



THE REGIONAL STUDIES
ASSOCIATION RESEARCH NETWORK ON
**ACADEMIC-PRACTITIONER COLLABORATION
FOR URBAN SHELTER, SOUTH PACIFIC**

We are a network of academics and practitioners that aims to bridge the practice-research divide across humanitarian emergency management – from preparedness to response, recovery, and back to development. We enable knowledge exchange between academic experts and governments, civil society organisations, humanitarian emergency responders, recovery personnel, and development actors. Linking these groups is vital because they hold different bodies of knowledge that are rarely shared. Producing a shared body of knowledge will impact all phases of humanitarian and development aid. Our network focuses particularly on urban shelter and settlements because new ways of managing emergencies are urgently needed in cities. We focus on the South Pacific because of the region’s emerging urban experience and vulnerability to disasters.

We aim to break the organizational silos and provide for generative, localised, consultative, interdisciplinary, and inter-sector urban humanitarian response where all actors rely on evidence, seek new knowledge, and fearlessly reflect on their practice – so that cities thrive.

Goal

Our goal is to link academic knowledge with humanitarian and government actors toward:

1. Pre-disaster planning for urban shelter and settlements, emergency preparedness, and recovery
2. On-demand assembly of information about good practice and the urban context during humanitarian emergencies
3. On-demand assistance to develop and critique humanitarian strategies as emergencies develop
4. Stronger community engagement in crafting recovery and development strategies
5. Better-informed academic research agendas that deliver results relevant to practitioner experience
6. Improved access to information and actors for academics researching humanitarian emergency management.

Challenges

We face certain challenges in operationalizing our efforts. These include:

1. Existing knowledge and knowledge sources are not effectively catalogued or understood in many settings
2. Academic knowledge is often not presented in a way that is humanitarians can readily use.
3. There are narrow windows for information assembly in humanitarian situations.
4. Academics may work differently and use different vocabulary than development and humanitarian actors.
5. Funding models and response procedures are rural-focused and reflect entrenched interests.
6. Governments must lead humanitarian efforts; humanitarians must not create parallel systems.