2011:1). The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) considers three interlinked dimensions when describing capacities; individual dimension, organisational dimension and enabling environment each with technical and functional aspects (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2014:2). This section has explored some of the challenges of capacity building and identified examples from various organisations’ attempt to describe the process of capacity building. The next section looks at how capacity building can take place beginning with the use of capacity assessments.

### **Capacity Assessments**

If NGOs are to accept the challenge of sustainability they must commit themselves to developing new managerial and technical capabilities (Korten, 1987:146). Often a capacity building process is begun by an NGO completing an organisational capacity assessment (Cretney, 2013; Fowler et al., 1995:1; The World Bank, 2012). Before beginning an assessment process it is important that NGOs identify their key stakeholders (Fowler et al., 1995:4). An organisation will struggle to identify its

capacity building needs if it is not clear on its vision. Once an NGO's capacity is assessed, tools can be put in place to address gaps raised during the assessment process. There is no single approach to carrying out an organisational assessment other than it should be participatory and inclusive (Fowler et al., 1995:2). Although the organisational assessment is a part of the bigger capacity building process and not an end in and of itself, capacity can also be built during the assessment phase. The support of key leaders is important to the success of the capacity assessment process (Fowler et al., 1995:3). If key leaders do not support the assessment process its contribution to capacity becomes minimised to a hoop to jump through for donors, and the benefits of the process to build capacity is lost.

SUNGO attempts to facilitate capacity building for NGOs in Samoa by offering training and facilitating NGO capacity assessments (Cretney, 2013; SUNGO Website, 2014). These assessments and training focus predominantly on the organisational and financial capacity of an NGO. Disaster response training, such as evacuation centre management, has been carried out by the SPC, IFRC and the MNRE (Méheux & Prasad, 2014).

Tools for capacity building include one-off training activities (International Monetary Fund, 2014:1). Training augments capacity building, but it is an ongoing mentoring process that achieves the most out of training initiatives. A Cambodian experience highlighted that training was most useful when follow-up visits to actual workplaces after the training sessions were made to resolve any challenges incurred when applying new learning from training sessions (Pearson, 2011:1044). Following on from capacity building and assessments, the next section looks at some challenges NGOs face in maintaining their sustainability.

## **CHALLENGES TO NGOs SUSTAINABILITY**

Sustainability can be seen on three levels; a macro (national), meso (institutional) or micro (community) level (Visser, 2010:52). As this study is looking at primarily the organisational and financial capacity of an NGO this section focuses on the institutional level. NGOs, operating in a national setting, face several challenges in

order to become effective and sustainable. These challenges include; the need for organisational strategy to implement the organisational vision (Kaplan, 1994:1), donor funding that is still predominantly provided through project funding (Gunnarsson, 2001:1) and perceived accountability (Lewis & Kanji, 2009:18). There is a need to meet the dual challenges of ensuring on-going financial viability and the challenge of embedding capacity in the organisation along with individuals (Low & Davenport, 2002:370). Investing in the capacity of the organisation helps the sustainability of that organization, so that if a person leaves, it will still continue to function well. The challenge is that the organisation does not exist without the people that operate it. Institutional capacity building, like individual capacity building, is time consuming and therefore often expensive (James, 1994:43).

When first looking at building the capacity within an organisation, those that look inward first rather than blaming external circumstances have a better ability to develop the resilience required for sustainability (Kaplan, 2000:520). Looking inward can mean using the type of organisational assessments discussed in the previous section to assist in preparing an organisation to take advantage of opportunities that may present themselves and to focus limited resources for the most benefit.

Funding and donor demands remain the biggest concern for NGO sustainability. There is an ongoing struggle to secure the financial base of the organisation (Bebbington, Hickey, & Mitlin, 2008:4). Avenues for funding for NGOs are often tied to their host country's bilateral aid programmes. This calls into question the ability of the NGO to act independently from government (Bebbington et al., 2008:4). NGOs have to walk a fine line between securing funding that is often available only to those organisations aligning with government priorities and, continuing their operation in line with the mandate stipulated by their constituent members.

NGOs need financial analysis skills to progress toward financial sustainability and they must become aware of emerging markets and opportunities (The Population Council, 2008:1). Financial capacity building must include support from managers. Many organisations only participate in donor-funded capacity building if there is a monetary reward involved which can mean that effective change may be compromised (Ramalingam, Gray, & Cerruti, No Date). A second issue is that an

organisation that carries out capacity building may attempt to instill ideas and priorities that are in line with its own funding and programming mandates, instead of working to build independent ways of thinking and working with the intended beneficiary organisation. A third issue is that funds for capacity building and preparedness are limited and time bound (Ramalingam et al., No Date:24).

NGOs predominantly receive funding via project funding. Projects have a finite funding lifetime and within this framework the issue of core administrative costs is usually not addressed (Low & Davenport, 2002:370). The end of project funding all too often means beneficial impacts that could have been sustained are lost (Low & Davenport, 2002:371). Unfortunately the lack of funding for core costs can mean that NGOs are frequently under-administered and under-managed. NGOs can be weak when they do not have reliable funding to build their internal capacity and cover administrative costs (James, 1994:16). NGOs can strengthen their financial capacity through local fundraising and funding diversification (James, 1994:20). These opportunities will vary from country to country and can be difficult to identify.

The alternative to project-based funding is institutional funding. However, this does not appear to be the answer in all cases. It can encourage slackness and it has been shown in one UK based NGO that it held back the development of the developing country NGO (James, 1994:17). Investing in additional capacity building of local staff, in conjunction with the institutional funding, can overcome the pitfalls of institutional funding. Any expatriate staff used in capacity building must be free of administrative tasks to enable them to concentrate on interactions with counterparts (Korten, 1987:153). They must also be strategic in searching out ways to become financially sustainable (Korten, 1987:156).

By being project orientated the ability of the community to manage its own programs is limited as donor fashions change due to political reasons outside the control of the NGO. This has the potential to undermine NGOs. A key indicator of capacity is the ability of the NGO to respond to the rapid changes. Formal management tools have been developed, such as the log-frames, as a response to donors and to enhance the ability of NGOs to provide service to donors (Lewis, 2007b:162).

Another challenge for NGOs is accountability. Critics argue that NGOs pursue their own agenda and self-interests at the expense of the very people they declare they are helping. Relying on other NGOs to verify their activities has also damaged NGO credibility in this area because it has not been seen as independent enough (Gourevitch & Lake, 2012:3). Additionally NGOs are accused of acting in self-interest in their humanitarian role when they do not live up to expectations when providing emergency assistance (Gourevitch & Lake, 2012). The lack of coordination leading to duplication of activities is blamed on institutional self-interest. International NGOs come under criticism for their naivety and lack of understanding of the local context (Lewis & Kanji, 2009:19). They are criticised for top-down decision-making where the community is rarely involved in project design, where well-known techniques are rigidly used at the expense of innovation (Lewis, 2007b). These perceptions on the lack of accountability and NGO self interest can hinder the NGO attempts to source funding for its activities. However, NGOs do have a better opportunity for innovation and flexibility than government agencies, which gives them an advantage (Lewis & Kanji, 2009:22).

There are tensions between what is desirable and what is feasible in practice when it comes to legitimacy of NGOs. The European Union expects NGOs to respond quickly but be accountable, transparent and democratic in their decision-making, which inevitably takes time and experience (Steffek & Hahn, 2010). NGOs need to ensure their actions are in line with their mission and values and donors need to have confidence in the NGO (Havrda & Kutilek, 2010:165). NGOs must try to work effectively given these two often conflicting and challenging demands. Governments should have a role especially in relation to the financial accountability and governance of NGOs. Governments however can create costly and time-consuming compliance that detracts from the mission of the NGO. Government can also be subject to powerful lobby groups that may even limit freedom of association in some cases. Therefore an accountability system that is a mix of state and non-state factors has its place (Havrda & Kutilek, 2010).

## **IN SUMMARY**

This chapter has explained the concept of capacity building as it relates to NGOs. It has identified the key in capacity building is to see it as a process. The challenge is to commit to sustainable capacity building in order to strengthen the capacity of NGOs to solve their own problems. Capacity building that includes reinforcing local competencies and organisational skills has a higher chance of leading to more sustainable institutions. This kind of capacity building takes time, but will lead to stronger organisations if implemented well (Pratt, 2010:1). In the context of project funding, allocations for capacity building activities could be built in to project budgets. This would allow an iterative process of capacity building to occur with each successive project. It requires each organisation to look a holistically at its capacity building needs when designing project activities and their corresponding budgets.

The next chapter will look more specifically at the roles of NGOs in responding to natural disasters and the capacity they require in order to perform that specific role. In chapter 4 the interviewees comment on how capacity might be built to enable an organisation to mount and an effective response to natural disasters.

## **CHAPTER 3: THE ROLE OF NGOS IN A DISASTER RESPONSE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A disaster is a situation or event, which overwhelms local capacity, necessitating a request to a national or international level for external assistance (CRED Network, 2009). Disasters can be caused by nature or by people. For the purposes of this report, disasters caused by nature will be discussed. Natural disasters are occurring with increasing frequency, magnitude and destructiveness and correspondingly NGOs humanitarian role in response to disasters has grown in recent years (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:51; Gourevitch & Lake, 2012:3). In the previous chapter NGOs were defined and the challenges in capacity and sustainability were discussed. This chapter will look more specifically at the role of NGOs who respond to disasters and what organisational and financial capacity is required by them to ensure that their role is fulfilled effectively. The first section explores a number of characteristics displayed by NGOs who respond effectively in disaster responses. The second section will explore the importance of building capacity within NGOs in order for them to facilitate an effective disaster response.

