



SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY (SPC) ANNUAL REPORT 2009



PART 1 - ANNUAL OVERVIEW

SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY (SPC)
ANNUAL REPORT 2009 — PART 1 - ANNUAL OVERVIEW



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Tongan students provide an escort for delegates at the opening of the 6th Conference

Director-General's Review – 2009



Dr Jimmie Rodgers
Director-General

I have pleasure in presenting the annual report of SPC's activities for 2009.

It was a year of considerable achievement, despite the impact of the global economic crisis that began in late 2008. In managing the resulting setbacks for programme budgets, we were very much aware that our members were at least equally affected by the crisis. I am pleased to report that through reordering of priorities, careful allocation of resources, and deferment of recruitment in some areas, we were largely able to maintain the delivery of services to members as planned.

The other significant backdrop to the year's activities was provided by the new arrangements for regional organisations – the Regional Institutional Framework – that were agreed on in July by a historic first-ever joint meeting of the governing bodies of SOPAC, SPREP and SPC.¹

6th Conference of the Pacific Community and CRGA 39

An undoubted highlight of 2009 was the 6th Conference held in October in Nukualofa, Tonga. The conference was opened by Her Royal Highness, Princess Salote Mafile'ò Pilolevu Tui, and chaired by Tonga's Prime Minister, the Honourable Dr Feleti Sevele. We were conscious of the honour paid to SPC by Her Royal Highness and most grateful to the government and people of Tonga for the traditional hospitality extended to everyone who attended both the conference and CRGA 39,² which preceded it. We were pleased to welcome the Premier of Niue, the Deputy Prime Minister of Cook Islands, and the Vice-President of the Federated States of Micronesia. We were also very pleased that more government ministers attended the 6th Conference in comparison to previous conferences. In his opening remarks, Dr Sevele encouraged members to continue full ministerial participation at future conferences, saying that such high-level engagement in guiding the work of SPC was more important than ever as its role expanded. In particular, Prime Minister Dr Sevele reminded the conference that given SPC's role as 'the region's largest scientific and technical agency providing services to Pacific Island countries and territories', it is crucial that leaders and ministers take greater interest in SPC's work programme.

The theme of the conference was '*Maximising the impacts of regional services at national level*' and delegates were impressed by the presentations made by representatives of several government departments and non-government organisations in member countries on the contribution of SPC's services to their own national strategies and projects. These included establishing rural Internet connectivity for schools and health clinics, improving crop varieties for atoll agriculture, training the hundreds of observers required to monitor tuna fishing catches and methods, and providing support for national initiatives to eliminate gender-based violence.

The conference welcomed Australia's announcement that it will provide AUD 10 million over four years to SPC to strengthen its support for statistical services in the Pacific region. Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for Development Assistance, Mr Bob MacMullan, said statistics were fundamentally important and Australia was concerned about the lack of resources for developing statistical information in countries. Delegates were also pleased to hear the interest expressed by the United States in re-engaging with the Pacific region. United States delegate Mrs Alcy Frelick said the US welcomed the opportunity to be present at a meeting where there were 'huge hearts and good minds' wanting to make improvements in the world.

Another noteworthy aspect of the conference was its endorsement of CRGA's decision to establish a subcommittee to study a long-term sustainable financing strategy for SPC. With SPC's growth and the expansion of its role, as mandated by Pacific leaders, our heavy dependence on project funding has

1 SOPAC: Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission; SPREP: Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; SPBEA: South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment.

2 39th Meeting of the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations.

become a major challenge for the proper planning and optimum use of development resources, particularly in terms of predictability and sustainability. While there will always be tension in balancing the resources needed and the resources available, we must find ways of reducing the uncertainty produced by the present situation. The subcommittee includes a good representation of SPC members and is scheduled to meet three times in 2010 to work on an analysis of SPC's core functions and the most appropriate funding modalities for these functions.

The conference is also responsible for the appointment of the Director-General. I was humbled to be unanimously reappointed to lead SPC for another two-year term. I am grateful for the support expressed by members and their confidence that with their partnership I can lead their organisation during a period of considerable expansion and change. In this regard I must acknowledge the support that I have enjoyed from my executive team and the staff of SPC because we are only able to excel as a result of their unwavering commitment and dedication to providing excellent regional services to members.

