



# **WATER AND SANITATION ISSUES AND STRATEGIC RESPONSES IN THE PACIFIC**

[VIEWS FROM NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS AND INITIATIVES]

**PACIFIC BRIEF FOR  
THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO CSD13**

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# 1 CHALLENGES

Pacific island countries are no different from other countries in that freshwater is essential to human existence and a major requirement in agricultural and other commercial production systems. The economic and social well being of Pacific island countries are dependent upon the quality and quantity of their water. However, the ability of the island countries to effectively manage the water sector is unique to Small Island Developing States (SIDS), whereby constrained by their small size, fragility, natural vulnerability, and limited human and financial resource base to mention a few.

## 1.1 Global and Pacific SIDS Challenges

The challenges and constraints of sustainable water resources management in Pacific SIDS can be categorized into three broad thematic areas. These three areas were also identified as broad challenges at the Kyoto Consultations for Small Island Developing Countries on Water Resources during the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum. These thematic challenges are considered as being key to addressing sustainable water management in Small Island countries and are:

1) Small island countries have uniquely fragile water resources due to their small size, lack of natural storage and competing land use, vulnerability to natural and anthropogenic hazards, including drought, cyclones and urban pollution. This requires detailed water resources monitoring and management and improving collaboration with meteorological forecasting services;

2) Water service providers face challenging constraints to sustaining water and wastewater provision due to the lack of resources including human and financial resource bases, which restrict the availability of experienced staff and investment, and effectiveness of cost-recovery. Future action is required in human resources development, water demand management and improving cost-recovery; and

3) Water governance is highly complex due to the specific socio-political and cultural structures relating to traditional community, tribal and inter-island practices, rights and interests, which are all interwoven with colonial and 'modern' practices and instruments. These require programmes such as awareness, advocacy, and political will, at community; institution and government levels to create a framework for integrated water resources management.

The challenges for the regional and international levels can be summarized to include:

- Co-ordination and refocusing of aid programmes and project design to assist SIDS to develop water management capacity and to implement projects to improve the environmental sustainability of water supply and usage, consistent with regional priorities;
- Co-operation with existing regional agencies in the development of water sector related programmes and technologies; and
- Regional level support of national capacity building, advocacy and awareness.

## 1.2 National Challenges

The major challenges or problems for most of the countries in the Pacific sub-region is the sustainable provision of adequate supplies of non-polluted freshwater and wastewater disposal, requiring improved resources management, efficient service providers and better local and national water governance.

One of the consequences of not having freshwater is the immediate constraint it poses on sustainable development. Other consequences include an increase in waterborne diseases and general hardship, especially for women and children.

The challenges at the national level to improve freshwater management and to achieve the sustainable use of freshwater are summarised below:

#### *Water Resources Management*

- Adequate water resources understanding and management.
- Adoption of integrated watershed management.
- Increased rainwater harvesting.
- Climate forecasting (rainfall/drought and cyclones).
- Mainstreaming vulnerability assessment and risk management.

#### *Water Supply and Sanitation*

- A safe and secure supply to all.
- Reduction of unaccounted for water (e.g. leaks).
- Cost effective mechanisms that provide incentives for the efficient use of water, with the provision of a basic level of supply at affordable cost to families.
- Development and application of low cost, environmentally friendly water recycling and use technologies.
- Promotion of technologies appropriate to Pacific SIDS.
- Introduction of mechanisms to ensure consistent standards and compatible technologies.
- Achieving full cost-recovery of urban water providers.
- Adequately-trained staff.
- Water management institutional reform.

#### *Water Governance*

- Use of integrated economic and environmental project and policy appraisals.
- Adoption of least cost integrated supply and demand side planning for water supply augmentation.
- Implementation of environmental regulations to eliminate significant pollution/contamination.
- Regulatory arrangements to allow private sector involvement in water supply while protecting consumers from potential market abuse.
- Public awareness campaigns and education on water conservation and water resources protection.
- Improved community participation and involvement.
- Sustained high level political commitment.

## 2 STRATEGIC RESPONSES

The Pacific national and regional consultations on water in small island countries<sup>1</sup> are a classic example of multi-stakeholder involvement and the development of partnerships. The Pacific sub-region is unique in terms of regional institutional architecture where regional level support is provided to national efforts in the development of regional policies and strategies for sustainable water and wastewater management and sanitation.

This is mainly done through the work of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP), and in particular SOPAC who has the mandate to support its member countries in the areas of water resources, water supply and sanitation.