### **NGOS AND DISASTER RESPONSE**

The growing scale and frequency of natural disasters is demanding more localised responses because the international community cannot be everywhere all the time (Ramalingam et al., No Date:26). When a sudden onset disaster hits, such as a cyclone or tsunami, governments are usually responsible for the management of disaster relief efforts but may lack the necessary experience and/or knowledge required to manage disasters effectively (Balcik, Beamon, Krejci, Muramatsu, & Ramirez, 2009:23). Usually within the first 48 hours after a disaster, a government will declare a state of emergency which allows for international aid to flow into the country (UNOCHA, 2013b). With the influx of donor funds, comes the question of

who controls those funds and the types of interventions that will be supported by those funds. A variety of stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs and donors, meet together in some form, to plan their response. As discussed in chapter 1, in Samoa this type of forum occurs through the Disaster Advisory Committee (DAC). Key infrastructure such as electricity, water, roading and telecommunications, is often damaged. The mammoth task of assessing the affected area, ascertaining specific needs, and providing mechanisms to meet those needs, is challenging and requires flexibility. It is essential to immediately meet the most basic of needs, being food, water and shelter. Longer-term needs such as rebuilding livelihoods and infrastructure are met when possible, usually determined by the availability of post-disaster funding. In order to have the ability to respond immediately and effectively, adequate preparation by all participants in the disaster response process is vital.

The value of NGOs in a disaster is in their role as rapid responders (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012). NGOs have earned the reputation of being efficient, effective, and impartial when distributing relief goods to disaster victims (Paul, 2003:87). Many governments have come to rely on NGOs in developing countries to assist in implementing disaster relief efforts (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:51). Due to their smaller size, and corresponding ability to be flexible, NGOs are able to reach the affected communities in remote areas where the government may not have a presence. NGOs generally operate at lower costs due to the use of volunteers and low technology overheads, promote participation by working with community groups, and innovate and adapt to local conditions (Lewis, 2007b). During a disaster response NGOs have varying types of roles depending on their capacity. In these roles NGOs work with governments, donors and the private sector to mobilise resources to provide goods or services. NGOs are increasingly considered by donor agencies as alternatives to national governments for channeling disaster relief funds (Paul, 2003:87). Since NGOs are essential to disaster relief efforts, allowing better coordination and collaboration between government agencies and NGOs is necessary to improve NGO response efforts (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:61). The next section will look at how NGO networks, partnerships and involvement with the community contributes to their disaster response role.

## **Networks and Partnerships**

Local NGOs working in a country on development or advocacy initiatives learn to understand the way other organisations act, and trust is built by regular interactions (Kilby, 2008:124). Networks are fostered prior to a disaster so that when a coordinated disaster response is required, partnerships from these networks can be made quickly and easily due to the existing trust and respect that has been formed (Kilby, 2008:121). It is from existing networks that the strongest and most effective partnerships may form (Kilby, 2008:125). In order for agencies to coordinate their activities there needs to be a common language and understanding of operational approach, including resource allocation and timelines (Coles et al., 2012:68). This becomes easier and more likely to occur when prior networks existed (Coles et al., 2012:68).

Fostering partnerships with local individuals and organisations is important for NGOs to be as effective as possible in their disaster relief efforts (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:61). Partnerships with government, while important from a coordinated humanitarian response point of view, mean that NGOs become less autonomous and subject to political influence (Allen, 2006:83). Partnerships are effective when NGOs develop effective practices to deal with their limitations and challenges and can utilise existing partnerships that provide complimentary services to meet needs (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012). The benefits of partnerships include the division of tasks, flexibility, and good communication (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:62). All members maintain their independence while bringing their skills, strengths, knowledge and focus into the relief effort.

However, forming effective partnerships can be challenging for NGOs. (Angeles & Gurstein, 2000:456). A lack of trust and prior communication are seen as two of the most common challenges for effective partnerships with and between NGOs (Coles et al., 2012:68). The approach taken to partnerships in the majority of humanitarian responses tends to be reactive, driven by emergency, and shaped by ad-hoc interactions that take place at the point of crisis. During a disaster response the design, implementation and assessment of partnerships is usually not systematic (Ramalingam et al., No Date:4). Another challenge is that funding is important for

NGO survival, and only relief organisations in good financial health can participate in an effective disaster response (De Waal, 1997:66). However, partnerships that are formed around money are often characterised by tension and inequality (Eade, 1997:18). The tensions arise when local consultation and involvement in creating the disaster response interventions is reduced. There is often the requirement from donors to adopt systems for reporting that are more rigid than other participatory or informal approaches that are common when working directly with communities (Eade, 1997:18).

Conflict between organisations responding to a disaster, where there are sudden and extraordinary demands, is a well-recognised problem (Comfort, 1990:89). However, there are examples of existing NGO networks creating partnerships that work effectively in a disaster response. One example is the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, which affected several countries. A massive international humanitarian response was launched in several countries involving many agencies. In India following the tsunami, one partnership, consisting of twelve NGOs, was relatively free from controversy. The partnership for the purposes of the intervention called themselves the East Coast Development Forum (ECDF). Besides providing relief, the members of the ECDF also advocated for improved governmental response to the poorer and lower caste communities affected (Kilby, 2008:121).

All ECDF members had been active in development and had worked together in advocacy campaigns for at least ten years prior to the Indian Ocean Tsunami. ECDF members had worked together on issues that were common among themselves and their constituencies and therefore had developed the necessary trust and communication. This trust and communication was inherent in the partnership and was key to the effective coordination, beneficiary selection, and overall management of what was seen as a very successful disaster response intervention (Kilby, 2008:124). The success of the ECDF was also attributed to the presence of village organisations, local knowledge of network members and the experience and systems offered by an NGO called the People's Rural Education Movement (PREM), an organisation experienced in disaster response (Kilby, 2008:122). Within a partnership, leadership is important. The effectiveness of the partnership is negatively affected if its leadership structure is unclear (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:62). PREM

fulfilled this leadership role within the ECDF. While often poor at networking due to the competition for resources, in this case, the NGOs were able to successfully deliver coordinated emergency relief (Kilby, 2008). This is also something that was seen in the response to Cyclone Evan as discussed in chapter 4.

Effective partnerships, such as the ECDF described above, are not only about resources. In order to create an impact or become a strategic player, informed planning and flexibility defined within an operational framework is also important (Eade, 1997:40). Another NGO response that worked well using existing capacity and networks was the Sungi Foundation in Pakistan. Sungi integrated its disaster response plans to its development and advocacy work. It partnered with Oxfam to create a capacity building plan that strengthened its community-based disaster management capacity in its targeted villages (Awan, 2006:1). When the earthquake hit in 2005, Sungi was able to draw upon its involvement with grassroots institutions and further increase its capacity through its existing partners (Awan, 2006:1).

While the organisations that collaborated in India's ECDF worked well in the Asian Tsunami the outcome of this type of collaboration is not always beneficial. When collaboration occurs among close and similar agencies, it can be sometimes to the detriment of an effective response. This is because it is important to have a diversity of resources linking different types of organisations (Simo & Bies, 2007:126). New forms of relationships and trust building are essential to address the challenges of coordinating cross-sector partnerships (Simo & Bies, 2007:126). The next section discusses some of these coordination challenges during disaster responses.

### **Coordination in Times of Disaster**

Coordination of NGOs was established in North America and Europe before the end of WWII (Ferris, 2005:315). Disaster responses usually require a large amount of resource and no single actor has enough to respond effectively. This is why humanitarian relief efforts involve a large number and variety of actors, each with different missions, interests, capacity and logistics experience (Balcik et al., 2009; Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:51). In addition there are often new agencies that appear in a country when a disaster occurs due to specific unmet needs in the country (Coles

et al., 2012:68). Collaboration and coordination are the most discussed solutions for mitigating and eliminating many problems encountered in disaster response situations (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:58). A decision not to collaborate is an obstacle to effective disaster relief efforts (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:59). However, the coordination of the various actors and partners is often difficult and represents a fundamental weakness in humanitarian action (Coles et al., 2012; Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:58).

Effective coordination structures can be hard to agree on. NGOs generally do not want to become part of a rigid bureaucratic structure at the expense of their flexibility and autonomy (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:59). Other challenges include donors placing restrictions on how quickly money is spent and donors directing the nature of the relief activities funded. Additional challenges to coordination occur when NGOs and governments rely on each party to undertake a specific role in the response, while the ability to perform those roles, especially by NGOs, is reliant on the timing of donor funding (Balcik et al., 2009:24). Sometimes political rivalry, or competition over access to funding compound these challenges (Allen, 2006:91).

It is often suggested that the most effective coordination of a disaster response involves leadership from a single institution, with all stakeholders included in the disaster response mechanism (Dorosh, Malik, & Krausova, 2010:177). Leadership is important for good coordination, yet a top-down model can be incompatible to a complex emergency event where rapidly changing conditions require dynamic systems that adapt to unanticipated situations (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012). Attempts at good coordination have been made with the introduction of the role of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) as a coordinating body in a disaster response. UNOCHA has initiated a cluster approach to coordination and this approach is still being tested (Balcik et al., 2009:26). As an example, in the 2008 Pakistan earthquake the UN cluster approach to coordination was criticised for not including local NGOs (Balcik et al., 2009:26). Local NGOs struggled with having the human resources to attend coordination meetings when they were invited and meeting minutes were not translated into the local language. The result was that NGOs stopped attending and the corresponding lack of coordination resulted in aid being received that did not meet the need (Balcik et al., 2009:26).

While the UN cluster system did provide the forums for coordination, the effectiveness of that coordination was limited. It is clear that challenges in coordination during disaster response remain.

