



Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) Support Facility

Background note for policy dialogue on climate change
adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the Pacific
(Group 2)

Port Vila, Vanuatu

4 March 2011



This project is funded
by the European Commission



A project implemented
by MWH

The objective of this dialogue session is to move a step further in outlining possible key characteristics and key actions for effective donor support¹ towards climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction so as to make societies more resilient to natural disasters in the Pacific.

The dialogue will use as a starting point recent national initiatives such as the Tonga Joint National Action Plan on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management 2010-2015, the Pacific (Madang) Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action and the Global (Hyogo) Framework for Action both 2005-2015, and the recently reviewed Pacific Climate Change Framework and its global equivalent in the UNFCCC

The dialogue session will also discuss how activities within the two sectors/areas can be better linked and more efficiently coordinated. Taking on board the key findings of the training of the three previous days, and building on concrete examples.

Three recent publications were useful in preparing this background note: (i) Mainstreaming Climate Change – a Guidance Manual for PICTs (SPREP 2010); (ii) Guide to Developing National Action Plans: A Tool for Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Management (SOPAC/PIFS/UNDP Pacific); and (iii) A review of Disaster Risk Management Mainstreaming in the Pacific Sub Region (UNDP Pacific Centre, not yet published) The first two publications can be downloaded through the following links: www.sopac.org.

For the past several years including 2010, Pacific Leaders in the Forum Communiqué have continued to highlight that climate change (including climate variability, extreme weather events and sealevel rise) remains the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific. In 2008 Leaders provided the Niue Declaration on Climate Change to highlight the regional needs that should be addressed by CROP organisations. As highlighted in the February 2010 Pacific Regional Report prepared for the five-year review of the 2005 Mauritius Strategy for SIDS, climate change and disasters are key to addressing the vulnerability of small islands as articulated in the globally accepted “special case for SIDS”. Events in the Pacific in recent years have highlighted that this vulnerability is increasing whilst the capacity to cope is not. In the context of natural disasters which may become national disasters, the adverse impacts of climate change will make matters worse.

Pacific island countries remain highly disaster prone with all of them threatened by a variety of natural hazards of geological and meteorological origin including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, cyclones, river and coastal flooding (including permanent coastal inundation due to sea level rise), landslides, and droughts. In the past decade social, including health and pollution hazards, and civil unrest have also increased as a result of population increase, urban drift, uneven wealth distribution and political pressures. Tropical cyclones and other extreme events (floods, droughts, extreme temperatures) are the most frequent cause of disasters in the region, but geological hazards and other anthropogenic hazards (fire, chemical spills or infrastructure collapse) have the potential to cause greater losses as recent tsunamis and inter-island ferry disasters have demonstrated.

The most recent major events occurred in April 2007 when a magnitude 8 earthquake and tsunami occurred in the western Solomon Islands costing the country an estimated US\$90 million equivalent to 90% of the year’s operating budget; in January 2009 flooding in western Viti Levu,

¹ Effective donor support consistent with the Paris Declaration (2005), the Pacific Principles on Aid Effectiveness (2007), and the Cairns Compact (2009).

Fiji, families and small businesses in sample areas in Nadi and Ba alone lost an estimated US\$160 million (7% GDP); and in September 2009, the magnitude 8 earthquake and tsunami in American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga, a result of which the Samoa Government estimated the losses at US\$104 million (more than 5% GDP); and in January 2010 when a magnitude 7.2 earthquake and tsunami occurred again in the western Solomon Islands for which costs are still to be assessed. All except the latest event included loss of lives.

It is important to stress that natural hazards by themselves do not cause disasters. It is the combination of an exposed, vulnerable and ill-prepared population with a hazard event that results in a disaster. Climate change increases disaster risks in two ways. Firstly, climate variability is being reflected as an increase in the frequency and/or severity of weather hazards. Secondly, climate change through slow onset processes will simultaneously increase communities' vulnerability to natural hazards due to the combined effects of ecosystem degradation, reduced availability of water for ecosystems and agriculture, and changes in peoples' livelihoods.

Clearly, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) share common goals: reducing the vulnerability of communities and achieving sustainable development. Whilst there is increasing recognition that DRR should become a core component of adaptation measures (The Cancun Adaptation Framework included a paragraph on "enhancing climate change related disaster risk reduction strategies, taking into consideration the Hyogo Framework for Action where appropriate" and a two year work programme on loss and damage), only few of these synergies are currently exploited. The tools developed under DRR – which build essentially on recent past and historical data – need to be expanded to accommodate the longer term requirements of CCA.

A key common link between DRR and CCA is the need to provide early warning systems that are effective, integrated and people-focused and that are able to communicate information that is understood over vast ocean distances both within and between countries and to generally isolated populations.

It is however also important to stress that differences between DRR and CCA do exist. There is no agreed evidence that hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanoes, for example, are climate-related and therefore cannot be absorbed by the CCA "politics", which indeed have a much higher profile in the international agenda than DRR. It is important to consider DRR separately or else the financing of risk reduction for geological disasters will face the risk of being neglected. This could be particularly devastating for the Pacific region, which as outlined above is painfully aware through recent events of the effects of geological disasters.

In addition, there are a number of development related trends that increase the risk profile of Pacific island countries. These include: rapidly changing population dynamics, urbanisation, loss of traditional knowledge, and changing social, economic and environmental conditions associated with globalisation.