The regional architecture in the Pacific region is a well-developed feature of the Pacific Islands' development agenda that is recognised as a model for regional or sub-regional cooperation. But it also absorbs significant resources so it is necessary as well to ensure that regional governance structures and processes are the optimal for promoting sustainable development.

### 2.1 Pacific Regional Action Plan

The regional needs for both water and sanitation are articulated for the Pacific in the Pacific Regional Action Plan (RAP) on Sustainable Water Management. The product of eight months consultation, the Pacific RAP is a strategic holistic approach to achieving sustainable water management in the Pacific. Endorsed by 18 countries, 16 at Heads of State level, the Pacific RAP not only provides a coordinated and agreed approach but has significantly driven water up the national and regional agenda. This is very much the evidence provided of late by member countries' initiatives taken on water resource management and the political support given by governments.

The Pacific RAP consists of six thematic categories, each containing 3-5 key messages, which broadly address the 20 or so challenges and constraints to achieving sustainable water management in the Pacific. For each key message a series of actions has been developed along with the responsible parties for implementing the action (e.g. national government, water utilities, regional organisations, donors). In this framework, a comprehensive strategic approach is built up.

The six thematic categories are:

- Theme 1: Water Resources Management (fragile vulnerable small, pollution, IWRM).
- Theme 2: Island Vulnerability (climatic, geohazard & social).
- Theme 3: Awareness (community participation, political will).
- Theme 4: Technologies (appropriate, capacity building, leakage reduction).
- Theme 5: Institutional Arrangements (policies, planning, legislation, regulation, IWRM).
- Theme 6: Financing (cost-recovery, economic value of water).

The consultation process included the identification of national priority actions as determined by the participating countries on the basis of their national water strategies, national assessments and stakeholder consultations undertaken for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum 'Water In Small Island Countries' Theme, and the development of agreed regional actions

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<sup>1</sup> This include the Pacific Regional Consultation on Water in Small Island Countries, held in Sigatoka, Fiji Islands, 29 July – 3 August 2002, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum Pacific Preparation entitled "Water in Small Island Countries". Reference is made to the proceedings edited by Clive Carpenter, Jeffrey Stubbs and Marc Overmars. This Consultation resulted in a Regional Action Plan on water resources management for the Pacific sub-region.

through a regional consultation meeting process of plenary discussion, working group review and delegation approval.

The actions are structured around six thematic areas with the following key messages, which address specific issues:

**Theme 1 – WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT** (Water Resources Assessment and Monitoring, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, Integrated Water Resources and Catchment Management)

*Key Message 1:* Strengthen the capacity of small island countries to conduct water resources assessment and monitoring as a key component of sustainable water resources management.

*Key Message 2:* Implement strategies to utilise appropriate methods and technologies for water supply and sanitation systems and approaches for rural and peri-urban communities in small islands.

*Key Message 3:* Implement strategies to improve the management of water resources, and surface and groundwater catchments (watersheds) for the benefit of all sectors including local communities, development interests and the environment.

**Theme 2 – ISLAND VULNERABILITY** (Disaster Preparedness; Dialogue on Water and Climate)

*Key Message 1:* There is a need for capacity development to enhance the application of climate information to cope with climate variability and change.

*Key Message 2:* Change the paradigm for dealing with Island Vulnerability from disaster response to hazard assessment and risk management, particularly in Integrated Water Resource Management.

**Theme 3 – AWARENESS** (Advocacy; Political Will; Community Participation; Environmental Understanding; Gender)

*Key Message 1:* A high quality participatory framework should be adopted at the National level to allow for open participation of communities in sustainable water and wastewater management.

*Key Message 2:* Access to, and availability of information on sustainable water and wastewater management should be provided to all levels of society.

*Key Message 3:* Water and sanitation education should be mainstreamed into the formal education system.

*Key Message 4:* Improve communication and coordination of all stakeholders in sustainable water and wastewater including government, civil society and the private sector.

**Theme 4 – TECHNOLOGY** (Appropriate Technologies; Demand Management and Conservation; Human Resources)

*Key Message 1:* Utility collaboration and regional partnership to reduce unaccounted for water will significantly improve the sustainability of utilities and reduce the need for developing new water resources.

*Key Message 2:* Appropriate institutions, infrastructure and information will support sustainable water and wastewater management.

*Key Message 3:* Island specific regional training programmes should be developed, resulting in sustainable levels of skilled and knowledgeable people and communities within the water and wastewater sector.

**Theme 5 – INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS** (Policy, Planning and Legislation; Institutional Strengthening)

*Key Message 1:* Work together through a comprehensive consultative process, encompassing good governance, to develop a shared National vision for managing water resources in a sustainable manner.