### **Disaster Affected Communities**

In all responses the aim is to meet the needs of affected communities. Immediately after a disaster the capacity of communities to recover fully in the long-term is often uncertain. When agencies do not provide timely relief due to a lack of coordination, it is the affected communities that suffers (Comfort, 1990:92). An advantage of NGOs is that they are usually independent to some extent from geopolitical interests. This independence enables them to pursue their own agendas to meet the needs of the affected communities (Lewis, 2007a:74). Local NGOs understand the local situation and can be effective despite not being involved in national pre-disaster planning activities (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:61). Local NGOs can also provide access for ordinary citizens to be a part of the decision-making process on the types of response required.

However, often neither government nor NGOs meet the needs of the poorest. This phenomenon can frequently be due to the funding priorities of donors. Donor priorities influence the work of NGOs, as they are not obliged to fund any particular disaster event (Balcik et al., 2009:23; Lewis, 2007a, 2007b). The necessity to obtain donor funds results in the donors becoming, in a sense, the 'customers' of relief organisations. NGOs then justify their existence to donors rather than to the affected communities (Balcik et al., 2009:23). International development NGOs have an advantage in many complex emergencies of having had development programmes and staff to run them in the countries before the onset of the emergency. This advantage provides them with a familiarity with the culture, ethnic groups and the national development programmes of the government as well as with local staff (Natsios, 1995:407).

The quality of the reciprocal relationship between the community and NGOs and other actors influences the communities' ability to recover. To refer again to the example in India after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, the response consisted of a

combination of interventions by governmental bodies, NGOs and local community initiatives. These interventions included local people and groups in the design and implementation of the intervention (Kilby, 2008:120). The successful delivery of their interventions was credited to the strategic support offered by the leading NGO, ECDF, the strength of the local NGO networks, their strong links with local fisher communities, and a long record of trust and credibility (Kilby, 2008:122). This example demonstrates the value of partnerships and coordination.

Partnerships between NGOs can bridge the effect of institutional divides at community level during all phases of the disaster risk management cycle from preparedness to response and recovery (Ramalingam et al., No Date:25). Collaboration among all agencies that will respond to future disasters is essential in maximising help provided to those affected by a disaster (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:65). After discussing how NGOs contribute to an effective response the next section will discuss the value and challenges of capacity building within NGOs to prepare for an effective disaster response.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING WITHIN NGOS FOR DISASTER RESPONSE**

While chapter 2 discussed the importance of capacity building within NGOs, this section will look specifically at the value and challenges of building the capacity of NGOs who respond to disasters. Because NGOs are a key component of disaster relief efforts, it is important to build capacity within NGOs in order for them to fulfill their role in a disaster response effectively. NGOs frequently seek to build organisational capacity in order to increase their impact (Rex, No Date:1). Often organisational capacity building cannot happen during the actual response due to the lack of time and/or an individual's ability to build capacity in a short and intense space of time. As a result, when there is no time to build local capacity, NGOs simply import capacity for the duration of a crisis (Ramalingam et al., No Date; UNESCO, 2006:3). As a result the capacity is often not sustained within the organisation (Ramalingam et al., No Date). Effective problem-solving in disaster situations requires a different approach to non-disaster times (Dorosh et al., 2010). As discussed earlier in the previous section on NGOs and Disaster Response, the

international community cannot always be everywhere due to the frequency of natural disasters therefore it is important to enable localised responses (Ramalingam et al., No Date:25). The building of local capacities to reduce the need for importing capacity is usually presented as an ongoing activity as opposed to the short-term delivery required in an emergency situation (Parakrama, 2001:120). Capacity building then becomes part of preparedness activities.

Most major external actors for example, donors, international NGOs and foreign governments, are committed to strengthening local capacity in emergency situations (Smillie, 2001:7). However, strengthening capacity involves many challenges including identifying which local organisation to work with and how to work with them. External donors need to take care that they are not inadvertently funding militia groups or organisations with a destabilising agenda (Smillie, 2001:7).

Donor funds are made available for capacity building following a disaster, rather than before. Capacity building takes time and, at times, that means that international NGOs and other external donors will choose to work independently rather than build capacity with local organisations. Capacity building is often poorly resourced, and it can be dependent on untagged funds from individual partner agencies that are very limited (Ramalingam et al., No Date:24). Donor funds frequently arrive without thought for the overhead expenses that are necessary to prepare for and respond to disasters. Donors often prefer that their funding be used for immediate relief rather than long-term needs, limiting the ability of NGOs to build capacity for future disasters (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012).

NGOs need assistance in strengthening their capacities in order to respond to survivors of disasters but this assistance should be made in ways which enable them to maintain their independence and stay connected to local communities (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:64). Institutional capacity building can be affected by high staff turnover (Simister & Smith, 2010:26). In part this is due to high burnout and turnover rates that already exists amongst humanitarian staff due to taxing work conditions, high urgency and relatively low compensation. This can be mitigated somewhat by ensuring the information remains with the organisations. The capacity of an organisation can also be affected by lack of training, and complicated by the fact that

the type of experience and institutional knowledge required cannot often be taught formally (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012; Smillie, 2001:20). Capacity building then is ideally to take place prior to disasters and include information system management.

The first steps in strengthening the organisational capacity for response to future disasters is creating a 'lesson learned' exercise within and between organisations. By participating in a 'lessons learned' exercise after a disaster response there is opportunity to reflect on organisational processes. Findings from monitoring and evaluation processes should be fed into the recovery process at all stages (Dorosh et al., 2010:167). These findings can transform any sources of conflict that are sometimes found in partnerships into the basis for cooperation among organisations (Comfort, 1990:105). Post-disaster improvements should include components such as networking, policy-making, planning, systems and procedures and human resource management (Dorosh et al., 2010:178). NGOs with ongoing development programmes are likely to be more effective in the recovery phase to take advantage of any capacity building opportunities (Dorosh et al., 2010:178). The next section looks more closely at disaster preparedness and its relationship with the capacity of an NGO to respond to future disasters. Disaster preparedness activities contribute to the capacity of an NGO to respond.

### **Disaster Preparedness**

Preparedness is any coordinated effort and process taken to ensure communities and response agencies know what to do in the event of a disaster, and include without limitation the development of plans and standard operating procedures, issue of warnings, simulations, training and public education (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2011:7). Integrating NGOs into disaster preparedness planning and training will lay the groundwork for better disaster response in the future (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:61). Preparedness includes collaborating on a larger scale than with direct disaster response actors. This includes the building of trust not only with other agencies on the ground but also with peripheral organisations such as the media and suppliers. Capacity, in terms of funding and human resource, is a key limiting factor in NGOs ability to participate in such preparedness activities (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012).

Strengthening the organisational capacity for responding to disasters includes adapting internal policies and having a detailed response strategy in place (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:64). This strategy should include knowing what other NGOs capabilities are and locating opportunities to train staff in disaster response (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:64). Working closely with donors to stress the importance of disaster preparedness and training is an important activity for NGOs (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:64). Attempts to strengthen local capacity may appear to obstruct the efficient delivery of emergency relief supplies in the difficult early stages. Hence an international NGO or aid agency will often only see the short-term disadvantages in capacity building (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012).

Another preparedness activity includes advocating for national policy making that relates to disaster response. This will help to bring more attention to disaster management issues (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012). This attention can generate the needed changes in operating environment, including legislation changes if required, to ensure that the next disaster response is more effective.

Substantial and sustained funding is required for disaster management capacity building (Ramalingam et al., No Date:27). Often it is more politically popular to donate to disaster response rather than to donate to capacity building activities that provide for the sustainable development of a local NGO. Changing this mindset to ensure greater funds are available for capacity building to ensure effective disaster response initiatives remains a challenge for the NGO community. In the short-term one alternative is to have an international office to provide support and direction to a local office. Relying on this approach has the side effect of changing the power structure, at least temporarily while capacity building takes place (Rex, No Date:9).

### **The Policy Environment for Disaster Preparedness**

In Samoa, an analysis of government documents revealed that a positive change in the operating environment of NGOs came about with the inclusion of DRR as a priority in the government development strategy. In 2008 the Samoa development strategy listed DRR as part of a priority area but there were no corresponding indicators or

measures of performance (The Government of Samoa, 2008). In 2012 the strategy not only endorsed the concept of integrating DRR into the national planning framework, but also included corresponding indicators relating to DRM and preparedness (The Government of Samoa, 2012:30, 41, 60). This provides the potential for NGOs to appeal to donors for projects that link with the national strategy.

On a regional level the Pacific Humanitarian Team (PHT), at its 7<sup>th</sup> Regional meeting in October 2014, called for the decentralisation of DRM and called on governments and NGOs to work more effectively together (UNOCHA, 2014:27). Its solutions included encouraging NGOs to participate in preparedness training and involving them in responses. The PHT also recommended that NGOs play a role in the Assessment Working Group which includes training on conducting assessments and involving NGOs as implementing partners or country level cluster co-leads (UNOCHA, 2014:6, 31). On a wider stage, the 2013 World Bank strategic policy guide on Disaster Risk Management (DRM) acknowledged that partnerships and collaboration with nongovernmental and civil society organisations should be harnessed to a greater extent (Jha & Stanton-Geddes, 2013:39). Table 3 in Appendix 2, lists some websites that are dedicated to improving DRR and with it, disaster preparedness with a view to effective disaster response and to lessen the impact of disasters.

This section has discussed the importance of capacity building in NGOs to ensure that they are able to respond effectively. The section also looked at the value of preparedness and how it both contributes to NGO capacity, and benefits from increased NGO capacity.