It is crucial that governments "mainstream" plans and strategies that are "whole of country" in order to implement "no regrets adaptation" to anticipated adverse effects of climate change, reduce risk, and hence achieve an overall reduction in the extent of vulnerability at all levels.

The SPREP Manual provides a valuable discussion on the meaning of "mainstreaming" (most simply read - integration). The OECD has recently developed the most comprehensive guidance manual for integrating climate change considerations into national, sectoral, project, and community levels (OECD 2009).

The SOPAC/PIFS/UNDP publication outlines some factors that constrain the adoption (mainstreaming/integration) of modern disaster risk management approaches in Pacific island countries, including:

- Disaster management has been largely considered in terms of response and recovery from disasters without considerations of risk reduction options as an integral element of development planning at all levels;
- Generally, there is a lack of government policy, organisational structures and legislative framework to underpin disaster risk reduction and disaster management in a holistic, coordinated and programmatic manner;
- Decision-making processes at the national, sectoral, provincial and community levels do not explicitly reflect considerations of hazard and vulnerabilities assessment;
- There is inadequate allocation of national financial resources for disaster risk reduction at all levels;
- A lack of, or inadequate, quality information about hazards and vulnerability to support decision-makers at all levels;
- The absence of, or weak, information systems available for each key hazard and which can provide 24-7 monitoring and early warning to communities at risk; and
- Communities at risk have limited disaster risk reduction efforts to minimize their exposure to risks; and coordinated disaster management arrangements, which can be utilised in times of disaster.

National Action Plans (NAPs) for DRM, and National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) for CCA are intended to facilitate the mainstreaming of DRR and CCA into national plans and budgets. Their development involves a process of high level advocacy, situation analyses, and stakeholder consultations at different levels which leads to the definition of a range of actions to be prioritised and implemented in order to strengthen the safety and resilience to disasters of the community within each country.

Their success along with other similar national level mainstreaming initiatives depends on consistent and ongoing interaction and dialogue between key stakeholders within a “whole of country approach” together with dialogue with development partners.

It is crucial that this interaction and dialogue ensures an improved enabling environment (refer to the explanatory text at end of this background note) that does indeed provide for cost effective implementation so that no regrets adaptation strategies are in place and maladaptation avoided, in order to achieve the objective of this dialogue session which is “*to move a step further in outlining possible key characteristics and key actions for effective donor support towards climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction so as to make societies more resilient to natural disasters in the Pacific*”.

Furthermore, in order to provide for cost effective implementation so that no regrets adaptation strategies are in place it is vital to understand the current situation on the ground. Data collection, historical and ongoing through sound monitoring programmes must underpin the knowledge base upon which no regrets adaptation strategies can be designed. Otherwise, costly mistakes are inevitable. Pacific island countries will need technical capacity building and in many cases capacity supplementation in order to establish and achieve the adequacy of these information databases.

It is useful to reflect on the six priority themes of both the regional disaster framework and the regional climate change framework. These themes were considered and adapted in Tonga and as a result Tonga has been able to develop the region's first Joint National Action Plan on CCA and DRM. The themes provide an insight into what is needed (and needs resourcing) for effective joint DRM/CCA implementation:

- Improved good governance for CCA and DRM (mainstreaming, decision making, organisational and institutional policy frameworks);
- Enhanced technical knowledge base, information, education and understanding of CCA and DRM;
- Analysis and assessments of vulnerability to climate change risks and disaster risks;
- Enhanced community preparedness and resilience to impacts of all disasters;
- Technical reliable, economically affordable and environmentally sound energy to support the sustainable development;
- Strong partnerships, cooperation and collaboration within government agencies and with civil society, NGOs and the private sector.

During the dialogue, participants will be invited to look into the link DRR/CCA and beyond across a "whole of country" platform, and spot key characteristics and actions for better integration "mainstreaming", in light of the particular situation of the Pacific region and with the ultimate scope of making Pacific island countries more resilient to the impacts of natural hazards including through the implementation of effective "no regrets" adaptation strategies. The outcome text should be that of providing indications on how donors can support policies enhancing practical link between and implementation of no regrets adaptation strategies across the two areas/sectors at different levels of intervention, i.e. regional, national and local.

- Why are the NAPs and/or NAPAs not sufficient, and how can enhanced donor and regional organisation support help?
- How can donors and regional organisations support implementation to ensure effective "no regrets" adaptation strategies, and maladaptation is avoided?

1. STRENGTHENING OF NATIONAL ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

Bearing in mind particularly the call by Pacific Leaders, through the Pacific Plan, for the establishment of national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) or the like, a challenge remains, and to ensure that in regard to improving the national enabling environment PICTs need the support of the international community to progress this work. Success at the national level might be an outcome that includes, but is not restricted to the following.

- Visible long term national strategic vision, linked to medium term goals/targets, and short term actions.
- Visible, operating linkages of coordination "horizontally" across sectors.
- Visible, operating linkages "vertically" of local to national and to international policy and governance efforts, and that these linkages are supportive.
- Visible and operating national and regional policies developed that address science and technology and the protection of natural resources as tools to support sustainable development and build resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- Streamlined, efficient and effective national effort to link NSDS, MDGs and other related global commitments.

- Genuine partnerships operating between government, development partners, the private sector, the NGOs, and the community at large.
- Sustainable financing including through an increased allocation of domestic resources for NSDS or the like, that contributes to social and economic development and environmental protection and adaptation activities.