

# The Role of Disaster Relief in Pacific Island Countries: A Cause of Increasing Vulnerability?

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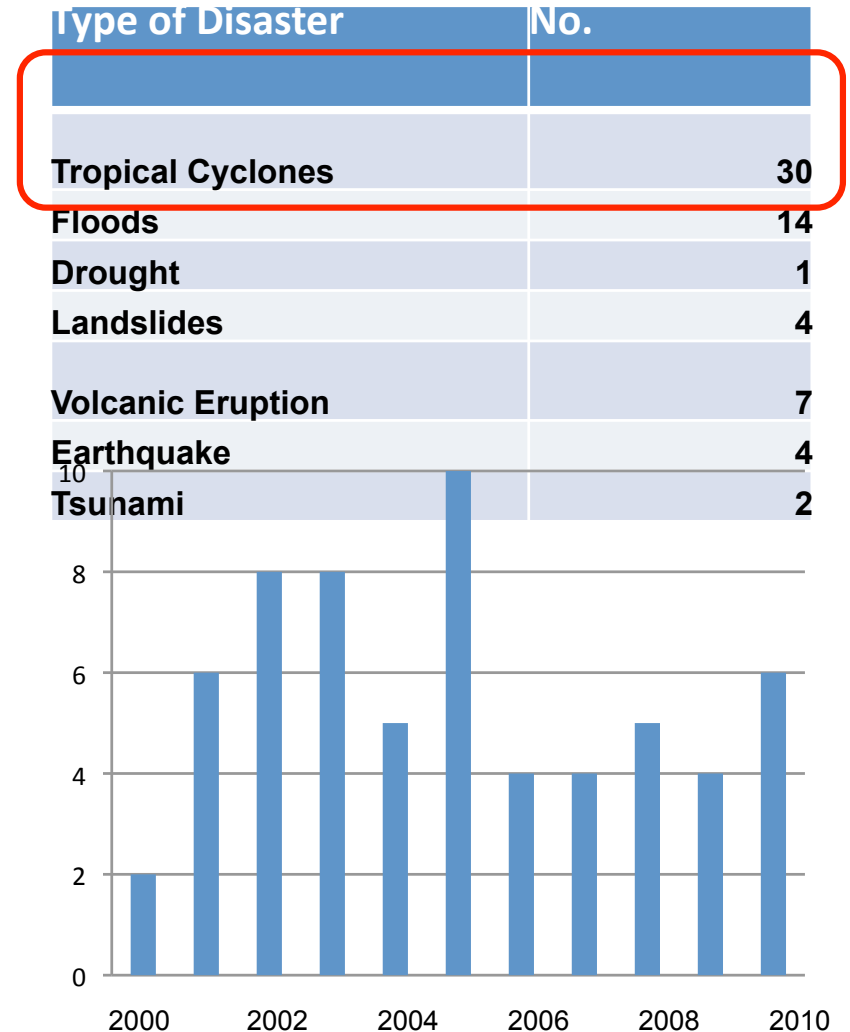
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# Climate Change, Extreme Events and Adaptation

- ◆ EEs likely to be initial signals of CC
- ◆ Changes in mean conditions may increase effects of EEs
- ◆ Climatic extremes are major hazards in PICs
- ◆ People living on islands are not inherently vulnerable
- ◆ PI communities are great adaptors
  - To environment and environmental change and variability
  - To economic, social and political change
    - Colonialism
    - Independence
    - Globalisation
- ◆ Nevertheless these processes of change are reducing resilience



Data extracted from ReliefWeb

# EE Adaptation Options for PICs

## ‘Traditional’

- ◆ Food security
- ◆ Inter-community cooperation
- ◆ Traditional knowledge and its transmission
- ◆ Settlements and buildings

## Contemporary

- ◆ Variants of the ‘traditional’
  - Quantitative
  - Qualitative
- ◆ New elements
  - Technocratic responses
    - Seawalls
    - River control
    - EWS
  - Centralized DRM
    - NDMOs
    - Preparedness
    - Post-disaster assessment
    - **Disaster Relief**

### Increasing:

- Quantities of assistance
- Range of elements
- Speed of implementation
- Sophistication
- Number of players

# Relief in PICs: A Brief History

## 'Contact'

- ◆ e.g. London Missionary Society (LMS): 1840s: two tropical cyclones in the Cook Islands.

