

Pacific Island States Capacity Development Needs For Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction

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Transporting food in the Solomon Islands.

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a brief examination of capacity development needs for climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) in small island developing states (SIDS). It is noted that this is a critical time for SIDS which must contend with ongoing developmental pressures in addition to growing pressures from risks associated with global environmental change and economic liberalisation that threaten their physical and economic security. Much depends in this context on the orientation of SIDS in global economic and political systems. Getting the policies right is proving to be very difficult as SIDS continue to be deficient in a critical mass of intellectual capital, policy coherence, financial resources and qualified personnel that are needed to develop and implement sustainable development policies and projects. In turn, this critically hampers the emergence of adequate systemic capacity. SIDS however have a history of changes at the global and regional levels which not only created constraints but can be seen as a source of new opportunities for building resilience to natural disasters. How effective this process transpires in the end will depend on how well lessons learnt from preceding years are taken on board and effectively acted upon.

1 INTRODUCTION

Global responses to climate change vulnerabilities are approached through the building up of resilience or by planning around hazards and risks. Given the special circumstances accorded to SIDS through the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA), and also enshrined in the UNFCCC, SIDS possess limited abilities to absorb exogenic shocks, both natural and human induced, in particular climate change, through inherent limited resources and capacities. In a Pacific Island context, identified strategies, planning systems and on the ground frameworks for pro-active measures exist, yet historically the vehicle for implementing these initiatives such as mainstreaming environment into development, multi-use of data, provision of consistent guidance and early participation of the community is inadequate. To be effective thus in Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) implementation, Pacific Island countries (PICs) significantly require concerted capacity development processes that ensure that these initiatives are provided the most effective and efficient means to adequately address the region's unique set of vulnerabilities.

In this context, the future achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in PICs and other international and national development targets hinges on the current capacities of individuals, organizations and societies to reform and adapt in pursuit of sustainable development objectives and in response to the adverse effects of climate change. While financial resources, including official development assistance are vital for success, they are not sufficient to promote socio-economic development in a sustainable manner without supportive strategies, policies, laws and procedures, well-functioning organizations and educated and skilled people. SIDS and PICs in particular will continue to struggle to establish the necessary foundation needed to plan, implement and review national and local strategies [1]. As a consequence, regional climate change initiatives such as the current Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) project has built on lessons learnt from previous regionally implemented projects such as the Pacific Islands Climate Change Project (PICCAP) whereby it was officially recognized that such initiatives must first meet the capacity development needs of PICs through perpetual learning processes in an attempt to strengthen and sustain necessary CCA and DRR functions. It must also address needs at multiple levels in PICs, from Government officials to communities experiencing the impacts of climate change.

2 OVERVIEW

a) Regional Setting

The engagement of many SIDS and in particular PIC Governments has its genesis in colonial history. The transition from colonial administration to self-government and finally to political independence, heightened by the collapse of a predominantly plantation-based agricultural economy left an extremely vulnerable and disorganized PIC private sector dependent on protected markets, import trading and various forms of Government intervention. Unlike other countries, SIDS in the Pacific do not have the advantage of significant industrial progress before entering into a fully democratic and liberal system of governance, which today, is among the most open global trade markets. It is not surprising therefore, that many PICs Governments

Launching the Renewable Energy DVD series during the UNFCCC 17th Conference of the Parties in Durban, 2011.

have had to assume a role beyond that of regulator, to the point where their influence dominates every aspect of social and economic life, deriving its primary revenues from tariffs on trade [2].

Reducing environmental vulnerability in SIDS thus will require provision of the necessary social, educational, political and economic support for the protection of natural resources on which all socio-economic development is predicated in SIDS. In small societies, especially where the domestic sector is weak and undeveloped, the role of Government must, out of necessity, be more interventionist than it would be in large and more developed economies. The major challenge for PIC governance is to seek to reduce national vulnerabilities whilst increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of national and regional governance. In this context addressing the following four key areas have been identified as critical for the success of capacity development in the Pacific region:

- Leadership
- Human resource development
- Institutional strengthening
- Local level support [3]

Leadership

While any capacity building efforts require multi stakeholder partnerships, the primary responsibility for leadership to reverse the current trend of growing vulnerability starts in the domain of governments yet opportunities are there for it to be conducted in partnership with relevant sectors. PIC governments consequently attempt to resolve the conflicting advice and requirements regarding the role of government and its corresponding size and structure. For example, on one side, governments of SIDS are being urged to implement decentralization; reduce the size of the public sector; adopt the Agenda 21 principles of citizenry participation and consultation; and effectively participate in and fulfil reporting requirements under international agreements either linked to the rapid pace of globalization or environmental degradation. On the other hand is the overwhelming economic aspiration to lift standards of living perceived imperative by all SIDS, and that this may come at the expense of environmental considerations.