The conference communiqué, which summarises the outcomes and decisions of the 6th Conference and CRGA 39, is annexed to this report.



Delegates at CRGA 39

Decisions on the new Regional Institutional Framework

As mentioned above, the agreement reached by the joint meeting in July on the new Regional Institutional Framework (RIF) for regional organisations has significant implications for SPC. Implementing the decisions taken by Forum Leaders and the respective governing bodies of SPBEA, SOPAC, SPC and SPREP on the RIF in 2008 took up considerable amounts of my time during the year. Consultations between the agencies were highly sensitive and in many respects political in nature and demanded a great deal from the people involved. I acknowledge with sincere appreciation the important role played by my executive team in ensuring that the work of SPC and delivery of our regional services to members continued unabated. I also wish to formally express my appreciation to my colleagues, the Chief Executive Officers of SPBEA, SOPAC and SPREP, as well as to the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), for the team work that resulted in the final implementation arrangements agreed to by the governing bodies at their joint meeting and separate special sessions. The decisions made were endorsed by Forum Leaders during their Cairns Conference in August.

In essence, these decisions are as follows:

- SPC to assume the role of lead coordinating agency for the regional energy sector.
- SOPAC's current energy programme to become part of the new Economic Development Division of SPC together with transport, infrastructure and communication.
- SPBEA to be merged with SPC, initially as a stand-alone programme in 2010.

Implementing the decisions of CRGA 38

Against the background of the special events described above, SPC made good progress in responding to the decisions taken by CRGA 38. A major highlight in early 2009 was the signing of an agreement, coordinated by SPC through the Regional Maritime Programme, with support from PIFS, for a subregional shipping service between Kiribati, Nauru, Tuvalu and Marshall Islands. Under the agreement, ships belonging to Kiribati Shipping Services Limited (KSSL) will be used to provide a more regular inter-island feeder shipping service between the participating countries. Delegates from these countries expressed their satisfaction with the voyages made in the first six months of the new service. They particularly noted that a sizable drop in freight rates was resulting in reduced costs for consumers and new trading opportunities were opening up.

Implementing the three pillars of the corporate plan 2007–2012

Pillar 1 – Increased focus on member priorities. This pillar dominated our focus in 2009. We continued to push the boundaries in our efforts to deliver on and safeguard our core business of addressing members' priorities. By the end of 2009, we had worked in close partnership with members to complete six more joint country strategies (for American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Samoa and Tonga) and started drafting the strategy for French Polynesia. Country profiles were also developed for all island members. The profiles, which list all SPC activities and associated funding for individual members, will be used to monitor implementation of the joint strategies.

Decentralisation continued in 2009 with the opening of the Solomon Islands country office and the strengthening of the regional office for the North Pacific in Pohnpei. Discussions continued with Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea on the opening of offices in these two member countries. Our corporate services are being restructured to support the Secretariat's growth and further decentralisation, and divisional and programme strategic plans are being aligned with members' priorities to enhance development outcomes at national level.

Pillar 2 – Strategic engagement at national, regional and international levels. SPC's relationships with key international partners continued to develop in 2009. Below are examples of our strategic engagement at the international and regional level during the year.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria became the largest non-member contributor to the 2009 SPC budget, providing 19.5% of the total budget (12.8 million CFP units), and is the second largest contributor overall after Australia, which provides 35% (22.65 million CFP units). The Global Fund will contribute a similar proportion to the 2010 budget, although the actual amount will decrease to 10 million CFP units.

In terms of our partnership with the European Union (EU), work in 2009 focused on preparing submissions for financing under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF 10).

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a very important strategic partner for SPC. Our high-level engagement continued with a bilateral consultation during the Cairns Forum and plans to convene a second consultation early in 2010. ADB is interested in working with SPC in a number of areas including statistics, health, the digital strategy, transport, fisheries and gender issues.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is our most important partner in the region's health sector. The new memorandum of understanding between SPC and WHO is working well and in July, we co-hosted the 2009 meeting of Pacific Ministers of Health in Madang, Papua New Guinea (PNG).