## Colonial Governments

- ◆ e.g. Fiji, 1886, tropical cyclone: Rice, ships' biscuits and sugar, Yams from unaffected communities, Planting material for sweet potato, maize and cassava, Costs charged against the tax refunds for the respective provinces
- ◆ By mid 20<sup>th</sup> century relief operations common in Fiji

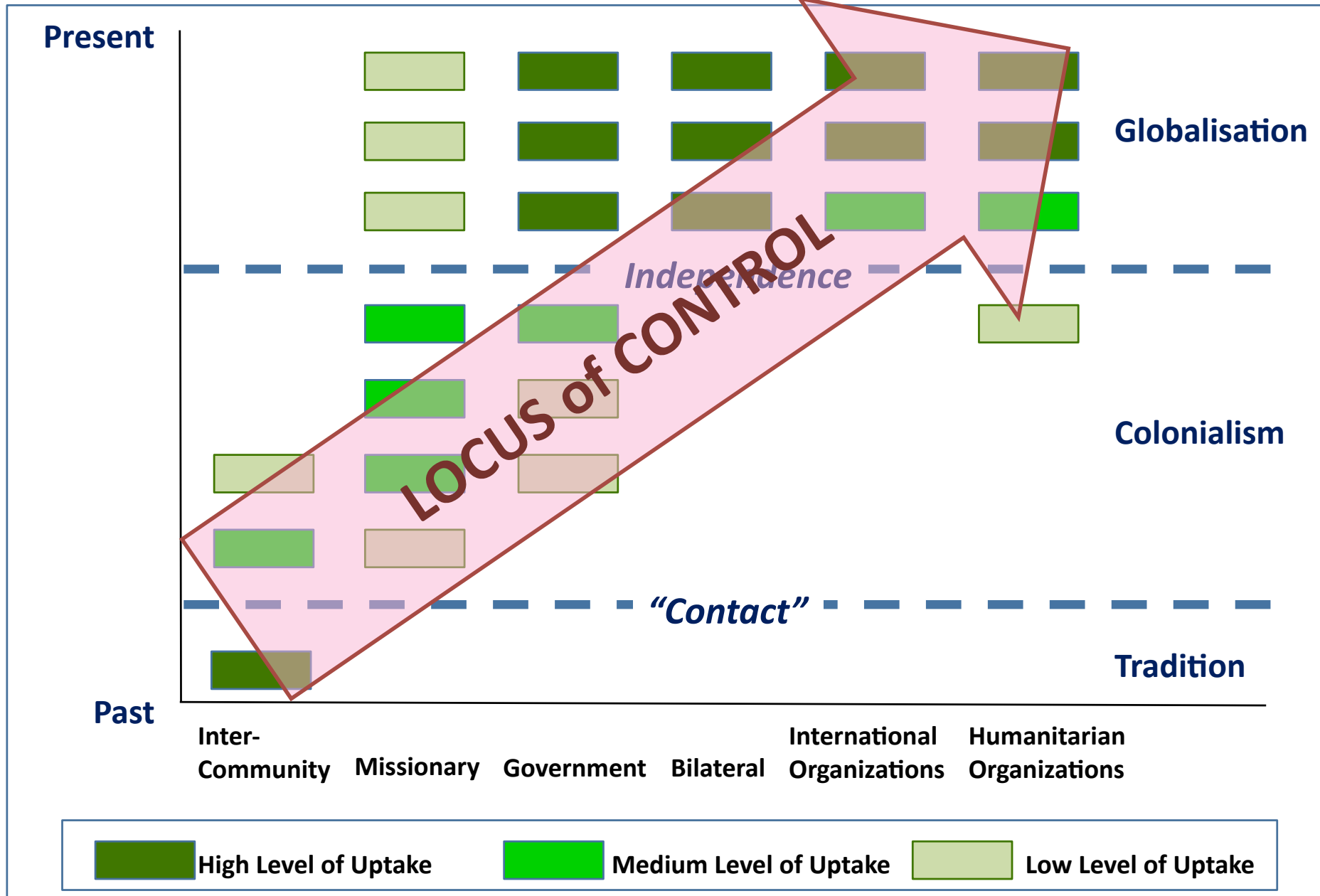
## Newly independent governments

- ◆ e.g. Fiji independent 1970, Hurricane Bebe 1972: "Prime Ministers Hurricane Relief Committee"

## The contemporary Pacific region

- ◆ Relief prompt and substantial
- ◆ Numerous Donors
  - UN / multilateral, Bilateral, International NGOs and IFRC, National governments, Local NGOs and RC committees
- ◆ Relief has increasingly become an expectation

# Pacific Is. Disaster Relief: A Brief History



# The Effects of Relief

## Purposeful

- ◆ Alleviation of suffering
- ◆ Development assistance
- ◆ Welfare (Bayliss-Smith et al.)
- ◆ Political benefits