## **IN SUMMARY**

It is possible that capacity building, which enables NGOs to effectively assist their governments in meeting the needs of communities affected by a disaster, is a goal that is too great. After fifty years of effort, capacity building still proves to be difficult in development settings where it is a priority. In emergency settings, where the primary and most immediate goal is to save lives, it is even more difficult (Smillie, 2001).

Capacity building requires a significant and sustained commitment of financial and human resources (UNESCO, 2006:3). NGOs will continue to respond to disasters especially when disaster relief is their mission (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012). In order to facilitate effective responses enhanced investments in national and local partnerships should be a priority for humanitarian donors (Ramalingam et al., No Date:4). Despite the challenges in capacity building there is potential for capacity building before a disaster response. Many national and international NGOs have integrated disaster mitigation and preparation into their organisational programmes (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012) thereby enhancing their future capacity to respond.

This chapter has identified the importance of the role of NGOs in a disaster response, how their capacity is strengthened by coordination, partnership and knowledge of local communities. The chapter identified the challenges of building capacity for a disaster response and with a sustainable future for these NGOs in mind. Chapter 4 will present the results of interviews with representatives of NGOs that responded to Cyclone Evan in Samoa in 2012. Interviewees convey practical examples of the activities involved in an effective disaster response and the challenges of building and maintaining their capacity to respond effectively.



## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS: NGOS RESPONSE TO CYCLONE EVAN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the course of this report seven key people from the Cyclone Evan response effort, predominantly from NGOs, were interviewed using a semi-structured approach. The interviewees are detailed in Table 1. Most of the interviewees made mention of the lessons learned from the disaster response after the tsunami in 2009, just three years earlier. There were nine questions set for the interviews. They spoke of the general success of their Cyclone Evan response projects in terms of partnerships, coordination and meeting the needs of the communities. Interviewees also described the challenges involved in meeting the needs of affected communities under trying circumstances, not only for the affected communities but also for the organisations themselves. This chapter summarises the comments of the seven interviewees supplemented with documents about the response that were published by UNOCHA, IFRC and the Government of Samoa.

The introduction chapter described Cyclone Evan and its effects on the Samoan community. The background section in this chapter reveals how the tsunami in 2009 provided lessons that were then applied to the Cyclone Evan response. It also paints a picture of the environment in which NGOs had to operate in immediately after the cyclone. The remainder of the chapter groups the answers from interviewees and document analysis under the three broad survey headings: The Response to the Disaster; Stakeholders: Relationships and Co-ordination; and, The Capacity of NGOs to Respond to Future Disaster in Samoa. The first group includes how the organisation responded, the resources it had available and where funding came from. The second group describes the relationships and co-ordination amongst all stakeholders that was utilised throughout the response effort. Finally the third group records the interviewees' views on the effectiveness of the response and the ability of NGOs to respond to future disasters. Interviewees also comment on how the capacity of NGOs could be improved and maintained.

## **BACKGROUND TO CYCLONE EVAN RESPONSE PROJECTS**

As mentioned in the previous section, many interviewees discussed the differences between the response for the tsunami in 2009 and the response for the cyclone in 2012. Due to the big international response effort that was launched to assist the affected communities, coordination issues were evident in the tsunami response. The improvement during the Cyclone Evan response most commonly cited by interviewees in this report was an increase in the level of coordination (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2013:1).

The response of government and NGOs to the Samoan tsunami was the first test of the 2007 Disaster Management Act. According to one interviewee the lessons learned contributed to the revision of the 2006 NDMP that was released in 2011 (Interviewee #5). Interviewees referred frequently to the lessons learned and skills acquired during the tsunami, those that were then applied to the Cyclone Evan response. Additionally, skills that an organisation had acquired for development projects were being utilised during disaster responses. The skills built up from both development projects and previous response projects included not only technical skills, but also that of building relationships for the purposes of forming partnerships.

*The tsunami captured the [Water and Sanitation Hygiene] WASH expertise then Cyclone Evan built on that. [Our organisation] gained the trust of the government, which reflected the commitment by staff.*

- Interviewee #4

The interviewee identified skills built upon from the tsunami, which not only included technical WASH expertise, but also relationships with government. These relationships form a part of the organisational capacity that an organisation has to respond to disasters.

Tropical Cyclone Evan was a category two cyclone with maximum sustained winds of up to 166km/hour (The Government of Samoa, 2013:5). The cyclone passed over Samoa on Thursday and Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2012. The National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) was activated on the Thursday morning of the Cyclone to coordinate the response (UNOCHA, 2012b:3). When Cyclone Evan hit

there were several immediate needs. First was shelter for those forced from their homes, predominantly due to flooding of rivers that washed mud and debris through peoples' homes. Cooking, clothing and bedding were all damaged by the river that flowed through their homes. Many people sought shelter with other family members, and up to 6,000 people sought refuge in evacuation centres set up in churches and schools (UNOCHA, 2012e:1). Once people were in evacuation centres the main needs were food, water and sanitation. The mud in the tropical climate could quickly become a source of disease (Interviewee #4). The availability of adequate water and sanitation are essential to ensure that a disaster is not compounded by the outbreak of disease (Interviewee #4).

Immediately after the disaster several international governments, including Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the USA, offered funds and materials to the Samoan government or donated money through the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) to the Samoa Red Cross Society (SRCS) (UNOCHA, 2012b). Additionally in the immediate aftermath the NZ government also made available funds specifically for NGOs. Five NGOs received approximately NZD 75,000 each (IATI Registry, 2014).

During the Cyclone Evan response all organisations were affected by the lack of electricity and water at their headquarters. In some cases electricity was out for more than six days and water for three weeks. The lack of electricity meant that mobile phones had to be charged at communal sites and this also affected access to the internet. Staff had to cope with the lack of refrigeration and air conditioning in a hot, wet environment. The lack of water meant that even basic hygiene was problematic. Some NGOs experienced a lack of vehicles and inadequate office space, which all contributed to the capacity deficit during the response (Interviewee #1, and #3). In addition the timing of the cyclone, just twelve days before Christmas, provided added pressure on staff. The interviewees commented that these challenges were met well by staff as they worked to respond to the needs of the affected communities, including their own families (Interviewee #1, 3 & 4).

Cyclone Evan challenged NGOs' capacity in terms of human resources. Interviewees reported that the high demand for help from affected communities meant that staff

often worked long hours and had little sleep. This high demand meant that priorities had to be made to ensure the most vulnerable received help first, as help could not be provided equally to everyone affected (Interviewee #1, #3 & #4). The Initial Damage Assessment (IDA) coordinated by the DAC played a key role in informing the priorities of the response. However, the challenge was the time-consuming nature of collecting the IDA information (Interviewee #5). Inevitably there were complaints about the assessments, with people listed as badly affected when they were not and others who were left off altogether (Interviewee #1). Overall, however, the centralised nature of recording the information meant that the distribution of relief to affected communities was fairer than during the tsunami (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2013:1).

This section has described the environment, both physical and administrative, in which the various stakeholders found themselves when they responded to Cyclone Evan. The next section looks into the type of response activities carried out by the NGOs.

## **THE RESPONSE TO THE DISASTER**

The disaster responses by NGOs were carried out in a project format. This means that certain activities were specifically approved by donors and implemented by NGOs. This research found that funding for the Cyclone Evan response projects came from international partners emergency funds and NZMFAT funding made available to NGOs. Subsequent to the initial response funds, funds from other donors such as the European Union and UN agencies were made available to NGOs for recovery projects. Two of the initial responding organisations accessed this recovery funding and another contributed to one of these recovery projects utilising private funding.

The response projects carried out with NZMFAT funding were predominantly focused on providing water and sanitation at both evacuation centres and in rural areas where the water infrastructure was yet to be restored. In addition, clean-up, kitchen, linen and gardening kits to assist people to return home as soon as possible were provided (IATI Registry, 2014). Once the evacuation centres were closed on 5 January 2013, the kits continued to be distributed to affected families in rural and

urban areas (UNOCHA, 2013a:1). They were distributed according to IDA supplied by the DMO (Interviewee #1). The contents of these kits were sourced predominantly from local suppliers. Local suppliers commented that when NGOs bought stock locally it also helped their recovery (Interviewee #1).

The New Zealand government funds made available to NGOs contributed towards the cost of replenishing disaster relief supplies used during the response (IATI Registry, 2014). In response to the cyclone, the organisation benefiting from this replenishment of stocks had mobilised its volunteers who were on standby, offered assistance in terms of administering first aid and had distributed non-food items to the disaster-affected population. Its volunteers assisted the Fire and Emergency Services Authority with the evacuation of houses in vulnerable areas, registering the evacuees in the evacuation centres and ensuring the centres were well facilitated and equipped with basic needs items including access to water (Interviewee #2). Other challenges arose when assets, previously used in a response and held by organisations after the tsunami response, were discovered to be unavailable for the cyclone response (Interviewees #2 & #6).

Interviewees commented that the high level of financial capacity of each NGO that enabled good financial management to take place. Only one Interviewee indicated that there were unwise decisions made in relation to the spending of funds. Overall, however, even this Interviewee indicated that projects were successful in providing for the needs of the people. A need for a high level of capacity around financial management was raised as an important part of a successful response (Interviewee #7). This is especially a challenge when there are many donors in a crisis situation wanting to provide funds for a response. When the level of donations becomes overwhelming then issues in terms of financial management, accountability and transparency arise (Interviewee #3).

