



Strategies for Promoting Building Code Awareness and Compliance





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Objective

This guidance note provides strategies that can be used by regional organizations and national building control authorities to promote building code awareness and compliance within a Pacific island country context

Target audience

Pacific building code awareness and compliance promotion should be targeted at:

- households;
- homeowners;
- builders;
- commercial property owners;
- community groups and faith-based organizations;
- regional, national, and subnational governments;
- building materials suppliers;
- banks and insurance companies; and
- international development partners.

The engagement of local politicians and community leaders to champion the construction of resilient infrastructure and building code adoption is crucial to a successful promotion and awareness outcome.

Design, Development, and Implementation

National building code (NBC) awareness and compliance strategies and programs can be designed and developed by regional organizations and national building control authorities with assistance from:

- government agencies and state-owned enterprises dealing with works, health, water and sanitation, occupational health and safety, power, and fire and emergency response;
- climate adaptation offices;
- organizations promoting accessibility awareness for people with disabilities;
- organizations that target energy efficiency and renewable energy;
- disaster management offices;
- construction industry professional organizations; and
- construction arms of nongovernment organizations (NGOs).

The engagement of a private sector media company to manage the design and development process would be beneficial. For example, for the 2019 Fiji NBC review, the Fiji Construction Council hired a local media company and used newspapers, radio, and TV to promote the review.

The programs can be implemented by:

- Pacific Island government departments responsible for building code administration and enforcement;
- NGOs promoting build-back-better and better-build programs;
- regional organizations promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation and resilient infrastructure solutions; and
- development partners as a part of a wider communication framework to engage stakeholders with their Pacific island infrastructure programs.

NBC promotion and awareness strategies comprise two components: the **medium**, and the **message**.

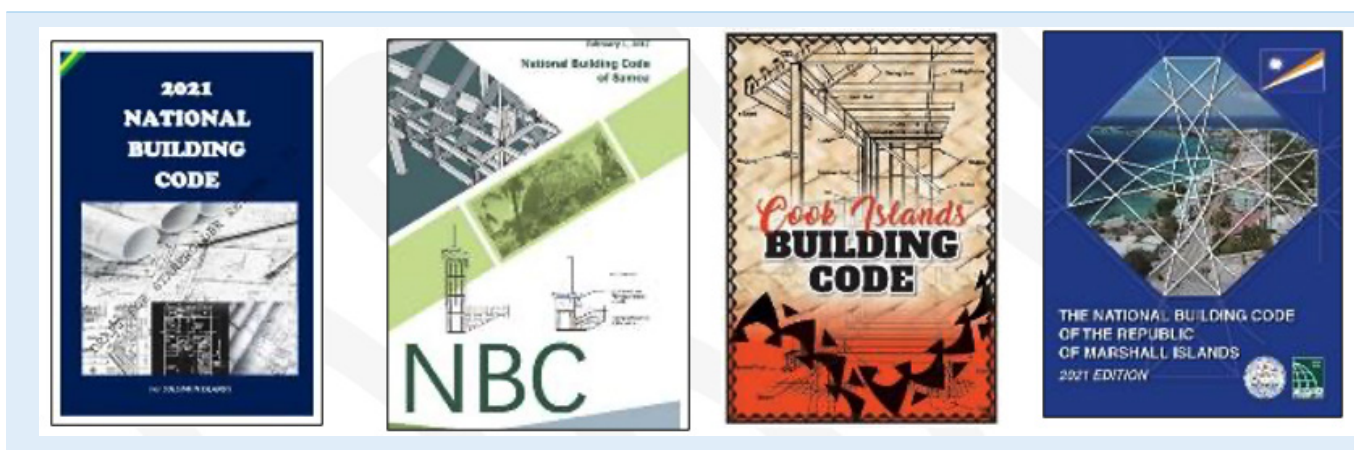
The Medium

Nine communication mediums are recommended to convey the benefits of compliance with Pacific NBCs. A successful strategy would utilize a mixture of mediums.

1. Internet

Designated websites and/or web page links tagged to government department and/or regional websites, e.g., the Pacific Island Forum's Pacific Quality Infrastructure initiative, the Pacific Community, and the Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility (PRIF). The design of the building code website needs to ensure that it is easily accessible by both the construction profession and the public. A budget needs to be allocated for the domain name and for maintaining and refreshing the website's pages.

Box 1: The PRIF website hosts NBC pictorial tiles, each of which links to an NBC¹



2. Social media

Facebook is the most popular media platform in the Pacific region and is widely used by national, regional, and international organizations to promote their messages. LinkedIn is primarily used by professional organizations and individuals. Social media pages should include messages with tiles that cross-promote NBC promotion with other websites, Facebook pages (e.g., those of PRIF and larger NGOs), and links to videos on other social media platforms.

3. Video

YouTube is recommended. To ensure that these sites remain accessible, a budget needs to be allocated for annual subscription services.

4. Print media

This spans newspapers, brochures, public notices, posters, and flyers. Posters and public notices can be displayed on government, community, and public notice boards. Flow charts can be developed as posters and displayed in council offices showing building permit procedures. Appropriately drawn cartoons can be used to demonstrate good building practices. Question and answer fact sheets can be developed that address key building code concerns such as permitting. Hard copies of the NBC and associated manuals can be published and outlets identified where they can be purchased.