Raising the Pacific voice during the UNFCCC 17th Conference of the Parties in Durban, 2011.





Facing the waves in the Cook Islands.



Community socio-economic assessment in Papua New Guinea, PACC project.

Human Resources Development

PICs need additional professionals with a wider or higher range of skills than is now currently available. This is a result of a number of reasons ranging from level of remuneration, career prospects, and educational infrastructure. The capacity issue underscores the potential role for regional and national universities based in the Pacific. However, tertiary institutions have, to a large extent, faced many challenges in making the transition from conventional education, to producing the trans-disciplinary information, education, research and consulting services needed to develop individual, institutional and systems capacity required to respond to the challenge of sustainable development. Consequently, SIDS-based tertiary institutions that are, by remit, the 'incubators' of professional capacity, are too often underdeveloped in terms of programmes offered, numbers of students accommodated, and research and consulting capacity.

Institutional Strengthening

The capacity challenges faced by most national institutions in PICs such as lack of inadequate funding, inappropriate scale and scope, scarcity of technical expertise, and poor infrastructure have forced regional states to turn to regional institutions for help in specialized assistance. In addition, international donor agencies also find it more cost effective to fund projects through regional institutions. Pacific SIDS have thus developed a reasonably well-organized structure of regional intergovernmental organizations, each with a particular focus and funded by member contributions. These are seeking to harmonize activities through the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP). In this context, PICs fundamentally are distinguished by the abundance of natural resources particularly marine resources - resources that remain largely untapped for want of knowledge of the resources and the commercially viable ways of utilizing them, as well as the necessary investment and training required. Regional institutional capacity inevitably needs to be strengthened to address the interrelated nature of the use of resources, social outcomes and environmental impacts [3].

Local Level Support

Minimizing exposure to external shocks starts with addressing local level problems of poor and vulnerable communities that are very strongly linked to factors including economic restructuring policies which have been implemented without due regard to social or environmental impact, and which have increased overall national vulnerability and as a result; the inability of many Governments to sustain public expenditure to realize development objectives (education, and basic social infrastructure) due primarily to shortfalls in revenue. Communities are also where the brunt of most climate change impacts will be felt, where adaptation and disaster risk measures need to be implemented, and where the effectiveness of these measures and the buy-in by the community will be essential to ensure their sustainability. The unique human resources situation in SIDS, characterized by ongoing out migration of professionals, makes these countries the most vulnerable in the broader context of vulnerability. The role that civil society and NGOs play in this context is integral to linking synergies with donor and national capacity development initiatives [4].

b) Regional Capacity Development Initiatives

The Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Programme (PICCAP) marked the first regional climate change enabling project in the Pacific. Funded by the GEF and implemented by SPREP, PICCAP was established to help fourteen Pacific Island Countries meet their national reporting requirements under the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC). For the majority of the participating countries, prior to PICCAP there were no existing national personnel formally mandated to work on climate change issues. PICCAP focused very much on not only assisting Pacific Island countries to meet their national reporting obligations (i.e. the National Communications), but more importantly on establishing capacity in each of the countries to address national climate change issues [5]. For many of the countries, the project focused on the

setting up enabling environments. For the first time ever, national climate change focal points were appointed, and national multi-stakeholder climate change 'country teams' were established.

PICCAP saw a series of training initiatives implemented across the region, over a three year period, building up climate change teams where none previously existed, and provided targeted training for individuals from all 14 countries over a wide range of climate issues (ie GHG inventories, vulnerability and adaptation assessments, facilitation skills, negotiation skills etc). The success of PICCAP should not only be measured on the number of National Communications produced and submitted during the project period, but the number of trained climate personal still working in country (or within the region), the number of national country teams still in existence, and more importantly the number of climate change projects which were born out of this initiative and have now been implemented across the region (eg Pacific Islands Renewable Energy Project – PIREP, CBDAMPIC, PACC and PIGGAREP) [6].