*The Cyclone Evan response was effective – better than during the Tsunami – this was due to increased structure and process but there is still a need to be more accountable and transparent.*

*- Interviewee #3*

Multiple NGOs participated with the government in forming assessment teams, which assessed the damage and needs of the population. This initial rapid assessment is

required to ascertain the level and type of impact a disaster has had on communities, and the relief and recovery needs of those communities (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2011:55). NGOs actively worked with governmental and bi-lateral partners to coordinate the types of support required to meet the specific needs of the affected communities (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2014)(Interviewee #3 & #1). Evacuation centre management was carried out at the request of the NDMO. Although this activity was not directly the mandate of the organisation involved, this involvement did allow the organisation to build their capacity in this area for future disasters (Interviewee #4).

This section looked at the response activities, the next section details how relationships between NGOs and between NGOs and government agencies contributed to an effective response. It also identifies how coordination is important to increase an organisation's capacity to respond to a disaster.

## **STAKEHOLDERS: RELATIONSHIPS AND COORDINATION**

Many stakeholders are involved in a disaster response. This section discusses how the coordination and relationships between these stakeholders contributes to the capacity of NGOs to respond and the effectiveness of the response. Several stakeholders were involved in the Cyclone Evan disaster response. These include government ministries and agencies, donors, NGOs, the affected communities and multi-lateral organisations such as the UN. Good relationships between stakeholder groups, and within each of these stakeholder groups, are important in ensuring good coordination and successful partnerships in disaster response projects.

*“Relationships are a key factor, especially in the Pacific where the size of population and sector is small. Decisions are taken that imply a level of trust and confidence that is built during the relationship.”*

*- Interviewee #2*

Interviewee #2 highlighted here that the relationship between NGOs and government is important in the Pacific. Managing the expectations that come from those relationships can present challenges. The expectation from government on some organisations for a particular service outside their mandate was a challenge to those organisations (Interviewee #4). Additionally government expected certain

psychosocial services to be undertaken by NGOs. However, there was little in the way of coordination for this type of service with the response from NGOs being predominantly contributing to meeting basic survival needs (Interviewee #5, (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2013:6)).

The provision of immediate drinking and sanitation water to people in evacuation centres and in the rural areas involved a partnership of government agencies and several NGOs (IATI Registry, 2014). The good coordination across these agencies meant that the available resources of each agency were combined and used effectively.

*“No one agency can do it all – it [the partnership] really improved the service offered by working together. The coordination was well done, the water sector coordinated well. Training is important to coordination.”*  
- Interviewee #4

In addition to observing the benefits of partnership and coordination on the service to affected communities, interviewee #4 commented above that training is important to coordination. This observation implies that capacity building is necessary for an organisation to coordinate effectively. Interviewee #4 spoke about the improved service to affected communities while interviewee #2 maintained that as a result of working together in partnership, a greater number of people were served compared with each organisation operating independently (Interviewee #2).

Demonstrating the benefits of collaboration between multiple stakeholders, three interviewees mentioned the successful partnership between three NGOs and three government agencies. The project involving these agencies, providing water to evacuation centres and community tanks, was recognised as a success of the Cyclone Evan response. It filled the gap until key water infrastructure could be restored. As a result of the provision of water in a timely fashion in the right places there were no outbreaks of disease. This is something that those involved celebrate, especially in light of the mud and other debris and destroyed infrastructure that made hygiene difficult (Interviewee #1, #2 & #4).

*“The partnership worked as one organisation”*

*“Every organisation separately could not have delivered that amount of water. Together we did more.”*

-Interviewee #2

This kind of partnership meant that the services were provided to a greater number of affected communities. The collaboration of these stakeholders highlights the importance of partnerships to the effectiveness of disaster responses. The next subsection will look at how relationships with international partners impacted the response from NGOs.

### **International Partners**

A strategy employed by NGOs in the response to Cyclone Evan was the utilisation of international partners. When a disaster strikes international NGOs often support their local counterparts or partner with other local organisations. International partners provided immediate emergency funding which the local NGOs put to use in the initial aftermath. International partners also made available surge capacity in the form of expertise and support. International organisations often have a dedicated emergency response team trained to respond and ready to deploy as required. They also keep a small amount of funds (NZD 10,000-20,000) that is available immediately upon a disaster without having to rely on the results of public appeals or contributions from donor governments (interviewees #1, #2, #3, #4).

This research indicated that in the response to Cyclone Evan, five organisations drew on access to international partners. Experience with local partners was seen as providing a level of comfort to international organisations when making this new response (Interviewee #7).

*“Capacity is important and the level of capacity of the local partner was known more in Cyclone Evan than the Tsunami.”*

*– Interviewee #7*

Those who did not have a direct local partner used previous relationships to assess whether or not to work through an otherwise unrelated local partner to implement response activities (Interviewee #2, #6 & #7).

*“Communication is easier if you know people so it’s important to build the relationship prior. Coordination is easier because of a known partner.”*

*- Interviewee #7*

Of these organisations who utilised international partners there were two who did not

have a direct counterpart organisation on the ground during non-disaster times. One of those has a local development partner, with whom it works with in order to pursue certain development goals.

Some international partnerships with local organisations that were formed during the tsunami had become outdated. When international partners tried to either rekindle those relationships with local partners for a Cyclone Evan response project or expected development partners to take on a humanitarian role, they were disappointed.

*“You can’t force a development partner to be a humanitarian partner. The development partner must have institutional interest to be a humanitarian partner.”*

*- Interviewee #2*

In these cases the international organisations had to utilise other relationships and essentially rebuild their capacity to act locally during the response. The difficulty in utilising prior relationships with local partners highlighted to the organisations involved that it is important to maintain relationships between disasters specifically with organisations that have an interest in being humanitarian partners. Also these relationships must be maintained to a level that allows the capacity of local partners to respond (Interviewee #1, #2, #3 & #4).

*“Partnerships are often good during disaster response but not [maintained] during peacetime.”*

*- Interviewee #3*

On encountering issues with outdated local relationships, one organisation revisited their governance structure. This organisation took the time to analyse and affirm that there can be flexibility in responding to a disaster and that the organisation is not limited to a single way of responding to a disaster within its own structure. The way in which the organisation responded to Cyclone Evan was different to the response carried out to the Samoan tsunami. The organisation gained confidence through this experience to consider more than one option in meeting the needs of an affected community. By revisiting their core mission and values one organisation came to see the method of response as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. In this case the ‘end’ is a project successfully meeting the needs of the affected communities. According to Interviewee #6 the reflection of what they were about as an NGO made

their organisation stronger and in a better position to respond to future disasters (Interviewee #6).

Interviewees commented that relationships, either past or ongoing, are not enough for an effective response on their own. Formal agreements, systems and prepositioned stocks all must join relationships as factors for responding effectively (Interviewee #2). These types of agreements strengthen the ability of a local organisation to act in partnership when required.

*“During a response you are not going to build capacity. We need to work with those who already have capacity.”*

*- Interviewee #2*

Interviewees commented on the contribution of surge capacity in the form of short-term personnel from their international partners. They acknowledged that this contribution made a positive difference to the capacity to act for most organisations. However surge capacity proved both a success and a challenge depending on the person involved.

*“Every humanitarian response, even if careful, will do some damage. This is due to the nature of people coming in from outside. The aim is to do more good than damage”*

*- Interviewee #2*

During the response organisations reported that those arriving from overseas who worked with local organisations and within existing organisational systems added real value to the response and increased both the capacity of the organisation to respond and the local individual. They participated in sector meetings and offered real support to existing staff (Interviewee #1, #2, #3). However this success was dependent primarily on the individuals involved. Challenges in utilising overseas staff became apparent when they came in with a view to take over and impose themselves on the situation. This type of approach caused conflict within the organisations and hindered rather than contributed to the capacity of the local organisation (Interviewee #3).

*“The representative tried to run the operation rather than build local capacity. This approach ruined relationships.”*

*- Interviewee #3*

This subsection has highlighted how relationships with international partners affect local capacity both positively and negatively. The next subsection highlights how

coordination of data impacts the capacity of NGOs to operate effectively.

### **Coordination of Data and Activities**

During the Cyclone Evan response, data from all stakeholders was centralised through the NEOC in order to combat the negative results of inadequate coordination during the Samoan tsunami response (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2013:1). The details of items that were distributed, along with the names of those who had received a distribution, were passed regularly to the NEOC. This meant there was less potential for households to receive duplicate distributions or to be missed out. There were also fewer reports of unwanted goods arriving (Interviewee #5).

Coordination with the government provided the opportunity for NGOs to have access to the rapid needs assessment and to understand what the government priorities were. Coordination meetings with all actors took place within the DAC framework. Other cluster or ‘sector’ meetings such as the ‘water sector’ brought together all stakeholders with an interest in one particular sector (Interviewee #2). It was both the DAC and cluster meetings that allowed NGOs to meet with each other and with donors and to clarify the direction of the national response.

*“Consistent coming together drives us, and provides encouragement”  
- Interviewee #4*

This encouragement is important with the long hours worked by staff during this time. The “coming together” at these meetings also informed the type of response that each NGO undertook resulting in less duplication (Interviewees #1, #2, #3, #5). The next section looks at the future of disaster response in Samoa. It describes how capacity was built by the Cyclone Evan response and interviewees suggest how it could be maintained between disasters.

## THE CAPACITY OF NGOS TO RESPOND TO FUTURE DISASTERS IN SAMOA

Having identified the positive impact of NGOs in a disaster response, the challenge is to ensure that NGOs have capacity to respond to future disasters. This section records interviewees comments on building capacity for the future and comments on the effect that responding to Cyclone Evan had on their capacity.

The interviewees identified recurring themes on the question of maintaining and building capacity between disasters. Due to the project-funded nature of NGOs, the main theme explained by both NGO representatives and government was the need for investment in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and preparedness activities.