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is another of SPC's important partners, particularly in the areas of reproductive health, adolescent health, population and development policy, research on gender-based violence, and liaison with parliamentarians. In 2009, UNFPA contributed approximately 2% of the overall SPC budget, the same percentage as projected for 2010.

SPC has also begun working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) after signing a new memorandum of understanding in 2009 that will guide our collaborative work and partnership.

The Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec), through its Health Programme, has stepped up efforts to work with SPC, particularly on emerging issues such as climate change and health, and food security and e-health. Consultation has begun on joint initiatives that will be supported by ComSec and implemented by SPC, or jointly implemented in a range of areas in addition to health.

SPC is one of a new five-partner initiative in health that also involves WHO, the World Bank, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID). The partnership, which is aimed at improving coordination of inputs and contributions to the region's health sector, held its inaugural meeting in August.

Meetings of heads of CROP (Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific) agencies continued in 2009. This consultative process among senior advisers at the regional level is starting to influence how we address the region's development priorities, particularly those of the Pacific Plan. There is a natural synergy between much of SPC's core business and the priorities of the Pacific Plan, with SPC leading or supporting work in several areas. In mid-2009 we published *SPC and the Pacific Plan* – a summary of SPC's services and outputs in 14 sectors that contribute to realisation of the Plan.

Strategic engagement at regional and international forums is a key component of Pillar 2. To reinforce the impact of our work, we endeavour to partner with other organisations in addressing key priorities for the region. Examples include our participation in the governing body meetings of other CROP agencies and in key ministerial meetings relevant to SPC's work, including the ICT Ministers meeting (February 2009, Tonga); Education Ministers meeting (March 2009, Tonga); Energy Ministers meeting (April 2009, Tonga); Transport Ministers meeting (June 2009, Tonga); Health Ministers meeting (July 2009, PNG); and Forum Economic Ministers meeting (October 2009, Cook Islands).

Pillar 3 – Strategic positioning of the organisation, which is essential to our efforts to achieve the objectives of Pillars 1 and 2. We are already seeing the benefits of some important steps taken under this pillar during the year

SPC's Strategic Engagement, Policy and Planning Facility is in full operation and has made significant impacts both within and outside the organisation. It plays a key role in positioning SPC to respond to both current and projected situations. Outputs for 2009 included coordinating JCS missions and developing country profiles; initiating a major research review on the impact of climate change on Pacific fisheries; and providing a focal point for development partners including the European Commission, ADB and the World Bank.

A new strategic plan for Corporate Services was approved by CRGA 38 and has been progressively implemented during 2009. Additional human resources have been placed in all three of SPC's major offices with noticeable improvements in corporate systems and administration. The new finance system is in its second year of operation and its multi-geographic, multi-currency capability is assisting in supporting the operation of SPC's decentralised offices.

Divisional highlights

Despite the economic downturn, there were many highlights in the work of SPC's programmes in 2009, some of which are described in detail in separate overviews and articles from each of our divisions. Here I wish to highlight some of the resource challenges faced by the divisions in their efforts to meet members' needs.

Land Resources Division (LRD)

LRD's integrated strategic plan for 2009–2012 has three objectives: (1) improved food and nutritional security; (2) integrated and sustainable agricultural and forestry resource management and development; and (3) improved and increased trade in agriculture and forestry products. Total funding for LRD for 2009 was 8.78 million CFP units. However, this is projected to fall by around 45% in 2010 mainly due to a reduction in project funds, particularly from EU. This funding level does not yet take into account recently approved funding through the Australian Climate Change initiative as well as other funding likely to come from EU should proposals submitted for their consideration be approved. It does, however, highlight the importance of seeking a mechanism for longer-term sustainable funding for core services in agriculture and forestry, many of which have a broad spectrum of benefits for health, environments, employment and trade.

Marine Resources Division (MRD)

The division consists of two programmes, the Oceanic Fisheries (OFP) and Coastal Fisheries Programmes (CFP), and the project coordination unit for CRISP (Coral Reef Initiatives for the Pacific). The latter project is implemented by a number of agencies, but its work involves or directly complements SPC activities. The Regional Maritime Programme, which was formerly part of the division, has moved to the new Economic Development Division.