*Key Message 2:* Develop national instruments including National visions, policies, plans and legislation appropriate to each island country taking into account the particular social, economic, environmental and cultural needs of the citizens of each country.

*Key Message 3:* Promote and establish appropriate institutional arrangements resourced sufficiently to enable effective management of water resources and the provision of appropriate water services.

*Key Message 4:* Recognise and share the water resource management knowledge and skills of all stakeholders at a National and regional level in the process of developing and implementing the National Vision.

*Key Message 5:* National and regional leadership in water resource management should be recognised and encouraged.

**Theme 6 – FINANCE** (Costs and Tariffs, Alternative Models; Role of Donor Organisations and Financing Institutes)

*Key Message 1:* Create a better and sustainable environment for investment by both the public and private sector, by developing and implementing National, sector and strategic plans that identify the economic, environmental and social costs of different services and develop pricing policies, which ensure the proper allocation of resources for the water sector.

*Key Message 2:* Establish financially viable enterprises for water and sanitation that result in improved performance by developing appropriate financial and cost recovery policies, tariffs, billing and collection systems, financial and operating systems.

*Key Message 3:* Reduce costs through improved operational efficiency, using benchmarking, development of leak detection programmes and improved work practices.

*Key Message 4:* Ensure access for the poor to water and sanitation services by developing pro poor policies that include tariffs with lifeline blocks and transparent and targeted subsidies.

*Key Message 5:* Achieve sustainable rural water and sanitation services at a community level through developing strategies that incorporate mechanisms for appropriate financing and capacity building.

The consultation process also enabled agreement to be reached on how this regional strategy would be implemented.

## 2.2 Pacific Type II Partnership on Sustainable Water Management

The Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management has been incorporated in a partnership arrangement under the so-called Type II initiatives submitted by the Pacific Island Countries to the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) in Johannesburg during the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in August 2002. Pacific Forum Leaders also endorsed this umbrella Type II water initiative amongst 13 others at the WSSD. It is expected that the Type II mechanism will be used by donor, international and regional organisations alike to help implement actions in the Pacific region towards achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and the WSSD Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) target to halve the proportion of people without access to safe and affordable drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015.

The main objective of the Type II Initiative is to achieve sustainable water and wastewater management in Pacific island countries through:

- The establishment of a regional water network of persons and organisations, inclusive of country governments, development agencies, professional associations and donors, that work in the different fields of water resources management and service delivery in the region, to improve regional coordination and collaboration;
- Implementation of the “Pacific Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Water Management”, as agreed upon by Ministers, Heads of Delegation and representatives of civil society groups with responsibilities for water affairs from 16 small island countries in the Pacific, as well as East Timor and the Maldives as part of the regional consultation and preparation for the “Water in Small Island Countries” and “Dialogue on Water & Climate” themes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum, during the “Pacific Regional Meeting on Water in Small Island Countries”, held in Sigatoka, Fiji from 29 July to 3 August 2002.
- Implementation of the “Pacific Wastewater Policy Statement” and “Pacific Wastewater Framework for Action”, as agreed by representatives of 15 Pacific Island Countries and representatives from civil society and development agencies, as part of the regional consultations to develop strategic approaches to implement the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, held in Majuro, Marshall Islands, October 2001.

The Partnership is coordinated and facilitated by the intergovernmental organisation with the mandate to support the Pacific Island Countries in water & sanitation – the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC).

## 2.3 National Policies, Strategies and Actions

Regional advocacy and strategic development of sustainable approaches can only take the countries so far. Eventually the capacity building and awareness raising have to develop into nationally-owned processes and institutional reforms within the individual Pacific Island Countries themselves. The Pacific RAP has provided those countries with a broad framework within which to strengthen their national water committees, and with an approach and political commitment to formalise these arrangements.

Since the finalisation of the Pacific RAP in August 2002, **Fiji** have created an interim National Water Committee and drafted a cross-sectoral water policy; **Papua New Guinea** have held national consultations on developing a multi-sectoral water policy and national action plan and established a National Water Association; **Tuvalu** have reviewed their national water plan including the need for more integrated management approaches; **Samoa** have just completed a further round of national multi-stakeholder

consultations on drafting a national water policy and are strengthening their existing national water committee; **Kiribati** have completed a national water sector review and developed a sectoral strategy and action programme on national water management policies and practices.

