

THEME 1: WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The effective and sustainable management of water resources in small island countries of the Pacific and other regions is vital for the health and social well being of their people, the protection of their environments and the development of their economies. The very limited nature of water resources, the vulnerability of these islands and their resources, including water, to natural disasters, over-exploitation and pollution combined with increasing demands for freshwater due to expanding populations and, in some cases, tourism, industry and agriculture, makes the management of water resources a very high priority.

In reality, there are many issues which currently constrain the achievement of the goal of effective and sustainable water resources management. At the national level, there is often fragmentation in the water sector and inadequate water resources legislation, policy and planning. At the administrative level, there is often insufficient local human resource capacity to conduct water resources assessment and monitoring. Other issues include conflicts associated with the use of water from customary land tenure, impacts of land use on water resources, problems with design and implementation of water projects (often funded by donors), and insufficient community education, awareness & participation. In addition, there are some knowledge gaps which require further applied research and actions to disseminate results.

A Planning Meeting held in Vanuatu in February 2002 identified Water Resources Management as one of a number of major themes to be addressed at the forthcoming Regional Consultation Meeting to be held from 29th July – 3rd August in Fiji. The list of the six Themes adopted for discussion at the Regional Consultation Meeting and further details about the meeting are provided in the "Information for Participants" brochure.

SCOPE

At the Regional Consultation Meeting, the Water Resources Management Theme (Theme 1) will be considering the following key elements:

- ?? Types of freshwater resources and their availability and sustainability.
- ?? Vulnerability of water resources and water quality degradation.
- ?? Knowledge gaps in relation to water resources.
- ?? Sustainable development of water resources. The focus will be on rural water supply systems, noting that urban water supply systems will be covered under Theme 4.
- ?? Surface water and groundwater catchment management.
- ?? Capacity building, applied research and training needs, particularly in the area of water resources assessment and monitoring.

Inevitably, there are some overlaps with the other five Themes.

SESSION

Outline

The Theme 1 session, to be held on the morning of Tuesday 30th July, will include presentation of a theme paper and case studies. These papers are intended to set the scene for a discussion involving all delegates, particularly those involved in water resources management.

Theme Paper

The theme paper, to be presented at the Regional Consultation Meeting will provide an overview of each element. A summary of key issues, concerns and constraints in relation to water resources management will be provided. The paper will also explore measures at international, regional, national and local level which have been taken in recent years to address some of the fundamental issues impacting on water resources management in small island nations. Finally, the paper will outline measures which could be taken to improve the situation and suggest possible actions for island nations to consider.

The focus of this paper is not on the whole water sector but rather on a number of key elements as indicated above.

Case Studies

To emphasise certain aspects of this theme, it is intended that four case studies will be presented by speakers from selected island countries. The purpose of these case studies is to provide practical examples of a range of water resources management issues and strategies to deal with these issues, particularly in small islands where the water resources problems are most critical. The selected case studies are:

- ?? Water management in Tuvalu with special emphasis on rainwater harvesting
- ?? Water management in Kiribati with special emphasis on groundwater development using infiltration galleries
- ?? Water management in Maldives with special emphasis on desalination
- ?? Integrated Catchment Management in 'Eua, Kingdom of Tonga

Discussion

Following the presentations, there will be time for discussion of key issues and draft proposals. It is anticipated that Country delegates will comment on relevant national experiences, concerns and possible actions based on their own National Consultations (prior to the Regional Consultation Meeting) and Country Briefing Papers (presented on the first day of the Meeting).

Working Group

It is intended that a Water Resources Management Working Group will be formed during the Theme Session to develop proposals and priority actions arising from the papers and the discussion for later endorsement by later plenary session of the Regional Consultation Meeting. This Working Group will meet, as required, after the Theme session to develop such proposals and a draft action plan.

INPUT FROM COUNTRY DELEGATIONS

Country delegations are encouraged to identify their own key issues and concerns in relation to water resources management and to develop their own priorities for actions. The major opportunity for this is through the National Consultations and the Country Briefing Papers. Further opportunity will exist during the discussion phase of the Theme 1 session and through the proposed Working Group.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, please contact the Theme 1 Resource Person, **Tony Falkland**

E-mail: tonyf@ecowise.com.au or Fax: +612 6270 7631.