Capacity building however is an on-going process. Lessons learned from PICCAP showed that while a lot of capacity building training was invested at the national level, gaps in project funding (particularly in the slow delivery of bridging funds between 1st and 2nd National Communications) and in some cases the inability of countries to absorb the trained personal into national budget allocations led to the mobility of many of those who benefitted from the training (primarily to regional posts in CROP agencies, regional NGO's or other multilateral organizations, and in some cases further studies). Later initiatives such as the Capacity Building for the Development of Adaptation Measures in the Pacific Island Countries (CBDAMPIC), while limited to four countries for financial reasons, built upon the national expertise developed during PICCAP, again putting focus on further developing strong national teams. While PICCAP focused very much on national level agencies, CBDAMPIC broadened its reach, and saw capacity development initiatives extended to the community level, including civil society organizations and grass roots organizations (ie women's and youth groups) with a strong community out-reach focus. More recent initiatives in SPREP have taken this lesson on board, and are addressing capacity building for climate change (with a focus on adaptation) in a more institutional and systemic way [7].

PACC is the first regional stage III climate change implementing project under the Special Climate Change Fund in the Pacific. Funded by the GEF, and implemented by UNDP in partnership with SPREP, PACC's objective is to enhance the capacity of the 13 participating Pacific Island countries to adapt to climate change, including variability, in country-selected priority development sectors, through implementing adaptation activities on the ground in vulnerable communities. These include food security and food production sector, coastal management, and water sector. While the objective of the PACC is to enhance the capacity at the national and community levels, the PACC project itself is a result of a systemic capacity approach to addressing climate change

in the region. The enabling environment developed by PICCAP, National Communications, CBDAMPIC, and NAPAs has allowed the formulation of a framework at the organizational level dealing with implementation of climate change adaptation measures [8].

PACC currently is developing and strengthening the institutional, individual and systemic capacities in each of the priority development sectors at the national and community levels. In the case of food security and food production in Palau for example, the government, SPREP and SPC-SOPAC are working together in developing a national climate change policy and national food security policy. The process requires participatory consultations, in-depth reviews of existing institutional, policy, plans and program structures. It also involves technical trainings of stakeholders on key and supporting skills at different levels [9]. Take for example, socio-economic assessments that form part and parcel of vulnerability and adaptation (V&A) assessments. Analytical results from these assessments can inform and influence existing policies.

3 DISCUSSION

Lessons Learned

- The need to rationalize public expenditure in chronic PIC budgetary deficits in light of increasing demand for goods and services, has brought into question the level of Government's capacity to continue to serve as the main and direct provider. In the long-term, local groups will have to assume many of the functions that government, by default, has played. In this context for successful functioning at the local level, community capacity has to be significantly strengthened.
- Reducing the overall vulnerability of the SIDS will also require governments to have access to requisite capacity to analyze external advice and conditionalities. Given the limited capabilities of the private sector in most of SIDS, the minimal flow of foreign direct investment, which is strongly linked to the perceived vulnerability of SIDS, the limited market infrastructure in place that does not yet allow effective and efficient operation of market forces, governments will continue to play a vital role to lessen the growing vulnerability of SIDS. Case evidence confirms that despite the growing recognition that the development challenge is different and more difficult because of the peculiarities of SIDS, this is seldom taken into account when donors or international organizations enter into agreements [9].
- PICs other major natural resource is it peoples. Modern production activities require an educated and well-trained work force that can adapt readily to the changing technological demands. Indeed, public and private investment in human resources development must be a major priority for the management of economic vulnerability.
- The education plans for PICs must target carefully the development of skill sets needed for adaptation and disaster risk, including through traditional cultural

