

## Sixth Meeting of the Pacific Meteorological Council (PMC-6)

Sustaining Weather, Climate, Water and Ocean Services for a Resilient Blue Pacific

14-16 August 2023, Sofitel Fiji Resort and Spa, Denarau, Nadi, Fiji

---

### Agenda item 11.4: Empowering Children with Disaster Risk Knowledge

#### Purpose of the paper

1. To provide update to the Council on the WMO recent activities on empowering children with disaster risk knowledge through the COPE initiative.
2. To recommend to the Council to endorse the COPE initiative for disaster risk knowledge development for children to strengthen community resilience.
3. To recommend the translation of the COPE series to Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) local languages.

#### Background

1. Climate change is increasing the risk of extreme events and disasters<sup>1</sup>. The number of disasters reported in the South-West Pacific tripled over the 50-year period. On average, a disaster was reported every 30 days in the 1970s, every 15 days in the 1980s and 1990s, every 10 days through the 2010s<sup>2</sup>.
2. The latest IPCC report provides evidence that the children of today will experience extreme weather events that will spiral out of control in their future, impacting their quality of life, as well as their health, well-being and security. Children aged 10 or younger in the year 2020 are projected to experience a nearly four-fold increase in extreme events under 1.5°C of global warming by 2100, and a five-fold increase under 3°C warming. The survival of children is at imminent threat from climate impacts<sup>3</sup>.
3. Small islands present the most urgent need for investment in capacity building and adaptation strategies. Several enablers can be used to improve adaptation outcomes and to build resilience which include education and awareness programmes, increased access to climate information and embedding Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge as well as integrating cultural resources into decision-making<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> [IPCC, 2022: Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)

<sup>2</sup> [WMO Atlas of Mortality and Economic Losses from Weather, Climate and Water Extremes \(1970-2019\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [2022 Review of Climate Ambition in Asia and the Pacific Raising NDC targets with enhanced nature-based solutions](#)

4. Pillar 1 of the United Nations Early Warnings for All (EW4All) Initiative<sup>4</sup> (disaster risk knowledge) – coordinated by UNDRR and WMO and a range of implementing partners – aims to scale up risk knowledge in countries, so that they are equipped with the adequate capacities and technical expertise. Better risk knowledge contributes to actionable early warnings.
5. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 highlights the need to better understand and prepare for disaster risk. It aims to reduce disaster risk and loss by prioritizing activities that promote a better understanding of disaster risk, with a focus on reducing existing risks, preventing emergence of new ones, and preparing for residual risks.
6. Although children are considered as vulnerable population in disaster, according to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted at the UN World Conference in 2015, children have a vital role in strengthening community resilience. In that case, it is essential that children are empowered with the skills, confidence, risk knowledge and the understanding of turning early warning into early action to act as role models in their homes, schools, and communities.

#### **Update:**

1. **WMO's objective:** WMO endeavors to enhance children's understanding of knowledge on climate crisis and disaster risk reduction by providing them with access to information, tools, and activities so that they are able to develop necessary skills to mitigate risks and respond effectively to disasters.
2. **WMO's specific contribution to EW4All Pillar 1 on empowering children's disaster risk knowledge – COPE<sup>5</sup> Initiative**

COPE is a series of illustrated, not-for-profit storybooks created in 2018, aiming to increase the disaster resilience of children globally, especially those living in less advantaged areas. Covering natural hazards ranging from floods to earthquakes, wildfires to cyclones, storm surge to tsunamis. The books provide coping tools, preparedness, and relatable stories in an imaginative way that is easy to understand.

WMO has been contributing to the COPE initiative in the following aspects:

#### ***Provide scientific guidance***

- WMO, serving as scientific advisor, along with the experts of WMO Technical Commission Expert Teams, have engaged in reviewing and editing the scientific content for cyclones, floods, storm surges, landslides, wildfires, droughts, volcanoes, heatwaves, and upcoming blizzards series to ensure to deliver reliable weather, climate and water-related information as well as the inclusion of indigenous knowledge and local knowledge on how to tackle the disasters. All experts make great efforts in

---

<sup>4</sup> [Update on Early Warnings for All Initiative](#)

<sup>5</sup> In recognition of the need to promote disaster risk reduction (DRR) knowledge, COPE, which is named "through the lives of 4 orphan children, Candy, Ollie, Ping and Eddy and under the guidance of Grand Mistress Fu, the COPE squad embark on journeys of discovery into the world of disasters," has been developed in response to that call to empower children.

using a creative, narrative, collaborative, and contextually sensitive educational approach to disasters that highlight key DRR messages that are easy for children to remember such as EVACUATE for floods or DROP COVER HOLD for earthquakes.

