

**PROPOSAL**

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**ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**A REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR  
THE SOUTH PACIFIC**



**The World Conservation Union**  
**l'Alliance mondiale pour la nature**

**JANUARY 1989**

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR  
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## 1. Background

The states of the South Pacific Region share the characteristics of most small island communities, for example:

- o Unique social and cultural conditions.
- o A large number of habitat types concentrated within a small area, many of which are fragile.
- o Economic dependence upon the utilisation or exploitation of natural resources (including tourism).
- o A limited land area providing few alternative locations for development projects.
- o A small population having limited resources to deal with environmental planning for major development projects.

In the circumstances, whilst the number of new development projects is not great, environment-development conflicts can arise from almost any development initiative.

Such conflicts can be avoided by careful environmental planning, which can minimise the adverse impacts of subsequent development and work towards the sustainable utilisation of natural resources.

Since most development in the South Pacific Region is project-led, the application of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to development proposals is a very appropriate and immediate way of introducing the required environmental planning. This is increasingly understood by the governments of the region who can now see the results of projects developed without sufficient regard for the environment.

The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) already encourages its member governments to use EIA to plan their economic development in an ecologically sustainable manner and they turn to SPREP for advice and assistance in this field. However, most of the governments lack the necessary legislative mandate, administrative infrastructure and technical expertise to commission or evaluate an EIA. Moreover, no single institution within the region presently has the capacity to conduct the EIA of a technically sophisticated project.

## 2. Proposal

It is therefore proposed that a joint SPREP/IUCN Environmental Impact Assessment Programme should be established to provide the support required for the initiation of EIA in the region. This five-year programme would have three main elements, as follows:

- o EIA Roster      Establishment and operation of a roster of regional specialists available to contribute to EIAs.
  
- o EIA Support     Provision of advice on both the initiation and review of individual EIAs and the institutional development required to introduce statutory EIA systems.
  
- o EIA Training    Provision of in-country training both in the techniques of EIA and the application/administration of EIA.

These elements are described separately on the following pages.

### 3. Regional Roster of Specialists

Given the unique socio-cultural and ecological conditions of the Pacific Islands, it is essential that the baseline studies and monitoring conducted as part of EIA should be undertaken by specialists from the region itself. This will have the added advantage of exposing local specialists from a variety of disciplines to the techniques of EIA, thus building up a regional capability in EIA over the period of the programme.

The proposal is to develop a regional EIA roster or pool of specialists already working in the region who could be available to provide advice individually or who could make up ad hoc teams when necessary to conduct an EIA of a large development project. The roster would include specialists from the SPREP staff, from regional organizations such as the South Pacific Commission, the South Pacific Bureau for Regional Co-operation, the Forum Fisheries Agency and CCOP/SOPAC, from the regional universities and other members of ASPEI, and from government technical services and planning staffs. Where certain types of professional expertise are not available in the region, an additional list could be maintained of other relevant consultants with experience in the region.

The SPREP secretariat would maintain the roster, and would work with governments to define their EIA requirements and identify suitable experts or put together appropriate EIA teams as needed.

The experts on the regional EIA roster would have the following functions:

- o undertake or contribute to EIAs for governments on request;
- o provide environmental advice on smaller scale projects;
- o assist governments in their review of EIAs submitted by developers or consultants;
- o contribute to government training on the use of EIA by various ministries and planning bodies.

A great advantage of the regional roster concept in the South Pacific context is that it would enable government officials to develop a close working relationship with the regional EIA specialists. The resulting continuity and confidence makes for an efficiency that is highly appreciated in the small over-worked government departments typical of the region. At the same time it pools the available expertise to create a regional capability for large and complex environmental impact assessments.

#### 4. EIA Support Activities

It is anticipated that in addition to the scientific and sociological specialists referred to in 3 above, the roster will include specialists in the application and techniques of EIA. This will enable the EIA Programme to provide regional governments with a service of EIA support activities in the fields of both EIA initiation/review and the development of policy and legislation. These would include the following two groups of elements:

- o environmental screening to determine requirement for detailed EIA
- o application of EIA guidelines in the country context
- o collation of relevant previous studies and other information
- o specification of appropriate assistance from SPREP or other sources
- o preparation of terms of reference for, and selection of, EIA consultants
- o evaluation of completed EIAs
- o interaction with government agencies and private developers to ensure that EIA is considered in the early stages of project conception
  
- o supporting the development of government policy for the application of EIA
- o assistance in the drafting and reviewing of appropriate EIA legislation
- o providing information for governments and private developers on the contribution of EIA to development cost-effectiveness and sustainability
- o development of EIA as a tool for the implementation of National Conservation Strategies and other environmental planning.