*“Governments and donors need to invest in DRR and preparedness to maintain local capacity. DRR is humanitarian response – they have to be linked.”*

*- Interviewee #2*

One organisation did not look to seek DRR funding in favour of other strategic development goals. Subsequently an opportunity was lost to both increase community resilience through preparedness and to maintain a relationship built by the response (Interviewee #2). Other organisations look to DRR projects as a means to develop capacity.

*“Disaster response is a stepping-stone to long-term projects and long-term projects are a platform for responding to disaster. We look for synergy between long-term projects and disaster response projects.”*

*- Interviewee #6*

Interviewees spoke directly to the question of whether Cyclone Evan built their capacity for disaster response. There were several development and preparedness projects, and potential for future projects, that arose for NGOs out of the relationships built with government, donors and each other. These projects have enhanced the local NGOs capacity to respond in the future. It was generally felt that by participating in the response that the organisations did build their capacity for future involvement.

*“Disaster response in general has the potential to increase organisational effectiveness.”*

*- Interviewee #6*

Some organisations have had ongoing projects that have built on the relationships made with government, other NGOs, and with donors during the cluster meetings after Cyclone Evan (Interviewee #1).

*“Implementing the projects further strengthened relationships with donors and other partners and created a workforce we can call on.”*

*- Interviewee #1*

These projects, which increase organisational and financial capacity, have been a direct and positive outcome of Cyclone Evan responses. As organisations build capacity with development projects they can then build disaster risk management (DRM) strategies into those projects. Interviewees looked to incorporate strategies for responding to disasters in between disasters.

*“The key is preparedness in quiet times. Ensure disaster response is part of organisational strategy. A strategy could include having a disaster response team member from each project that was released from the project in times of disaster.”*

*- Interviewee #3*

Interviewee #3 highlights above the human resource challenges involved in implementing a disaster response and at the same time maintaining existing development projects. Organisations also reflected on their ability to build capacity.

*“The capacity to build capacity is lacking. A regional strategy over a longer period of time for capacity building is necessary.”*

*- Interviewee #3*

The above interviewee identified that to build capacity implies there has to be the means available to build that capacity. Another interviewee reflected on the gaps in available capacity to build capacity.

*“There is potential to increase capacity. Expertise is there but not everybody has the right type of expertise. There is knowledge and skills in relation to DRM but the link to the individual NGO is missing.”*

*- Interviewee #5*

The links referred to above indicate the need for forums to be made available for the sharing of DRM knowledge. Capacity building in NGOs should include building DRM knowledge and skills. This includes making available funding for NGOs to carry out these types of capacity building projects. These projects would assist not only DRM capacity but also general organisational capacity.

In Samoa the Community Disaster and Climate Risk Management (CDCRM) contribute to both community resilience and maintain the capacity of NGOs between disaster responses in Samoa. This has been implemented by two NGOs on behalf of the government (Disaster Management Office, 2013:6). It helps communities identify hazards and create an action plan to mitigate and respond to those hazards (Interviewee #1, #3, #4, #5).

*“the CDCRM program is important between disasters [for Samoa], there is a need to work more closely with NGOs”*

*- Interviewee #5*

Interviewees also commented on the impacts of the disaster response that reflected directly on community resilience. Interviewee #4 identified that there is an ongoing need for community networking.

*“If communities are trained well this will help alleviate our work during a disaster response.”*

*- Interviewee #4*

There is awareness and trust among communities for the NGOs that responded within their communities. This enables DRR activities that increase preparedness to be more effective (Interviewee #4).

## **IN SUMMARY**

This chapter summarised the results of the interviews and document analysis on the response to Cyclone Evan. It highlighted the practical application of the disaster response structures and the importance of partnerships and coordination to improve the effectiveness of a disaster response mentioned in the literature review chapters. It has also highlighted the real need to consider NGO capacity between disasters. This is so that effective assistance can be made available to government to meet the needs of affected communities. The links between the results of the interviewees' observations in chapter 4 and the literature reviews in chapter 2 and 3 will be explored further in chapter 5 in terms of the research questions introduced in chapter 1.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS: BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY IN NGOS FOR DISASTER RESPONSE IN SAMOA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Investigating how NGOs in Samoa responded to Cyclone Evan revealed some key factors to consider when building the organisational and financial capacity of NGOs. Samoa has provided an interesting case study because it was the subject of two natural disasters that occurred relatively close in timeframe: the tsunami in September 2009 and Cyclone Evan in December 2012. The proximity of these disasters added to the discussion of capacity building in NGOs for disaster response.

The aim of this research was to investigate the effect of Cyclone Evan on the organisational and financial capacity of the NGOs that responded in Samoa. The literature review in chapters 2 and 3 indicated both the importance of the role of NGOs in a disaster response and the necessity for NGOs to have adequate capacity with which to respond. These chapters also identified the challenges that Samoan NGOs face when attempting to build capacity. In chapter 4 the specific experiences of NGOs during the Cyclone Evan response were explored through semi-structured interviews and a document analysis. These experiences further highlighted the importance of the role of NGOs in a disaster response and the need to explore ways in which to build their capacity. The interviews and document analysis also revealed that the DRM sector in Samoa has evolved and that NGOs have had an opportunity to address their capacity needs. Chapter 5 will now discuss the findings in the previous chapters in light of the following research questions, which were introduced in chapter 1:

1. How do NGOs in Samoa build their organisational and financial capacity in order to respond to disasters?
2. What are the successes and challenges of effective and sustainable capacity building in NGOs operating in Samoa for disaster response?

3. What was the effect of donor-funded Cyclone Evan projects on the organisational and financial capacity of NGOs operating in Samoa to respond to future disasters?

This chapter will first discuss the general findings of the research. The three subsequent sections will then address each research question individually. Finally, the implications for NGOs are discussed and some areas of further research are identified.

## **GENERAL FINDINGS**

A strong NGO sector can greatly assist governments in their efforts to meet the needs of its people following a disaster (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:51). In many ways the recent tsunami marked a coming of age for Samoan NGOs, the Samoa DMO and their capacity to respond to disasters. Interviewees shared that the tsunami response experience, just three years prior to Cyclone Evan, meant that experiences and relationships gained were leveraged in the Cyclone Evan response. Cyclone Evan showed the positive effect of good partnerships. In order to create good partnerships in an intense emergency response situation good relationships are required prior to the disaster. The challenge however is to keep the relationships and knowledge across much longer timeframes (Smillie, 2001:20). Staff within NGOs will undoubtedly change. Therefore creating institutional knowledge and relationships, as well as individual knowledge, is important (James, 1994:22). This challenge is especially difficult when relationships are primarily about the people within the organisations being committed to the relationship as opposed to relationships between organisations themselves (Eade, 1997:22).

Interviewees and the literature indicated that the capacity to respond is affected by the capacity an organisation has prior to a disaster and also the disaster itself may damage existing organisational capacity (Dorosh et al., 2010:183). A key challenge in many disasters is that basic resources that are usually taken for granted - such as power, water and communications - are compromised by the disaster itself. The ability to procure adequate supplies, the availability of adequate funds and human resources are all factored into an organisation's capacity to respond effectively.

An important part of each response is the subsequent debrief and analysis of the lessons learned which is completed after each disaster, such as those found in the Samoan government debrief reports (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2013). It is these analyses that inform future practice and preparedness activities. The impact of the response on the capacity to respond to future disasters largely depends on an organisation's ability to reflect on lessons learned, both positive and negative, and to apply them (Interviewee #3 (Dorosh et al., 2010:186).

Comparisons between the literature and the interviewees' experiences demonstrated that the response of the NGOs in Samoa in some ways was equal or better than other examples. In Samoa, the DAC managed the coordination of the response (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2011). The UN cluster approach to coordination did not work so well in the 2008 Pakistan earthquake however interviewees in Samoa commented that the water cluster<sup>1</sup> operated well in the 2012 Cyclone Evan (Balcik et al., 2009:26). A good example of an NGO partnership working well is in India where NGOs had formed effective partnerships after the 2004 Asian Tsunami (Kilby, 2008). This mirrors the experience in Samoa where three NGOs worked together with government agencies to supply purified water to affected communities (Interviewee #1, #2, #3, #4). The next section looks at how NGOs build organisational capacity to allow positive partnerships as part of an effective response.

## **BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY**

This section discusses the findings of the first research question: how NGOs in Samoa build their organisational and financial capacity in order to respond to disasters. A study of the literature in chapter 2 found that capacity building is more effective as a long-term iterative process, involving more than one-off training activities (Land, 2000). If organisational capacity issues are not resolved then performance is affected (Fowler et al., 1995:1). NGOs participating in disaster response usually want to increase their impact (Rex, No Date:1). To increase their sustainability NGOs need to increase their organisational capacity (Korten,

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<sup>1</sup> Other sectors were predominantly covered by government and therefore were not the subject of this report.

1987:145). In Samoa, SUNGO contributes to building the organisational and financial capacity of NGOs by offering not only training activities but also the opportunity for NGOs to undergo capacity assessments (Cretney, 2013; SUNGO Website, 2014). As discussed in chapter 2, capacity assessments are used by a number of organisations to facilitate a process whereby an NGO can consider their current position in terms of organisational and financial capacity and what the next steps are likely to be in order to grow organisational and financial capacity (The World Bank, 2012:16). In addition to this, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) facilitate specific disaster response training at times, with the assistance of donors and other government ministries, which goes some way into building the capacity of NGOs more specifically for disaster response (Méheux & Prasad, 2014). As discussed in chapter 2, this kind of one-off training only supplements the capacity building process for NGOs and does not involve all the organisational capacity building processes that might be necessary (Pearson, 2011). Additionally, NGOs can only take advantage of this kind of one off training event if they are carrying out ongoing activities and therefore have staff available to attend such training events (Dorosh et al., 2010:178).