- WMO also includes the COPE initiative in the Guide for National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) in support of national Multi-Hazard Early Warning Procedures, Coordination Mechanisms, Systems and Services to strengthen formal and informal education about climate change, promote sustainability and support children to become environmental champions in their own communities.

### ***Facilitate the development of communication strategy***

To better spread the DRR knowledge, once published, the COPE series are all provided free of charge, without any copyright restrictions and is up to the partners in each country to disseminate these materials where the needs are.

The books have been distributed in 34 countries, about 3 million children has the access to the series.

- **Translations including sign language for disabilities**

- All COPE series are available in English. Upon Members' request, in 2023, WMO Secretariat has facilitated in the translation of the COPE series into all other UN languages (i.e., Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, Spanish).
- This year, with the support from Tongan Meteorological Service, the Cyclones series is translated into Tongan language and launched during PMC-6. Up to now, the COPE series has been translated into 18 languages, including Bahasa, Filipino, Japanese, Malay, Nepali, Portuguese, Turkish, Vietnamese, etc.
- The inclusion of disabilities and children's rights perspective has been carefully vetted by experts at UNICEF, East Asia and Pacific. The COPE team creatively integrates sign language across the narratives via an ongoing partnership with the University of Brazil, and the use of Brazilian Sign Language.

- **Learning platform and social media**

- All COPE series are available on respective platform of WMO, UNICEF, UNDRR, Hong Kong Observatory, etc.
- COPE animations are accessible on Youtube while audiobooks on Spotify.

- **Outreach activities**

- COPE series have been used in DRR education projects in schools, especially kindergarten and primary schools as well as education centers in Nepal, China, Hongkong, China, India, Malaysia, Indonesia.

### ***Develop linkages with other UN organizations, NMHSs and academia***

Up till now, 30 collaborators, including UN organizations, NMHSs, disaster management agencies and academia have been engaged in the COPE initiative. For instance, Tongan

Meteorological Services and Hongkong Observatory specifically contributed to the Cyclones volume; MeteoFrance in the Heatwaves; China Meteorological Administration and Shandong University in the Drought; and Mongolian Meteorological Service in the process for the Blizzards which will be launched in October 2023.

### ***Promote in various global/regional high-level events***

WMO has been promoting the COPE initiative in various global and regional events such as the Youth Forum at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (**GP2022**) in Bali, Indonesia in May 2022, the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (**APMCDRR2022**) in September 2022 and [the science and youth side event](#) of the 27<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (**COP27**) in WMO's Pavilion.

### **3. Gaps and challenges**

Limited number of publications aimed at children have been dedicated to achieving the goal to empower children with disaster risk knowledge so as to build their resilience. There are still gaps in the capacity building, especially in the SIDS:

- Few free books or appropriate learning materials are available;
- Most books are not usually translated into local languages;
- Limited online training/learning platform or courses are accessible;

### **Recommendations**

The Meeting is invited to:

- **Acknowledge** the increasing need of children awareness and involvement in weather, climate, water, disaster risk reduction and related environmental action;
- **Note** the progress of the COPE initiative;
- **Recognise** COPE initiative as a vessel for empowering children with risk knowledge to increase their hazard awareness and preparedness;
- **Endorse** the recommendation of the translation of the COPE series to local PICTs' languages through Pacific funding modalities such as Weather Ready Pacific.

### **Links**

COPE disaster series website: <https://cope-disaster-champions.com/>

WMO Library website: [https://library.wmo.int/index.php?lvl=notice\\_display&id=21786](https://library.wmo.int/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=21786)

UNICEF Learning Passport: <https://www.learningpassport.org/>

UNDRR Prevention Web: <https://www.preventionweb.net/organization/cope>

Hong Kong Observatory: <https://kids.weather.gov.hk/en/index.html>