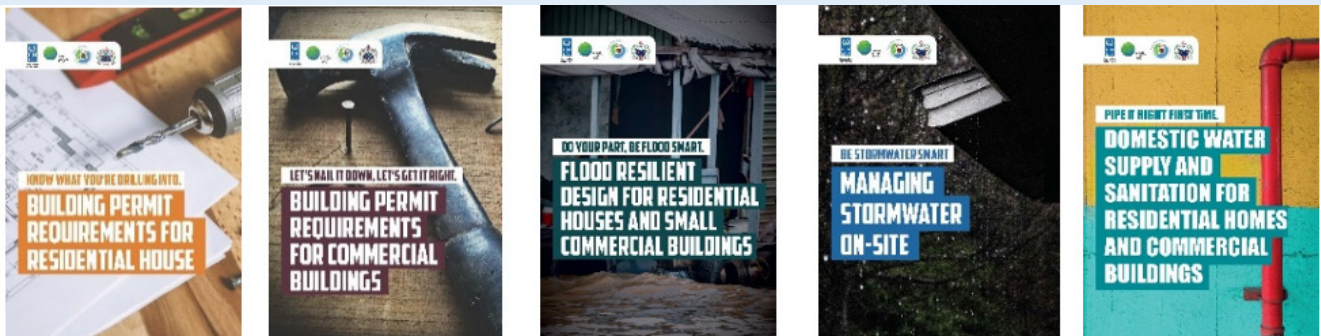
¹ PRIF. Online Repository: Building Codes <https://www.theprif.org/online-repository-building-codes>

Box 2: Papua New Guinea Education School Building²

Papua New Guinea’s Department of Education used appropriate Pacific island cartoon characters to promote school maintenance in brochures and posters.



Box 3: Samoa Building Code Handbooks³



In 2017, the Samoa Ministry of Works, Transport, and Infrastructure undertook a review and update of its NBC. To support the introduction of the new NBC, the ministry developed five handbooks:

1. building permit requirements for residential buildings;
2. building permit requirements for commercial buildings;
3. flood-resilient design for residential houses and small commercial buildings;
4. managing stormwater on-site; and
5. domestic water supply and sanitation for residential homes and commercial buildings.

The handbooks are available in English (and some in Samoan) free of charge from the ministry offices on the purchase of the NBC. The handbooks address common queries such as the following:

1. Why is a building permit necessary?
2. What is the difference between a commercial building permit and a residential building permit?
3. When is a building permit required?
4. Do you need to hire a professional to assist with permit application?
5. What can happen if you fail to apply for a building permit?

² Government of Papua New Guinea, Department of Education. 2005. *School Infrastructure Management Manual*. pp. 39 and 43;

³ PRIF. 2023. *Improving National Building Codes and Standards in the Pacific: Coordination and Harmonization Report* https://www.theprif.org/sites/theprif.org/files/documents/PRIF_INBCSP_Coordination_and_Harmonization_Report_0.pdf

5. TV

This includes commercial and community channels. Many local TV channels have community obligations that can be accessed for the promotion of infrastructure resilience and building code compliance.

6. Radio

This includes advertisements, radio, and community radio.

Box 4: Tongs Corporation “Buildim Better Show” on Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation’s Radio Program⁴

To promote public feedback on the proposed 2022 Solomon Islands National Building Code, engineering and architectural representatives from the government and the private sector participated in radio programs, both radio call-in shows with a public audience and in-studio radio panel discussions.



7. Road shows and public meetings.

These include formal launches integrated with print, TV, radio, and social media. Public meetings can include workshops conducted by national and subnational bodies (public works departments, town and provincial councils) with targeted community groups, including church groups and builder’s associations. Workshops that engage the audience are more effective than presentations.

8. Community theater

Community theater groups can be engaged to write and perform short video clips and/or on-stage performances that promote the benefits of building code compliance.

Box 5: Wan Smolbag Community Theater⁵

The Vanuatu-based Wan Smolbag community theater has made more than 100 films in the past 20 years, which have been aired all over the Pacific. Video clips, films, and plays have been commissioned by NGOs and development partners to educate people on subjects including how to use Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) toilets, disability inclusion, cyclone preparedness awareness, and reef conservation. Similar video clips, films, and short plays could be commissioned to promote the benefits of NBC compliance.



9. Awareness through compliance activity

There is a close connection between compliance activity and awareness raising. A very cost-effective means of improving compliance is inspection and enforcement activity at building sites. Where available, the use of infringement notices has three benefits: improved awareness, improved compliance, and a revenue source for industry regulators.

⁴ Tongs Corporation. 2021. Solomon Islands “Buildim Better” Radio Show. Episode 10: The National Building Code. 29 July. <https://www.facebook.com/TongsHardware/videos/%EF%B8%8F-episode-10%EF%B8%8F-the-national-building-code-join-jay-1-n-2-as-they-receive-an-updat/512071783214533/>
⁵ Promotional Wan Smol Bag Vanuatu poster for a community play entitled – “Wehem Ol Gel”

All communication mediums need to engage with community leaders and local politicians to endorse, promote, and champion the message. A successful strategy should also encourage word-of-mouth messaging, which will further help inform politicians and decision-makers.