The results from the interviewees and the literature indicate that there are three main activities that NGOs can participate in to build and maintain capacity for disaster response. Firstly, it is important to recognise that relationships between all stakeholders are part of the capacity of an organisation and to foster them (Kilby, 2008:121). Secondly, interviewees explained that to participate in, and find donors to invest in, disaster risk reduction and preparedness projects is essential for capacity building (Interviewee #2, #3, #4, #5)(Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012; UNOCHA, 2014:23). Thirdly, both of these activities can be facilitated by participation in coordinated disaster responses (Interviewee #1, #4). These three capacity-building activities are further elaborated on in the following three subsections.

### **Fostering Relationships with Other Stakeholders**

This study indicates that strong relationships between all stakeholders are a part of the capacity of an organisation. These relationships include those between international and local NGOs, those between local NGOs and government and those between different NGOs. Relationships are a key factor because of the trust and confidence

required to work together in a high stress environment (Interviewee #2, #7). This study showed that strengthened relationships enhance an organisation's ability to respond to future disasters. As seen in the Asian tsunami example in chapter 3, good pre-disaster relationships form the basis of strong partnerships required to carry out effective response projects (Kilby, 2008:120). Interviewees from Samoa explained that relationships with government and donors led to funding opportunities for further projects. Additionally these relationships can create the opportunity to increase the impact of a response activity by pooling available resources with other stakeholders for a coordinated response (Interviewee #2, #4).

Adding to the Samoan experience, chapter 3 identified two recent documents emphasising the importance of partnership. Both the World Bank Strategic Policy and the PHT called for the utilization of partnerships between NGOs and government. These forums indicate that stakeholders in the DRM sector, including donors, are recognising the importance of funding DRR & preparedness activities and of involving NGOs in that endeavour. If the recommendations from these forums are acted upon, then there is further opportunity for NGOs to increase their capacity to participate in an effective disaster response (UNOCHA, 2014).

The interviewees also revealed that valuable lessons were learned by international NGOs when they found that the role of their local NGO development partners could not be assumed to be a humanitarian one when required, simply because of an existing development relationship or a previous humanitarian relationship. The lessons included being realistic about the expectations of a development partner's current level of capacity and desire to become a humanitarian partner. By learning to manage relationships between international NGOs and local NGOs that they have built relationships with, there is a belief that both the international and local organisations have become stronger and better able to respond (Interviewee #6). The interviewees highlighted issues of how assets are used and where they are stored between disasters. There was some indication that more accurate tracking and management of disaster response assets is required between disasters.

### **Pursuing DRR and Preparedness Projects Between Disasters**

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and preparedness projects provide funding and experience for NGOs and their staff between disasters (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012). If NGOs have ongoing projects they are more likely to be in a position to take advantage of capacity building opportunities (Dorosh et al., 2010:178). Politically in Samoa, there is local and regional acknowledgement of the need to address the capacity of NGOs using DRR and preparedness projects as instruments. (UNOCHA, 2014). The challenge is that funding for preparedness projects both in Samoa and other regions is limited and time-bound (Ramalingam et al., No Date:24).

The document analysis revealed that in Samoa the Samoa Development Strategy has evolved, between the 2008 and 2012 strategic plans, to recognise DRR strategies as important to the country (The Government of Samoa, 2012). This change allows NGOs to pursue donors who wish to support the national strategy. This, along with the implementation of the Community Disaster and Climate Risk Management (CDCRM) program, demonstrates the level of importance DRR now holds within the Samoan government ministries. Allowing NGOs to participate in national DRR programs, like CDCRM in Samoa, ensures that NGOs are in a stronger position to form partnerships in a disaster response (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:64). The challenge is gaining donor funding for these types of DRR programs and to provide opportunities for NGOs to be part of the national DRR strategy.

### **Participate Actively in Disaster Responses**

Interviewees suggested that partnering and coordinating with government during the response was important for building capacity. It contributed to the effectiveness of NGOs by providing the opportunity for NGOs to have access to the rapid needs assessment and to understand what government priorities were. Using this knowledge NGOs could support government priorities and provide services that meet the needs of affected communities (Interviewee #2). The participation in the disaster response provided the impetus for NGOs to demonstrate their capability and to gain the confidence of government and donors. This demonstration of NGO capability can lead to opportunities for future funding, either for recovery, development projects or DRR and preparedness projects. A PHT recommendation recognised that it would be

beneficial for more NGOs to act as implementing partners during a response (UNOCHA, 2014:23). A benefit to an NGO in becoming an implementing partner in a disaster response is the opportunity to increase their organisational and financial capacity during the course of the response.

The next section looks at research question two and the capacity building successes and challenges for NGOs operating in Samoa.

## **SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES IN SAMOA**

Research question two sought to identify the successes and challenges of NGO capacity building in Samoa. Effective capacity building for NGOs in Samoa responding to disaster has had many successes and challenges. As discussed building and maintaining relationships is a key capacity building success in Samoa's DRM sector. The major challenge remains the continuity of funding for ongoing activities, including DRR projects, in order to increase organisational capacity and also to take advantage of one-off capacity building opportunities.

### **Capacity Building Successes In Samoa**

It came out strongly from talking to interviewees that good relationships with government were built during Cyclone Evan. The successful formation of partnerships involved during the response also demonstrated NGOs ability to utilise and build upon existing relationships. These relationships were fostered during the response by attendance at sector and cluster meetings, which provided NGOs an opportunity to meet and collaborate together. The successful coordination of all stakeholders and the partnerships formed could not have happened without the willingness of all parties involved. This demonstrated both the willingness, and the ability, of the government and NGO sector in Samoa to work together to provide an urgent service to those affected.

Successes in Samoa also include legislative and national strategy changes (The Government of Samoa, 2012). These indicate that the government is recognising the importance of national DRR strategies. Samoa is in a good position to implement this strategy, with the potential to utilise NGOs through the creation of the CDCRM

program. By taking DRR preparedness to the communities NGOs can call upon their experience to increase community preparedness and build their own capacity at the same time (Ramalingam et al., No Date:6). Analysing lessons learned from disaster responses can strengthen organisational capacity (Dorosh et al., 2010:167). This is done in Samoa by the government and by some NGOs especially in the area of centralised coordination (Samoa Disaster Advisory Committee, 2013).

Interviewees identified that successes during Cyclone Evan included the high capacity in the area of financial management of each NGO. This enables a good level of trust with donors and encourages more opportunity for future project funding. Along with these successes in Samoa, there were also examples of challenges in building capacity for a disaster response.

### **Capacity Building Challenges In Samoa**

Challenges faced by NGOs in Samoa include the lack of local capacity building expertise. After a capacity assessment is completed, the task of acting on the results needs to begin. In Samoa, and as reflected in the literature, it was suggested by interviewees that the capability to build capacity is lacking, with the right skills not being in the right organisations (Interviewees #3, #5) (Smillie, 2001:20). As previously highlighted capacity building is a process and takes time and, correspondingly, there is a need for ongoing training initiatives. Local capacity developers are important to the development of local organisations as they have the ability to respond in an ongoing manner (Pratt, 2010:1). Due to the high frequency of disasters, the international community cannot always be available to respond to a disaster. This means that good local expertise is vital for the ongoing development of a country and its ability to recover from a natural disaster (Ramalingam et al., No Date:6).

A continual challenge is to take actions stemming from agreements made in formal regional meetings, such as the PHT, and legislative changes made to the Act and NDMP. Gaining funding to include NGOs in ongoing cluster meetings and DRR projects is the key challenge in making progress (UNOCHA, 2014). While, DRR projects may go some way to meeting the organisational capacity needed to respond

to a disaster, they do not address all the financial capacity needs. As discussed in chapter 2 financial sustainability is precarious when reliant on project funding (Bebbington et al., 2008; James, 1994; Low & Davenport, 2002). Long-term institutional funding investment remains a challenge for NGOs in Samoa, which mirrors the literature in other regions (James, 1994:17).

The importance to the capacity of an NGO of building good relationships cannot be over-emphasised in this report. The challenge is to maintain relationships between all stakeholders in between disasters. Accessing the right kind of funding for a specific project that allows this type of relationship to be maintained, even after key people have left the relevant organisations, is important. This is where the creation of Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) and formal agreements can support in maintaining institutional relationships (Interviewee #2). These agreements record a structure and demonstrate intent at an organisational level to provide a basis for which new staff can build relationships.

Further challenges in human resources are faced as both the interviewees and the literature identified high burn-out rates among aid staff due to more demand than staff had the skills, or time, to respond to (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012; Smillie, 2001) (Interviewee #1 and #4). The next section looks at the effect of Cyclone Evan on the capacity of NGOs to respond to future disasters.

## **THE EFFECT OF THE CYCLONE EVAN RESPONSE**

The final research question was to identify the effect of Cyclone Evan projects on the organisational and financial capacity of NGOs operating in Samoa to respond to future disasters. Interviewees indicated that by responding to Cyclone Evan, NGOs that participated gained valuable capacity. Cyclone Evan provided opportunities for reaffirmation of partnerships and the creation of new relationships. It also provided an opportunity for NGOs to reflect strategically on when and how an organisation becomes involved in a disaster response. Additionally, interviewees commented that during the response there were opportunities to liaise with government. Successful interaction with government led to increased credibility for many organisations.

Interviewees commented that the Cyclone Evan disaster response was an opportunity to design future development projects. Development projects between potential humanitarian partners provide additional strength to the organisational and financial capacity of NGOs to respond to disasters and help to meet the challenge to maintain capacity between disaster responses (Dorosh et al., 2010:178).