An independent review of MRD in 2009 assessed its performance in relation to members' needs. One immediate outcome is the development of a new single strategic plan for the whole division for the next four years (2010–2013). From 2010, the division will also have a new name – Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) Division.

Total staff numbers, particularly of scientific staff, fell towards the end of the year with the completion of the PROCFish and DevFish projects.

The total revised budget for the division in 2009 was 14.7 million CFP units, while the projected budget for 2010 is 47% lower at 7.8 million CFP units due mainly to the completion of a number of large projects. Of the 7.8 million CFP units, about 38% (3 million CFP units) is considered core funding support (core and programme funding), with the rest being project funding. Like LRD, however, this funding level does not include recently approved funding through the Australian Climate Change initiative and possible EU funding of proposals submitted for consideration.

Public Health Division (PHD)

PHD was established as a technical division of SPC on 1 January 2009. Its work covers communicable and non-communicable diseases, outbreak response, and prevention and advocacy. The division's new strategic plan for the period 2010–2014, which was endorsed by the 6th Conference, seeks to address some of the inequities in resourcing priorities in health through both a strategic and structural reform process. In particular, there will be a greater focus on working across sectors to address the wider determinants of public health, such as adequate housing, access to education and health care, and affordable fresh food.

The division's budget of 27 million CFP units represented almost 44% of the total SPC budget in 2009. The budget for 2010 is less at approximately 22.3 million CFP units. Most of the growth in the PHD's budget and staff numbers (around 60) has occurred on the basis of new Global Fund grants and the Pacific HIV Response Fund, with 66% of all PHD project funds for 2009 dedicated to HIV, tuberculosis and malaria.

The division currently has staff in place in six member countries³ and territories, and this may expand further.

Social Resources Division (SRD)

SRD's work encompasses statistics and demography, human development (youth, gender issues, community education and culture), media and human rights. Staff are located at headquarters and at the regional offices in Fiji and Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). In addition, some project staff are based in Honiara, Solomon Islands, and a small number have recently relocated to Vanuatu as part of further decentralisation.

The 2009 budget for SRD was 6,979,400 CFP units, with a high proportion of this amount (44.2%) consisting of core and programme funding. The budget for 2010 will drop by more than 2.2 million CFP units.

At the end of August 2009, the division had a total of 57 staff. Although total staffing for the various programmes in the division remained static over the past year, the division's four programmes delivered an expanded range of services and training to members in the areas of community education, human rights, gender issues, culture, youth issues, media and collection and analysis of sound and timely statistics.

Economic Development Division (EDD)

The new EDD was established in part to respond to members' requests that SPC strengthen its focus on economic development and in part to accommodate functions that are being transferred to SPC as an outcome of the RIF process. The key drivers of economic development – energy, transport, infrastructure and communication – form the four pillars of the division. The division will be fully operational from January 2010.

Energy

From January 2010, SPC will assume the role of lead coordination agency in the regional energy sector. Initially, SOPAC's energy programme will form the bulk of the Regional Energy Sector Programme. The petroleum advisory function, which shifted from PIFS to SOPAC, will also move to SPC. Pacific Energy Ministers established the direction of the regional energy programme in their communiqué of April 2009, asking that energy services to Pacific Island countries be delivered through one energy agency and through one programme to contribute to the development of a stronger sector and improved service to member countries.

Transport

In 2009, only the Regional Maritime Programme (RMP) has been operating under the EDD. In future, the Transport Programme will also provide research and advisory services to members on land transport and aviation, complementing the Pacific Aviation Safety Office's work on aviation security.

Communication / ICT

The Regional Communication/ICT Programme will primarily continue SPC's work in coordinating implementation of the five key objectives of the Pacific Plan digital strategy, in particular providing ICT access in all areas of the region.

³ New Caledonia, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Regional Infrastructure Programme

This programme will not begin operating immediately. Further analysis will be done, taking into account other mechanisms being established to address infrastructure needs, such as the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility (PRIF).