## 5. In-Country EIA Training

A start has been made on regional EIA training by SPREP, with support from the Asian Development Bank. A course scheduled for November 1989 will give a region-wide introduction to EIA applications in the Pacific Islands. Instructors will consist of qualified members of the Association of South Pacific Environmental Institutions (ASPEI) with which SPREP works closely, SPREP staff, and appropriate outside expertise. The regional course will ensure that each SPREP member government will have at least one person well-trained in EIA.

However, EIA must be conducted within the context of national environmental policy and legislation, national and local development plans and pressures, the social and cultural conditions, the effects on the island ecosystem with its often unique flora and fauna, and local site-specific environmental characteristics. Personnel from various government agencies need to be trained to understand this context and recognise the role of EIA in minimizing the harmful side-effects of development.

When regional EIA specialists are deployed it is anticipated that they will effect technology transfer to those government personnel with whom they work. However, it would also be valuable for SPREP to organize in-country training courses to strengthen the government capacity to use EIA effectively. Such courses are cost-effective because they minimize travel costs for participants, and ensure that training takes place within the local context. They also provide an opportunity for participants from many government agencies to co-operate together and experience the interaction between their different sectoral activities, leading to more effective if informal integration of government actions.

The training teams for such in-country courses would be drawn largely from the regional roster of experts. Participants would come from the government agencies responsible for environment, marine resources, public works, forestry, agriculture, tourism, environmental health, physical planning, port authority and development planning, as well as government executive and legislative branches. Depending upon the course content, representatives from academia, NGOs and private enterprise could also benefit from attendance.

## 6. Implementation of the Regional EIA Programme

### 6.1 Role of SPREP

The overall responsibility for the co-ordination of the regional EIA programme rests with SPREP, which has obtained government approval for inclusion of the regional programme in the SPREP work programme. SPREP staff will develop the regional EIA roster of experts, assist governments to adopt appropriate EIA procedures, organize the preparation of EIAs when requested by governments, and plan and supervise the in-country training activities. These activities of SPREP will be fully co-ordinated with the work of UNEP in the region, particularly its Regional Seas Programme.

### 6.2. Role of IUCN

IUCN will draw on its considerable technical expertise in organizing environmental impact assessments in developing countries to provide technical support for the development of the South Pacific regional EIA programme, including:

- o advice to SPREP on organization of regional EIA programme
- o assistance in finding technical specialists for roster
- o arrangements for specialized consultancies.

IUCN can also draw on the expertise in its commissions and programmes to provide specific assistance where impacts concern protected areas, marine and coastal areas, forests, wetlands, or rare or threatened species. In particular, the IUCN Task Force on Island Conservation can advise on the particular problems of assessing environmental impacts in island situations. The IUCN Environmental Law Centre can provide technical assistance in drafting appropriate EIA legislation.

### 6.3 Timing and Duration

The regional Environment Impact Assessment programme is planned to run for 5 years, during which time it is expected that EIA will become a routine part of each government's planning process. While there may always be some need for outside assistance with the assessment of large complex development projects, most governments in the region should by then be able to plan and carry out or commission routine EIAs using national or regional expertise.

SPREP has already received requests for assistance with EIA of development projects, so work on these can begin as soon as the programme is approved. The regional EIA training course in November 1989 could be used as a first step in bringing together specialists for the regional roster, and developing a consensus on the EIA methods most appropriate to the region. The volume of EIA work would be expected to build as governments adopt EIA requirements, and then stabilize as governments become capable of internalizing much of the EIA procedure.



7. Proposed Budget

The proposed programme has been designed to be a low-cost operation which will act as a stimulus or catalyst for the introduction of EIA in the region. The majority of the funds will be consumed within the region, principally as disbursements from SPREP.

INDICATIVE BUDGET (US\$ '000)

<u>Activity</u>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
1. Fees, travel and expenses for short EIA assignments	30	30	30	30	20
2. In-country training courses	--	30	30	30	30
3. Report preparation, office expenses	5	7	7	7	7
4. Contingency	--	3	3	3	3
5. IUCN technical costs	6	6	5	5	4
6. IUCN administration	3	6	6	6	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>69</b>

Total budget for five years: US\$ 357,000