



Pacific Peoples Housing Forum

New Zealand

Post-Event Report

Pacific Peoples Housing Forum
Fale Pasifika, University of Auckland
9am – 5pm Friday, May 17, 2019
Auckland, New Zealand

Organised by



and Hon. Jenny Salesa,
Minister for Building
and Construction

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Event Summary

More than 100 delegates from New Zealand and Pacific Nations of Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and the Cook Islands attended the inaugural Pacific People's Housing Forum. First of its kind, this one-day event brought together representatives from local and national Government, private sector and academia to dialogue, collaborate and problem-solve on Pacific People's housing both in the Pacific and in New Zealand.

The theme of the forum "powering collaboration for housing impact" received high-level support with Hon. Jenny Salesa, Minister for Building and Construction. She stated in her closing address the government's commitment to addressing housing affordability concerns in the Pacific community by adopting a rent-to-buy programme and a shared equity initiative.

In addition, Vui Mark Gosche, Deputy Chair of Housing New Zealand agreed to deepen collaborative relationships between Housing New Zealand, community housing providers and Pasifika service organisations.

Panel discussions on disaster response and resilience highlighted the need for an assets-based approach for development, where the skills and strengths within the community are leveraged. In doing so, dependency and reliance on aid are reduced. "We need to work in partnership with affected communities", explained Leveni 'Aho, former Director for the National Disaster Management Office in Tonga.

The housing finance panel discussed the need for more effective financing options for post-disaster housing within the Pacific. Vaine Nooana-Arioka, Managing Director for Bank of the Cook Islands emphasised the importance of collaboration and availing resources ahead of the next big disaster event.

Other highlights included contributions from Pacific young people on housing adequacy. Prior to the forum, organisers hosted an essay competition for young people aged 16-18 based in the Pacific. Entrants answered the question "Habitat for Humanity is working toward a world where everyone has a decent place to live. What are your hopes for housing in your country?" Three finalists representing Samoa, Tonga and Fiji presented excerpts of their essays during the forum. 'Ana Malia Falemaka illustrated the importance of decent housing with her statement "home is the starting place of love, hopes and dreams – especially the dreams of children".

Overview of Discussions

Affordable Housing and Innovations in Housing Finance

Within Pacific communities in New Zealand, homeownership levels have fallen drastically to only 18% compared with over 50% in the 1980s. Additionally, Pacific communities are only 7% of the total population but constitute 36% of state housing tenants.

Expanding the accessibility of affordable housing will require leadership from all major stakeholders. The government can give greater support to pathways to home ownership for people on lower and modest incomes such as rent-to-buy schemes or shared ownership schemes. Vui Mark Gosche pointed out that this could be more cost-effective than the current practice of providing accommodation supplements, which does not address the root cause of housing unaffordability.

Additionally, financial capability programmes as recommended by Vui Mark Gosche will help ensure the success of families when they become homeowners. “It shows that we can do it, but it takes collaboration”, he stated.

Within the Pacific, creative collaboration with the public and private sector will help produce more effective financing options for post-disaster housing. This should be bolstered by directing more resource towards disaster risk reduction programmes. In addition to the significant impact of saving human lives, effective planning can reduce the financial impact of natural disasters.¹

Disaster Resilience

The collaboration was seen as a vital component of building resilience to disasters in the Pacific. First, by working in partnership with affected communities, long-term sustainability and community empowerment is promoted. Secondly, in relation to disaster-response activities, proper coordination will ensure timely and effective support is given to disaster-affected communities. As such, there is an opportunity for Pacific diaspora communities in New Zealand, Australia and the United States to amplify the impact of their post-disaster support if they are coordinated with government agencies and aid agencies.

Quality of housing

Within New Zealand, poor quality rental housing due to the aging housing stock is a significant issue for Pacific families. In addition to addressing this, more culturally appropriate housing designs need to be developed for various kinds of Pacific households.

In the Pacific, there is a range of issues that affect housing quality and consequent disaster resilience. These include lack of skilled carpenters, limited access to high-quality building materials due to cost and remoteness as well as the limited reach of government policies and building codes. An integrated approach is required for addressing these challenges. Some strategies include improving the accessibility of building codes, expanding access to training in disaster-resilient building techniques and research into traditional and emerging building materials and techniques.

¹ According to the United Nations, every dollar spent on disaster preparedness programmes saves \$7 in disaster response.

Climate Change

Nobel Prize-winning climate analyst Penehuro Lefale stated that effective strategies to address climate change must start with a clear understanding of the definition of climate change itself. At present, differences exist between the United Nations definition and the scientific definition, giving rise to confusion and inertia in political will. Additionally, consideration should be given to the physical context where normal seasonal weather activity should be differentiated from long-term patterns.