The Message

The critical message to be conveyed to the target audience is the benefits of compliance with the building code, and associated costs. Each audience may benefit differently and may require different messaging strategies. Understanding the social, personal, and economic motivators and barriers of individuals and/or communities should be understood (and even within a country, different motivators and barriers may exist).

Within the Pacific regional context, the language used to communicate a NBC message should be a mixture of formal (English and French) and vernacular (e.g., Bislama, Fijian, Ikiribati, Nauruan, Samoan Tok Pisin, Tongan, Tuvaluan). The message should avoid technical jargon and maximize the use of photographs, videos, anecdotes, and metaphors.

Messages can be targeted at different sections of the NBC:

- structural;
- water, sanitation, and hygiene;
- mechanical and electrical;
- fire safety;
- use of local nature-based materials (e.g., locally grown timbers, gravels, sands);
- locally manufactured building materials (e.g., blockwork, joinery);
- imported materials;
- building standards;
- management of hazardous building materials (e.g., asbestos, paint); and
- accessibility for people with a disability.

Messages can be designed and developed to target specific building aspects such as the following:

1. Householder safety and savings

If you build a code-compliant building, benefits include a safe haven during a cyclone, insurance discounts, and improved chances of getting a mortgage.

2. Infrastructure resilience and build-back-better

The message could comprise photos and videos of buildings with good code-compliant characteristics such as the use of bolts to secure roof rafters, cyclone ties, and cyclonic roof screws; accessibility for people with a disability; electrical and fire safety; and healthy water and sanitation.

3. Provision of safe havens during catastrophic events

The message could be to promote personal and family safety by comparing the impact of code-compliant and non-code-compliant buildings during a catastrophic event such as a tropical cyclone or earthquake.

Box 6: Cyclonic destruction after Cyclone Winston



Cyclonic destruction after Cyclone Winston in Fiji⁶ in 2016 (above left) has made the public more aware of the need to cyclone-proof buildings. Good examples of new building built to withstand cyclones are classrooms constructed by the Vanuatu Ministry of Education in Tanna, Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam in 2015⁷ (above right) using local builders and materials that can be easily purchased from local hardware merchants (endnote 3).

4. Cost and benefits of code compliance.

The message could communicate the possible benefit(s) that \$10,000 could buy over a 20-year period.

Box 7: Post-Disaster Needs Analysis⁸

The World Bank estimated the value of disaster effects arising from Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji in 2015 was F\$1.99 billion (\$0.9 billion – May 2016), including F\$1.29 billion (\$0.6 billion – May 2016) in damage (i.e., destroyed physical assets) and F\$0.71 billion (\$0.3 billion – May 2016) in losses.

5. Building code application processes

The message could explain and simplify building code application procedures, such as the cost of building permit fees and what they cover. Building code authorities should be encouraged to establish a one-stop-shop process for building code application.

Box 8: Building Code Fact Sheets⁹

Solomon Islands and Tuvalu developed fact sheets that help construction practitioners and persons lodging building permits better understand the permitting process and the benefits of constructing building in accordance with the NBC. The fact sheets addressed the following:

- the building regulatory framework;
- the building approval process, including an application process flow chart;
- the NBC;
- what the building regulatory framework means for those implementing it;
- what the changes mean for commercial, public, and group dwellings;
- what the changes mean for single dwellings and outbuildings;
- whether a building permit is needed for existing buildings;
- whether a building permit is needed for new buildings;
- dangerous buildings;
- steps needed to ensure compliance during construction; and
- frequently asked questions.

6 Government of Fiji, Department of Education.

7 Rhys Gwilliam.

8 Government of Fiji. 2016. *Fiji: Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, Tropical Cyclone Winston*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/975781584942869315/pdf/Fiji-Post-Disaster-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

9 Government of Solomon Islands, Ministry of Infrastructure and Development Building Code Fact Sheets prepared in 2022.

6. Grievance (whistle-blower) processes

The message could establish procedures where the public can report to building control authorities noncompliant public buildings such as classrooms and community hall.

7. Trade and customs controls

The message could help develop and promote building code and building standards compliance for imported and locally produced construction materials to programs that support the development of trade and customs controls and the reinforcement and/or establishment of national standards bureaus. The message could also promote to the government the benefits of sales tax exemptions for key building resilience materials such as roof cyclone ties and cyclonic roofing screws.

8. National building control commission

The message could promote to other government departments (e.g., urban affairs, planning, and lands departments; provincial governments; and town councils) the benefits of establishing a national building control commission managed by a national infrastructure ministry. In many Pacific island countries (e.g., Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, and Solomon Islands), these bodies are responsible for administering building regulations and collecting building fees, and are concerned that they will lose control of the permitting process and an important income stream if such a commission is established.

9. Occupational health and safety

Promotion of the benefits of compliance with occupational health and safety requirements on building sites.



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