Applied Geoscience and Technology Division

This division has been created within SPC's structure mainly to accommodate SOPAC's core work programme when it finally transfers to SPC in accordance with the decisions on the RIF.

Programme Support Services

SPC's Programme Support Services include the Strategic Engagement, Policy and Planning Facility, Corporate Communications and Public Relations, Information and Communication Technology, Publications, Translation and Interpretation, and the SPC Library. In addition to providing services to support corporate activities and the delivery of services by programmes, they also on occasion provide direct assistance to members. These sections have had the challenge of meeting the needs of a growing organisation without an increase in their own staff and funding, but they have performed very well under pressure. However, a review of the resources needed to maintain good capacity in Programme Support Services will be a priority for 2010.

Corporate highlights*Executive appointments*

In April 2009, Mrs Fekitamoeola 'Utoikamanu took up the position of SPC's Deputy Director-General (Suva). She was previously Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations in New York and also Ambassador to the United States, Venezuela and Cuba, and High Commissioner to Canada. Her wide experience in the international and diplomatic arena has been of great benefit to the SPC executive team, as has her first-hand experience as a senior public servant at national level. In 2009, Mrs 'Utoikamanu has been closely involved in implementing the RIF decisions, particularly in consultation and planning for the merger of SPBEA with SPC from 1 January 2010.

Managing a growing and decentralised organisation

In 2009, we began on a restructure of our administrative and management systems to ensure SPC has a highly professional 'corporate backbone' capable of supporting a more decentralised organisation into the future. Among these measures is a higher level of delegation across various management levels and more resources for our corporate services sections, including human resources, finance and conference management.

These measures are aimed at making the implementation of the recent decisions on the RIF as efficient as possible. Inevitably, 2010 will be a year of transition, especially for the staff and programmes most affected by the RIF reforms. However, the next two years also present us with a rare window of opportunity to transform SPC's current sector-based divisional structure into 'an organisation for the future' with a structure determined by the benefits it can bring to members in a way that is sustainable and in keeping with the evolving global development environment.

Detailed analysis on the future shape, size and structure of SPC will be undertaken, taking into account the organisation's current and expanded role. This analysis will include looking at a new organisational structure based on themes rather than sectors, and how the structure should be shaped to optimise service delivery

to members. The result may be that SPC transfers provision of some of its current services to other regional organisations, or that it changes the way it does business, or that certain services are taken on by members through direct bilateral arrangements with development partners.

The key themes likely to underpin SPC's role, and ultimately its future structure, are sustainable natural resources management and development; human and social development; and economic development. Supporting these three major themes will be science and technology, and strategic engagement, research, policy and planning.

Staffing and human resources

In 2009, recruitment continued to pose a challenge to the organisation. The global economic crisis added a new dimension – in some cases we were unable to make appointments due to financial pressure.

As a normal part of the harmonisation of CROP remuneration, the 2009 CROP triennial remuneration review was conducted by a consortium comprising Strategic Pay (New Zealand) and PricewaterhouseCoopers (Fiji) following an international tender process. The triennial review includes an in-depth analysis of CROP remuneration and related principles and practices. In addition to the triennial review, the consultants also undertook the annual market data survey of the three reference markets used to set CROP remuneration – the Australian and New Zealand public service sectors and Fiji Islands (all organisations).

The 6th Conference approved the recommendations of the review, which included (i) changing the current job-sizing methodology to the methodology used by the consultants; (ii) changing the current salary band structure used by CROP organisations, which does not directly link the staff categories of locally recruited/internationally recruited staff, to a new banding structure that links the two categories; (iii) removing the reference to a mandatory retirement age from the Staff Regulations; and (iv) applying the six-year-rule, as approved by CRGA and currently applied by SPC, across all participating CROP agencies.

Staff representative committees

My discussions with both the Noumea Staff Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Suva Staff Representative Committee (SRC) were less frequent in 2009 than was ideal, mostly because of the amount of time I spent on duty travel associated with the RIF exercise. However, the meetings we did have indicated that we have addressed many of the major areas of concern to staff and now it is more about fine tuning. The Director of Corporate Services has also put in place a process of regular consultation between his division and SAC and SRC, which has already benefited staff. This will continue in 2010.