It was also noted that effective housing strategies should not conflate the work areas of disaster risk reduction and climate change. Although related, each is its own speciality. Improving disaster resilience must work in tandem with the political will to reduce carbon emissions, particularly from fossil fuels. Failure to do so will lead to increasing numbers of climate refugees. This has implications for housing in countries like New Zealand as well as in the Pacific.



Recommendations and Next steps

The following are outcomes of discussions or announcements made at the Forum.

Climate Change: A recognition of the need for more published climate change research from the Pacific, in order to ensure adequate representation in global strategies and actions.

Housing Affordability in New Zealand: The New Zealand Government is working towards developing a scalable rent-to-buy product as well as shared ownership products for people on low-to-modest incomes.

Collaboration:

- Housing New Zealand Board to meet with Community Housing Providers and Pacific Specialist Organisations to develop strategies for improving housing for Pacific Families.
- Association of Development Financing Institutions in the Pacific to hold discussions with specialist-shelter organisations to advance the housing finance agenda for the Pacific.
- Collaboration with HNZ standards team and relevant stakeholders on design requirements for Pacific families.

Youth: Establishing a Habitat Young Leaders group to advocate for housing in the Pacific

Strengthening Pacific Focus:

- Send a team of representatives from the Pacific to the Asia-Pacific Housing Forum in Bangkok in September to raise the visibility of Pacific housing issues in the wider region.
- Host future Pacific People's Housing Forums in Auckland. The next one to be a collaboration with the University of Auckland.



Speakers and Contributors

Opening Speakers

Claire Szabó

Chief Executive Officer
Habitat for Humanity New Zealand
New Zealand

Hon. Jenny Salesa, MP

MP for Manukau East
Minister for Building and Construction
Minister for Ethnic Communities
Associate Minister of Education, Health,
and Housing and Urban Development
New Zealand

Climate Change and Housing

Penehuro Lefale

Director and International Climate
Analyst, LeA International
Samoa

Disaster Housing Panel

Moderator

Masi Latianara

Country Director
Habitat for Humanity Fiji

Speakers

Leveni 'Aho

Former Director for National Disaster
Management Office, Tonga

Tilianamua Lorna Aloalii

Assistant Chief Executive Officer
Asset Management and Building
Ministry of Works Transport and
Infrastructure

Habitat's Work with Pacific People

Taulapapa Brenda Heather-Latu

Habitat for Humanity New Zealand
Director
Honorary Consul for Great Britain and
Northern Ireland to Samoa
Attorney General of Samoa (1997-2006)

Housing Finance Panel

Mata'utia Rula Levi

Chief Executive Officer
Samoa Housing Corporation
Samoa

Sanjeeva Perera

Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Housing and Community
Development
Fiji

Vaine Nooana-Arioka

Managing Director
Bank of Cook Islands
Cook Islands

Pacific Housing in New Zealand

Hon. Vui Mark Gosche

CEO, Vaka Tautua
Labour List MP (1996-1999)
Member of Parliament for Maungakiekie
(1999-2008)
Former Minister of Housing, Pacific
Island Affairs, Corrections and Transport
New Zealand

Feedback from Lead-in Events

Leveni 'Aho

Former Director for National Disaster Management Office, Tonga
Special Envoy to Tonga, World Bank
Tonga

Su'a Julia Wallwork

Country Director
Adventist Development and Relief Agency
Samoa

Youth Panel

Moderator:

Caren Rangī ONZM, FCA

Deputy Chair, Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa
Board Member, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
Professional Governance Practitioner
Associate, Centre for Social Impact New Zealand
Director, Cook Islands Investment Corporation
Director, Le Va
Principal Consultant, Ei Mua Consulting Ltd
Board Member, Pacific Homecare
Director, Pacific Co-operation Broadcasting Ltd
New Zealand

Speakers

Aruna Wallwork-Tuala

Samoa Representative
Samoa

'Ana Malia Falemaka

Tonga Representative
Tonga

Rachel Swann

Fiji Representative
Fiji

Closing Remarks

Hon. Jenny Salesa, MP

MP for Manukau East
Minister for Building and Construction
Minister for Ethnic Communities
Associate Minister of Education, Health, and Housing and Urban Development
New Zealand

Claire Szabó

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Rick Hathaway

Vice President
Habitat for Humanity, Asia-Pacific
Philippines

Evening Contributions

Kaiata Kaitao

Young Writer

Resonate

Auckland-based vocal harmony group

Sponsors

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