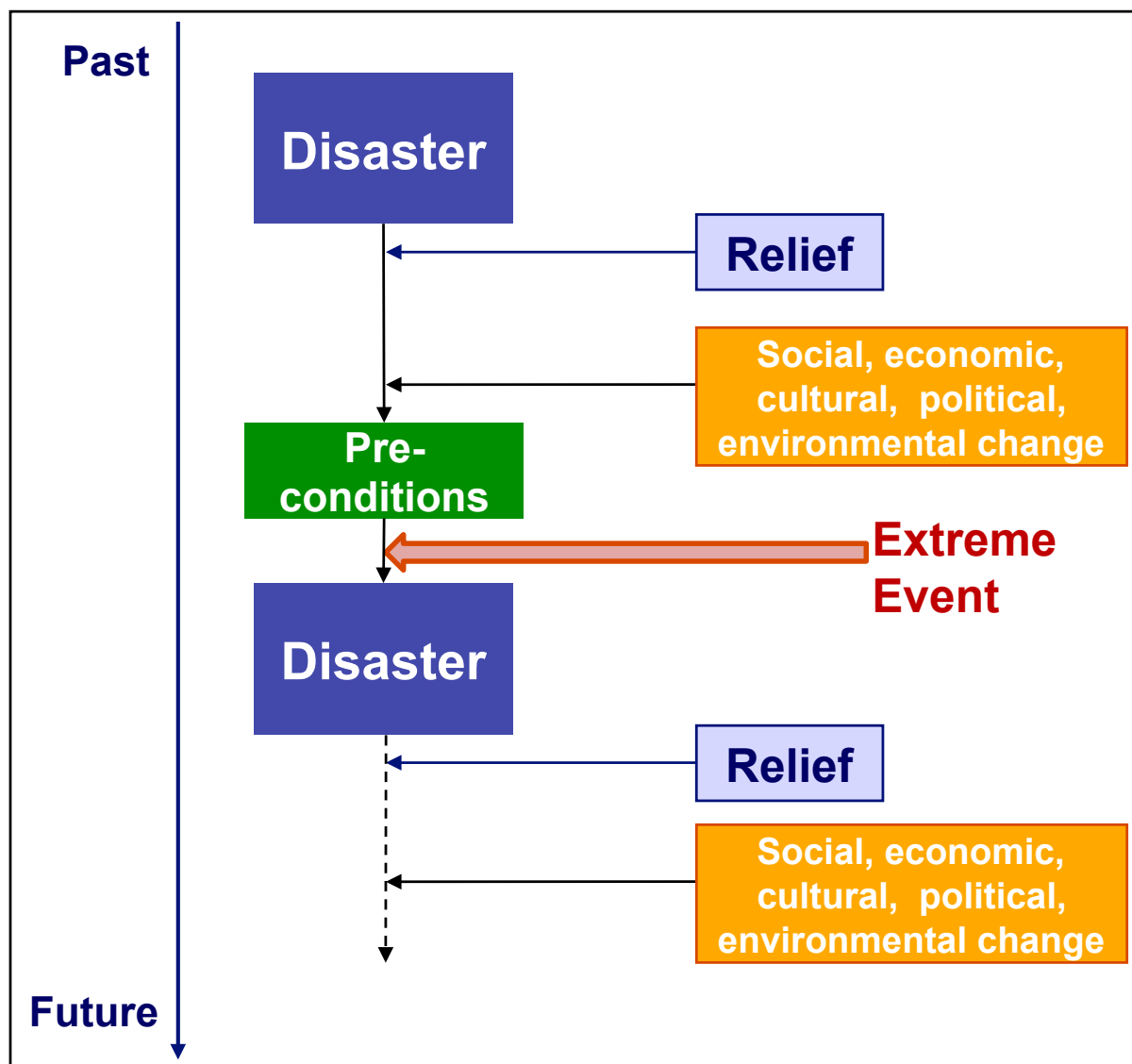
**No longer required**

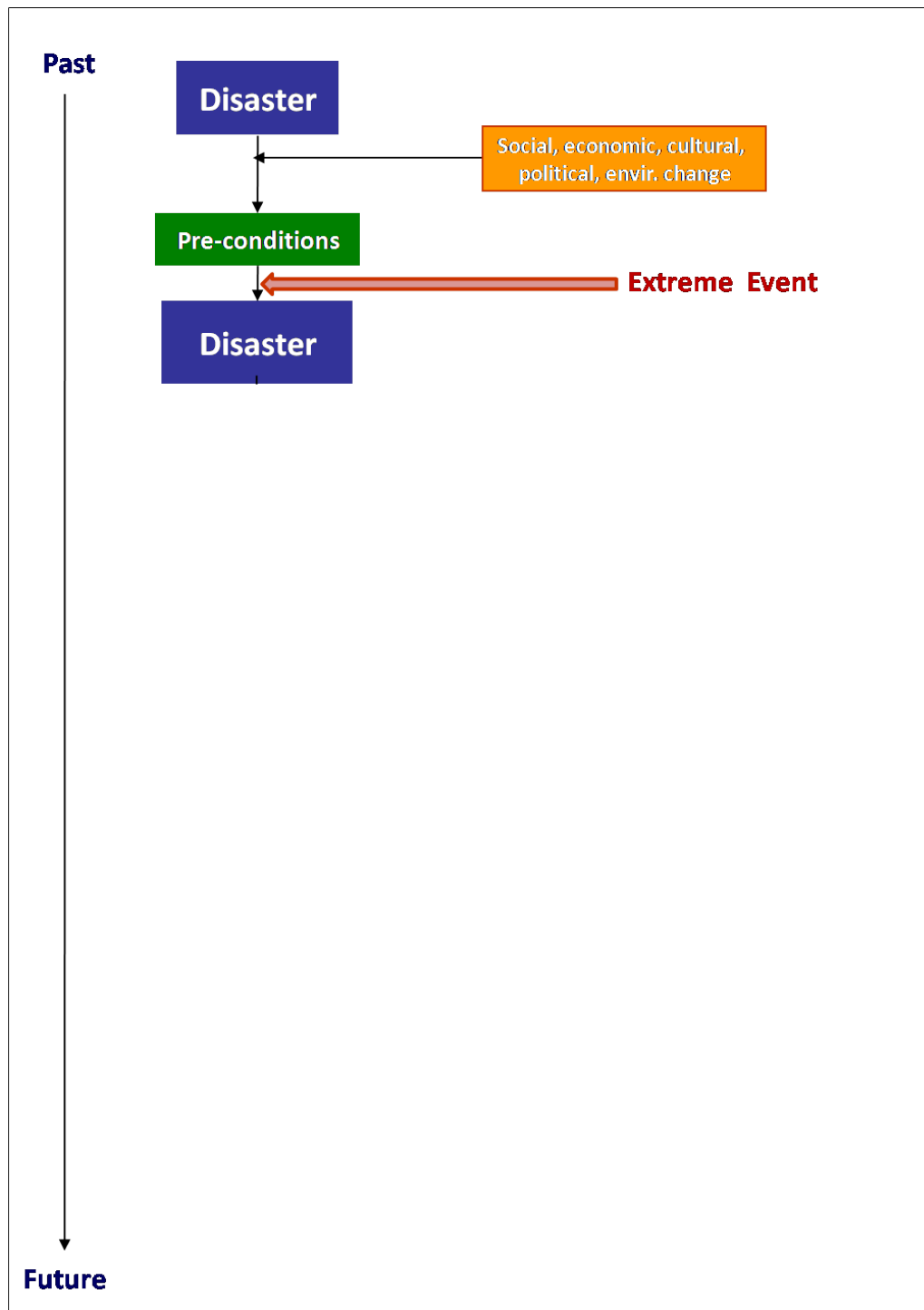
## Incidental

- ◆ Introduction of new foods, buildings
  - Imports
  - Crops
- ◆ Reduces food security
  - Surplus production
  - Food preservation
  - Famine foods
  - Crop biodiversity
  - Intercommunity sharing

# Linking Relief to Vulnerability

- ◆ Disasters reflect pre-disaster conditions
  - Carry-over principle (Quarantelli and Dynes)
  - Progression of vulnerability (Wisner et al.)
- ◆ PIC pre-disaster conditions have changed through time
- ◆ Influenced by general change and the provision of relief after previous disasters





# Moral Dilemma

- ◆ CC may → increased losses
- ◆ Quantum very difficult to establish
- ◆ Nevertheless, polluters should compensate for losses they have caused

**BUT**

- ◆ Relief may be maladaptive
  - Increasing future vulnerability
- ◆ Having contributed to increasing vulnerability should relief be reduced?
  - hardship
- ◆ What then is the responsibility of polluters?
  - Contribute to DRR
  - Community capacity building

# Differential Humanitarian Responses

## Solomon Islands Tsunami

- ◆ April 2007
- ◆ Severe damage to coastal communities and facilities
- ◆ Western Province, capital Gizo and numerous islands
- ◆ 52 fatalities
- ◆ 9,000 homeless

## Cyclone Guba

- ◆ November 2007
- ◆ severe flooding : Oro and Milne Bay provinces
- ◆ Official death toll: 149
- ◆ 1,800-2,000 houses destroyed
- ◆ 9,500 people displaced.
- ◆ 58,000 people required urgent assistance, 150,000 affected

**How much international relief?**

Nearly **US\$20** million

Less than **US\$2** million

**Future Implications:**

**more climate disasters → increased donor fatigue, disinterest?**

# Conclusions

- ◆ **Many factors are contributing to growing vulnerability in PICs**
- ◆ **Relief and CC are just two of these:**
  - **Will the need for disaster relief increase as an effect of climate change?**
  - **How secure is the likelihood of continued relief?**
    - **As a form of aid**
    - **As a form of compensation**
  - **Can the maladaptive effects of disaster relief be reversed?**

**Thanks for Listening**