- practices. Where these practices are economically relevant, the chance of PICs maintaining their cultural identities will be more feasible. In this regard, the collaboration of tertiary institutions and research institutions, based in the Pacific, will enhance their collective capabilities for developing the requisite human resources for tackling the impacts of climate change.
- NGO's contributions to national development are manifested in the projects that they undertake. Their approach to project development and implementation often times determines the success of initiatives to help vulnerable groups or situations. It is therefore imperative that NGOs have a clear and concise approach to identifying projects. The challenge is to bring the most creative organisational development products and tools, to provide information on how to improve management, operations, communications and resources. There is the realisation that organisations want to take responsibility for their own growth and evolution. Lessons learned from the UNDP Small Grants Programme also reflect this.
 - A great organizational challenge of many institutions is to maintain participation and accountability. Any Capacity Building Programme must therefore promote institutionalised formalization and professionalism developing procedures and structures allowing for organizational learning. This involves procedures of monitoring and evaluation, serious critical evaluation, and feeding the lessons learnt back into action. This implies the need for quality documentation and archival systems, computerization, standardized procedures of programming, monitoring and evaluation, self-criticism and openness.
 - Although progress has been made in environmental awareness, the problem of inadequate public understanding of the importance of institutions to deal with environmental protection has impeded progress in strengthening these institutions and their capacity. Lack of public understanding has affected effective coordination of sustainable development measures because the coordinating mechanisms are not always accorded the authority and recognition due them [10].
 - Most country reports and that of analysts suggest that financial constraints are the most limiting factor in environmental management in SIDS. It probably is also the greatest contributing factor to the human resource scarcity. In rare instances where financial allocations are made in the budget for this purpose, its lack of timely availability too often adversely impacts on the ability to conduct time-sensitive environmental programmes. There is also in many of the PICs a small population base, either on a national scale, or in outer island and remote communities that further exacerbates the capacity development process in these countries.

Based on past experience of Regional projects as PICCAP and CBDAMPIC, the following priority set of capacity building activities have been identified to constitute the broad parameters to guide future development of project activities to be supported for PICs:

- Development and use of participatory process in the formulation and development of national policies, action plans or project initiatives to address vulnerability.
- Initiatives at the regional, national or local levels for the development of project ideas or for education/training of stakeholders, including the individuals responsible for negotiating international agreements on SIDS.
- Assisting locals/communities with seed funding to implement adaptation and mitigation activities that may become income-generating or that have significant demonstration value in their activities.
- Development of national coordinating mechanism or activities focused on making the planning process less sectoral and more integrated.
- Assist in the establishment of information/systematic observation systems and to facilitate exchange of information and expertise
- Facilitating the development of partnerships to promote capacity building

4 CONCLUSIONS

Implications for Policy and Actions

SIDS has reported on a number of valuable lessons from regional and inter-regional cooperation in numerous sectors as a result of the Rio outcomes such as the BPOA and the UNFCCC. Exchanges and information sharing has spurred collaboration and a greater understanding of common problems. Solutions that have been tried in one country or region have been adapted for other countries, by experts from each region working together in the case of the international environmental conventions, particularly on climate change, where SIDS negotiate as a group. This is a very important development for SIDS, as it provides a *foundation for greater collaboration* and a blue print for effective capacity building across SIDS in different geographical regions.

A critical dimension to the human resource problem is the lack of the prerequisite *technical and managerial skills* to address complex issues of CCA and DRR. PICs will need to build these capacities enhanced through *education* to perform the necessary analysis determining relevance as well as the best methodology for implementation. Various institutional rigidities, resistance to change and other weaknesses have also commonly been reported in PICs. In terms of organizational structure, responsibilities are generally not clearly defined because functions, missions, and mandates overlap in many government agencies and the level of communication and cooperation is poor. In many PICs, the selection of a department to execute specific responsibilities is more a consequence of tradition than institutional capacity.

Getting the policies right is proving to be very difficult as witnessed through refining PICCAP, CBDAMPIC and PACC. Overall, SIDS continue to be deficient in a critical mass of *intellectual capital, policy coherence, financial resources and qualified personnel* that are needed to develop and implement sustainable development policies and proj-



Morning catch in Fiji.

ects. In turn, this hampers the emergence of adequate systemic capacity. With notable exceptions, the resulting institutional capacities are still very low, especially in environmental matters. However, the development of regional PIC-based institutions, especially those focused on technical and institutional environmental management capacity (e.g. SPREP), and universities, offers a potentially quite cost-effective capacity development path. In summary, improved capacity development in PICs must be institutionalized and participatory processes for national development planning process so as to:

- Reduce the negative impact of natural disasters.
- Enhance management of natural resources and environment in particular water, land, air, and marine and coastal resources.
- Increase participation of all stakeholders in the process and improve access at all levels to information, technical support and financial resources.
- Maximize the returns on investment in formal education and applied human resources development through economic diversification.
- Improve the negotiating capacity of SIDS, so they can more effectively participate in international negotiations particularly with regards to Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives.
- Develop capacity for the building of partnerships for implement vulnerability reduction strategies with improved links between Government and NGOs, as well as improved capacity of most national NGOs.
- More relevant educational content
- Enhanced regional cooperation and integration.

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