



THE CRAWFORD FUND FOR FOOD SECURITY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Emerging Voices Shaping Regional Integration for a Food Secure World

10-11 August 2026

Parliament House, Canberra,
Australia, and online



Community-Led Development: A Pacific Model for Regional Food Security and Climate Resilience

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Session 4: Exploring multi-country research platforms, shared adaptation strategies, trilateral partnerships and cross-boarder innovation that strengthening food-system resilience.

MORDI Tonga evolved by responding to what communities needed

2007–09

Development
Programme and Trust
Community-led rural
development

2014

Applied research
Turning field challenges
into questions and
evidence

2018–22

Climate and disaster
resilience
Protecting development
gains and relationships

Today

Research +
development +
resilience + social
enterprise

120+

rural communities

39,000+

people within reach

One bridge

communities • government
researchers • partners



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Community Development Plans turn local priorities into investable action

1. Listen

Community
dialogue
Local knowledge
Inclusive
participation

2. Prioritise

Needs and risks
Agreed priorities
Community plan

3. Connect

Research and
technical support
Government and
finance

4. Own

Local contribution
Implementation
Maintenance and
learning

Communities are partners and decision-makers not passive beneficiaries.



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Food security depends on the whole community system

What communities identify

- Reliable water for households and production
- Climate-resilient crops and farming practices
- Tools, infrastructure and market access
- Livelihood diversification and local enterprise
- Stronger preparedness for disasters

Why the plan matters

It links agriculture with:

- Water security
- Health and nutrition
- Climate resilience
- Local governance
- Women and youth
- Markets and income



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The model connects planning, evidence and practical delivery

IFAD / TRIP

Community planning, livelihoods and local institutions



Australia / TARCP

Locally led climate resilience and community finance



ACIAR + Research Institution

Research tested with farmers and adapted to Tonga



Water + infrastructure

Productive assets that communities help select and sustain

Research becomes valuable when communities can use it, adapt it and sustain it.



Women's leadership strengthens decisions, livelihoods and resilience

Women already hold critical knowledge about food, nutrition, household resources and community resilience.

Voice

Create safe and meaningful space for women to influence priorities and decisions.

Opportunity

Connect women with skills, finance, markets and leadership opportunities.

Influence

Measure participation by decision-making power, not attendance alone.

Inclusion is not an add-on, it is part of effective food-system design.



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Local ownership works, but enabling systems must change

What works

- Trust built over time
- Community priorities documented
- Local knowledge combined with science
- Women and youth shape decisions
- Local institutions remain after projects

What still gets in the way

- Short funding and research cycles
- Predetermined activities and targets
- Fragmented sector programmes
- Limited finance, markets and infrastructure
- Disasters that reverse development gains

The challenge is not community willingness, it is aligning institutions and investment around community priorities.



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Five actions can scale the model across the Pacific

- 1 Start with community plans** Use locally agreed priorities as the foundation for research and investment.
- 2 Fund local institutions** Invest in organisations that can sustain relationships beyond project cycles.
- 3 Co-design research** Give farmers and communities a role in questions, testing and interpretation.
- 4 Join up sectors** Link agriculture with water, climate, health, markets and local governance.
- 5 Measure what lasts** Track ownership, capability and resilience, not outputs alone.

Sustainable food security is built with communities, not delivered to them.



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