It should be emphasised, however, that the disaster response structure is a largely temporary one. Once an organisation has finished its initial disaster response objective, the organisation has to go back to its regular local operations (Rex, No Date:9). It is during this time that building capacity using the lessons learned and relationships formed can take place. The response to Cyclone Evan demonstrated that when lessons are learned from previous disasters, such as the improved coordination over the 2009 Samoan Tsunami, then a more effective response could be mounted. Ideally further capacity building would take place within a DRR project to ensure a focus on the types of capacity building opportunities that are specific to disaster response. These include managing evacuation centres and staff being part of national simulation exercises.

Having reflected on the research questions the next section concludes the report by discussing implications of this research for NGOs and possible areas for further research.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The aim of the research was to investigate the effect of Cyclone Evan on the organisational and financial capacity of the NGOs that responded in Samoa. Interviewees and the literature showed that capacity building attempts for NGOs to respond to disasters must include building and maintaining relationships in preparation for forming partnerships during a response (Ramalingam et al., No Date:8). The ultimate objective of a disaster response is to effectively meet the needs of affected communities (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012). Samoa has learned many lessons in responding to disasters and building NGO capacity over the past five years. The interviewees indicated that the lessons from the 2009 tsunami enhanced the

capacity of NGOs and assisted them in responding to Cyclone Evan. These lessons have greatly improved Samoa's ability to respond to a disaster in a coordinated and effective manner for the benefit of affected communities. Responding to Cyclone Evan provided an opportunity to build relationships that led to development and preparedness projects. These projects provide potential for organisational and financial capacity building. There is a need for follow-on DRR and preparedness projects to maintain capacity, including relationships after the disaster response.

Including NGOs in DRM is being advocated in current forums such as the PHT meeting and the debrief reports from various disaster responses (UNOCHA, 2014). The decisions of the regional bodies can be used as a platform for advocating for more funding in capacity building through DRR and preparedness programs. They can also be used to advocate for mainstreaming DRR components in development projects from development donors who would not otherwise become involved in humanitarian projects. This would help to maintain the capacity that is built during a response. To this end NGOs need to be aware of funding opportunities (James, 1994:20).

When NGOs are included in the full DRM cycle, from preparedness to response and recovery programs, their capacity to respond increases. If NGOs have increased capacity, their ability to participate in disaster response in a well-coordinated meaningful way is enhanced. One role of NGOs is to continue advocating for funding for these DRR and preparedness programs. Donors can be asked to support not only pure DRR and preparedness initiatives but also the mainstreaming of DRR components within development projects (Eikenberry & Cooper, 2012:64).

Interviewees acknowledged the benefits of being part of coordination bodies such as the DAC in Samoa. Being part of the DAC ensures they have a voice, a practical role in a disaster response and subsequent DRR projects, and also enables NGOs to gain access to opportunities for funding in DRR projects and other capacity building initiatives. With this in mind NGOs taking advantage of these initiatives between disasters assume a responsibility to ensure that they have appropriate capacity before they coordinate and implement activities during emergencies (UNOCHA, 2014).

### **Areas for Further Research**

This research report focused specifically on the capacity of NGOs to support a disaster response in Samoa. The literature highlighted that there was little in the way of an analysis of NGO capacity and the role of NGOs in a disaster response specifically in the Pacific. Many times in NGO studies the Pacific is combined with Asia. Low and Davenport, one of the few to address NGO capacity building in the Pacific, is now over twelve years old (Low & Davenport, 2002). The literature acknowledged that the process of building and maintaining capacity was complex. It also highlighted in general the value of capacity assessments of organisations, particularly in NGOs. Further research could be made on the comparisons of capacity assessments of NGOs in Pacific countries, to assess the existence and/or effectiveness of capacity building techniques and measure the level of capacity of NGOs overall. In Samoa this research could bring together the results of capacity assessment undertaken by SUNGO. By building on Low & Davenport 2002 and other reports such as the 2007 review by NZ AID titled “Building the Samoa NGO support fund”, (Rivers & Sinclair, 2007) this potential research would analyse progress made on capacity building with recommendations for future NGO capacity building efforts.

By looking into the response to Cyclone Evan with a capacity building lens, this report has identified aspects of an effective disaster response, including partnership and collaboration with government and NGOs. Due to the high impact of disasters on small Pacific countries economic development, it is important to minimise this damage through effective disaster response and mitigate through DRR and preparedness projects. This report has highlighted the importance of increasing NGO capacity in order to strengthen the impact of DRM activities from preparedness to response and recovery.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: TABLE OF CAPACITY BUILDING WEBSITES

**Table 2: Capacity Building Websites**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Link</b>
The African Capacity Building Foundation	<a href="http://www.acbf-pact.org">http://www.acbf-pact.org</a>
Asia-Pacific Aid Effectiveness Portal	<a href="http://www.aideffectiveness.org/Tools-Capacity-Development-Plans-and-Strategies.html">http://www.aideffectiveness.org/Tools-Capacity-Development-Plans-and-Strategies.html</a>
Capacity.org	<a href="http://www.capacity.org/capacity/opencms/en/index.html">http://www.capacity.org/capacity/opencms/en/index.html</a>
Community Development Resource Association	<a href="http://www.cdra.org.za">http://www.cdra.org.za</a>
European Union	<a href="http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/home">http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/home</a>
FAO Capacity Development Portal	<a href="http://www.fao.org/capacitydevelopment/capacity-development-home/en/">http://www.fao.org/capacitydevelopment/capacity-development-home/en/</a>
IMF Institute for Capacity Development	<a href="http://www.imf.org/external/np/ins/english/">http://www.imf.org/external/np/ins/english/</a>
International NGO Training and Research Center	<a href="http://www.intrac.org">http://www.intrac.org</a>
Learning Network on Capacity Development (UNDP)	<a href="http://www.lencd.org/home">http://www.lencd.org/home</a>
National Council of NonProfits	<a href="http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/capacity-building/what-capacity-building">http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/capacity-building/what-capacity-building</a>
The Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (6 UN Organisations)	<a href="http://www.cadri.net/en/areas-we-work/capacity-development">http://www.cadri.net/en/areas-we-work/capacity-development</a>
UN DESA	<a href="http://www.un.org/esa/cdo/">http://www.un.org/esa/cdo/</a>

UNDP	<a href="http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/capacitybuilding/overview.html">http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/capacitybuilding/overview.html</a>
World Bank Capacity Development Resource Center	<a href="http://go.worldbank.org/4CE7W046K0">http://go.worldbank.org/4CE7W046K0</a>

## APPENDIX 2: TABLE OF DRR WEBSITES

**Table 3: Table of DRR Websites**

Organisation	Link
Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Centre	<a href="http://www.adrc.asia">http://www.adrc.asia</a>
Asia-Pacific Gateway for Disaster Risk Management & Development	<a href="http://www.drrgateway.net">http://www.drrgateway.net</a>
NGO VOICE - Voluntary Organisation In Cooperation in Emergencies	<a href="http://www.ngovoice.org">http://www.ngovoice.org</a>
United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction	<a href="http://www.unisdr.org">http://www.unisdr.org</a>

## APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION SHEET



### INFORMATION SHEET

#### **NGO Capacity Building and Disaster Response: A Case Study of the Effect on NGO Capacity after their Response to Cyclone Evan In Samoa**

Hi, My name is Virginia Pycroft and I am currently enrolled in a Master's research project in the Development Studies Programme of Massey University. This study contributes to a research project taken to complete the requirements for a Masters degree in International Development at Massey University.

The project will seek to identify how capacity can be built and maintained within NGOs in order for them to respond effectively to a disaster. The objectives of my thesis are:

1. To investigate how NGOs operating in Samoa build their organisational and financial capacity in order to respond to disasters.
2. To identify the successes and challenges of effective and sustainable capacity building in NGOs operating in Samoa for disaster response.
3. To identify the effect that donor-funded Cyclone Evan projects had on the organisational and financial capacity of NGOs operating in Samoa to respond to future disasters.

As you might already know, I work for Adventist Development & Relief Agency (ADRA) Samoa and was involved in the response to Cyclone Evan. I am interested in learning how capacity is developed within organisations and how to maintain that to ensure maximum impact. This research combines my interest in capacity building and the development NGO sector.

I will be asking representatives from up to eight organisations that responded to Cyclone Evan in Samoa to participate in a semi-structured interview. If you agree to participate in this project, the interview will involve answering questions about your organisations response to Cyclone Evan and the organisational capacity involved before, during and after the response.

The information from the interview will be analysed along with a document analysis to establish the effect disaster responses have on the capacity of NGOs. All personal information relating to both you and your organisation will be kept confidential. Generic labelling will be used when referring to interview results. All interview notes will be securely stored to ensure privacy and confidentiality. General project findings will be made available to you upon request. The use of specific information on individuals or organisations will be limited to academic purposes.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you do agree to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you participate you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any question
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation

- Provide information on the understanding that your name, and that of your organisation, will not be used
- If you agreed to have this interview taped you can ask to have the tape recorder switched off at any time.

Thank you for participating in this study. Please do not hesitate to contact me, or my supervisor, if you have any questions or concerns.

**Contact:**

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*This research project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*

*If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06-350 5249, email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz).*

**APPENDIX 4: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
**TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**NGO Capacity Building and Disaster Response:  
A Case Study of the NGO Response to Cyclone Evan In Samoa**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at this time.

I understand that my name or the name of my organisation will not be identified during the writing up of this research.

I agree to this interview being taped with the understanding that I can ask for the tape recorder to be switched off any time during the interview: Yes / No

I would like to receive a summary of the findings of this study when it is completed: Yes / No

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Name.....

Signature ..... Date:.....

Contact information for a summary of the research to be sent:  
(email or postal address)

.....

.....



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