



It's a turbulent time across the globe right now and as an organisation that works to create a more prosperous world for New Zealanders and our Pacific neighbours, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade hard. There have been significant changes to operations at Post, and in Wellington, as we all move to hunker down and work from home. In conjunction with our partners, we are coming to terms with the fact that we will not be able to enjoy our usual ease and breadth of travel.

HOW WE ARE NOW WORKING

As an international organisation we are used to working with our remote network of governments, suppliers, NGO partners and communities. However, the large volume of staff now working from home has placed a strain on our IT systems. This may mean delays in processes or lapses in communication. We hope to help address this with the information provided through this periodic newsletter, *He Waka Eke Noa*.

A note from Jonathan Kings, Deputy Secretary, Pacific and Development Group

"It has been an intense period as we prepare ourselves and assist other countries to prepare for COVID-19. That work is not yet finished and continues to take up a lot of our time. We have been helping countries put in place their pandemic plans, assisting them to obtain essential medicine, and addressing supply chain challenges for essential goods. This is taking an enormous amount of time and effort.

At the same time, we are all getting used to remote working. Grappling with technology, family, and the myriad other issues of working from home. As we do, we want to ensure we keep you, our partners, informed on how we are progressing. We are actively contributing to the government's response to COVID-19 in New Zealand, but we also remain very focused on our core responsibilities of representing New Zealand interests in the world, and delivering a world class development programme.

As I am sure is the case with you, as far as possible we are continuing with our work. Some of what we do can currently continue with no changes, but there a large number (approximately 73%) of Activities which are impacted. For the impacted Activities we will be in touch with specific suppliers about how we manage them from here.

It is still far too early to really understand the impact this virus will have, but over the coming weeks we will be liaising with other donors, with our supplier partners, and with partner governments to better understand the short, medium and likely long term needs that countries are likely to have to deal with. We want to keep you in the loop."





IN THE PACIFIC

The Pacific and Development Group's focus over the last few weeks has been on helping Pacific countries prepare for COVID-19, agreeing an initial support package, dealing with the movement of people, and preparing for the current lockdown. The challenges faced by Pacific countries are significant. Our scenario planning has led us to conclude that financial stability, social cohesion issues, and security issues will be very real. We believe that we have a reasonable understanding of vulnerabilities across our development relationships. However, New Zealand's capacity to provide support is limited as demands on our own system grow and transport links close down.

- ***From the Partnerships Team***

PDG works with a number of NZ NGOs, some of which we understand will be able to continue to support local vulnerable communities in the region through their well established in-country partners, despite COVID-19. That said, drawing on the feedback we have received, we are conscious that COVID-19 is impacting on them and their local partners in many ways. To ease pressure and enable adaptation, the Partnerships Team has come up with some immediate measures to support our NZ NGO partners working in the Pacific and beyond. For further details get in touch with the Partnerships Team at partneringforimpact@mfat.govt.nz. We welcome the feedback we have received so far, and encourage you to remain in contact. We are particularly interested in understanding how partners are adapting, and the ongoing development and COVID-19 support being provided.

- ***From our Sustainable Development Sector and Thematic Division***

Much of our focus is on supporting the Pacific through the immediate crisis, and although travel restrictions have impacted numerous planned activities, there is still much that can be progressed remotely. Teams are working with suppliers and partners to identify where and how work can progress. Variations to contracts and GFAs can be agreed where appropriate to ensure services continue. The goal is to be in as strong of a position as we can to deliver activities and other priorities once travel restrictions have ended. New activities remain under development, with an aim to progress business cases, procurement and contracting.

- ***From our country teams***

Urgent work is underway to support partners to respond to COVID-19. Every country is facing the same challenges, and in many places, help is needed. With extensive disruption to the usual way of life, particularly travel, we are going to have to think outside the box if we are to continue to deliver against country priorities. And so, over the coming weeks our country teams are tasked with doing that, and identifying priority areas for recovery efforts. We will seek to engage our delivery partners as early as possible on any changes or shifts to our bilateral aid programmes as a result of the challenges ahead.





AROUND THE WORLD

Decisions have been made to defer the remaining short term training scholarships (STTS) and English Language Training for Officials (ELTO) cohorts scheduled for the 2020 calendar year, due to anticipated longer-term impacts of COVID-19 domestically and on our in-country partners.

Relevant cohorts are:

ELTO Asia Intake 55 scheduled to commence in late July

ELTO Africa scheduled to start in September

ASEAN STTS on Public Sector Leadership scheduled for September

AHA Centre Executive (ACE) programme scheduled for October

That's us for the first edition of He Waka Eke Noa, we'll look to update periodically throughout this turbulent period.

The MFAT Pacific and Development Group team.