There is also increasing activity in addressing urban water management issues in a more cross-sectoral approach. Wastewater and stormwater management are being tackled as inter-departmental issues now in **Port Vila, Vanuatu** and **Apia, Samoa**. In Apia this has gone as far as institutional restructuring to create a municipal agency including representatives and links to all relevant government departments.

### **3 SPECIFIC ACTIONS**

#### **3.1 Joint Caribbean-Pacific Programme for Action on Water & Climate (JPfA)**

The JPfA was born from the close collaboration between the Caribbean and Pacific region preparatory work for the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum. Using the global Dialogue on Water & Climate as a vehicle of opportunity, both regions developed Water & Climate consultations. Technical advisors from both regions attended each others consultations.

The primary conclusion of the advisors was that there was sufficient complementarity between the two regional consultation outcomes that a common programme of action could be agreed upon, comprising of 22 action elements, common to both the Pacific and Caribbean regional consultation outcomes, covering four collaborative areas: research, advocacy and awareness, capacity building and governance. Immediate priority actions were identified as: water resources assessment, water governance, integrated water resources management, water demand management and water quality. The JPfA was formally launched at Kyoto by the delegations from both regions, and a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the respective lead regional agencies for each region.

The JPfA takes an Integrated Water Resources Management approach to addressing water and climate issues in SIDS, as demonstrated by Integrated Watershed and Coastal Area Management (IWCAM) in the Caribbean and Island Systems Management (ISM) in the Pacific. The JPfA enables transfer of knowledge, expertise, positional statements and personnel between the two regions to the benefit of the 34 countries involved. The JPfA has already strengthened the SIDS position at the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum, WMO Congress and Barbados+10 preparatory meetings. At a side-event at the CSD 12 on the JPfA on Water and Climate, a request was made to extend the partnership to include the African, Indian and Mediterranean Seas region (AIMS). This will be further explored, with progress to be reported in Mauritius in January 2005.

#### **3.2 Small Island Countries Portfolio of Water Actions**

In the final Water In Small Island Countries session of the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum, a draft Statement and a Portfolio of Actions on Water in Small Island Countries derived from the Pacific and Caribbean consultations and Dialogue on Water and Climate were presented. A Session Statement and a Portfolio of Water Actions were agreed upon, and the session was further used as a briefing for Ministerial Delegations that attended the Senior Officials Meeting and the Ministerial Conference that were held on 19-20 and 22-23 March 2003, respectively.

The Portfolio of Actions includes six priority actions on: Hydrological Cycle Observation Systems (a water resources management approach for climatic extremes); South-South collaboration; The Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management; Water Demand Management; Water Quality Monitoring; and Water Governance.

The Ministerial intervention stated:

“Recognising the uniquely fragile nature of water resources in small island developing states, we support specific programs of collaboration such as the Caribbean Pacific Joint Program for Action on Water and Climate in Small Island Countries”.

## 4 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONDITIONS

CSD12 provided a platform for understanding the constraints preventing sustainable water management being achieved and identifying possible solutions. CSD13 is intended to take these solutions and develop them into strategies. After CSD13, the Water for Life Decade commences, a decade of increased commitment and therefore opportunity to improving water and wastewater management.

In the Pacific we have completed the issue and constraint analysis, and formulated detailed and comprehensive responses through the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management and the Pacific Wastewater Policy Statement and framework for Action.

These achievements have been articulated at CSD12 and CSD 13 can provide an opportunity to secure the necessary commitments required for implementation of these regional strategies during the Water for Life Decade (2005-2015).

The primary unresolved issue as identified by our external assistance partners is the lack of focus or priority given to water and sanitation in the national development strategies. The Pacific Island Countries must use CSD12/13 to facilitate prioritisation of water in their national sustainable development strategies, if they are to take optimal advantage of the global focus on water during CSD12/13 and the subsequent Water for Life Decade. This has also been expressed in the BPoA+10 Review of the Freshwater Chapter, which gives due recognition to CSD12 and CSD13, the “Water for Life” Decade and the role of Mauritius in prioritising water on the SIDS global agenda and SIDS national agendas.

Without additional resources, national and regional activities in this sector cannot continue. The priorities that have been identified through the national and regional consultations are contained in the Pacific Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Water Management, 20 actions of which form the JPfA, common to the Caribbean and Pacific.

It is essential that the Pacific RAP be implemented if sustainable water management is to be achieved in the Pacific. As a priority the six Portfolio of Water Actions need to be implemented.

It is also a necessity that the resources that are required to operate the strategic partnerships, be secured for the foreseeable future. Without the partnerships, implementation will be less coordinated, more expensive and less effective. It is in every stakeholders interest to maintain the strategic value of the partnerships.

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