SPC's budget

The year was a challenging one for SPC's finances. The impact of the financial crisis hit hardest during the first half of the year, with the weakened Australian and New Zealand dollars resulting in the curtailing of some services and delays in recruitment. Some contracts could not be extended and the remuneration increases approved by CRGA 38 for the 2009 financial year were not implemented. In this regard, I note the special gesture made by SPC staff in foregoing these approved increases so that services to members would not be further restricted. The recovery of the Australian and New Zealand dollars in the later part of 2009 enabled SPC to reinstate its planned level of service provision and the remuneration increases will now be implemented in 2010.

Sources of SPC funding

Of the total 2009 budget of 67,509,700 CFP units, 8,221,829 CFP units, or 12.2%, came from members' assessed contributions, 90% of which came from the four metropolitan members, and 10% from the 22 PICTs. Metropolitan members and development partners contributed 98% of the total funds for 2009, with

2% per cent coming from the 22 island member countries and territories. Eighty-seven per cent of SPC's total funding for 2009 came from four members (Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States) and six non-member sources – the Global Fund, EU, ADB, UNFPA, GTZ (German Technical Cooperation) and Global Environment Facility.

Audit report for 2008 financial year

The 2008 records for both SPC's overall finances and the Staff Provident Fund received clean audit opinions, making this the 13th consecutive year that SPC has received clean audit reports. The auditors raised a number of issues and recommendations in their management letter that management has either already addressed or undertaken to address. However, arrears in assessed contributions continued to be a problem. On top of the impact of the financial crisis, it is very difficult for SPC to carry a high level of arrears and still deliver services at optimal levels. The Secretariat has discussed options for settlement of arrears with members, including instalments over an agreed period.

A number of large regional projects were completed in 2009 and this will result in a 23% reduction in SPC's budget for 2010 compared to our 2009 revised budget. This comes as no surprise given that projects are by their nature time-bound, with no certainty of continued funding. However, SPC needs to be better able to forecast funding gaps and to as far as possible ensure that members receive sustainable benefits from all projects.

SPC's executive team at the 6th Conference of the Pacific Community in Tonga



Leslie Walker
Director of
Corporate Services

Michael Batty
Director of Marine
Resources Division

Aleki Sisifa
Director of Land
Resources Division

**Fekitamoeloa Katoa
'Utoikamanu**
Deputy Director-General
Suva

Dr Jimmie Rodgers
Director-General

Richard Mann
Deputy Director-General
Noumea

William Parr
Director of Public
Health and Social
Resources Divisions

Amena Yauvoli
Manager of North
Pacific Regional
Office

Conclusion

I will end by first thanking our members for their confidence that SPC can help them achieve their development goals. I also wish to thank our development partners for their trust in SPC, their belief in the value of our work, and for the resources they give so generously.

I must thank all SPC staff, located in 17 of our 22 island member countries and territories, for their service to the region during 2009. I also acknowledge their families, whose support is instrumental in SPC's achievements.

In acknowledging staff for their commitment and dedication, I wish to pay particular tribute to two serving staff members who died in 2009. Michael Manning, Fisheries Scientist (Stock Assessment) with the Oceanic Fisheries Programme, died suddenly while working in Tuvalu in early September. I take this opportunity to convey our deep gratitude to the Government of Tuvalu, staff of the Ministries of Health and Foreign Affairs, and the Police Department for their assistance at this time and also the staff of the Forum Fisheries Agency, who were with Mr Manning in Tuvalu. Another staff member, Gabrielle Kari, died in May 2009 after serving SPC for 21 years as a member of our Publications Section and later the Oceanic Fisheries Programme. We offer the families of both these staff members our heartfelt condolences.

Finally, I offer sincere thanks to my deputies, Richard Mann and Fekita 'Utoikamanu, and the members of my executive team, who despite excessive workloads and stress during 2009 again excelled beyond my expectations.

The work of development is not a straightforward process – in some areas, large gains can be made relatively easily and in others, progress is slow and incremental. I believe, however, that our real partnership with our members and our focus on fundamental issues, such as education and gender equality, that underpin progress in all sectors and at all levels, offer the best path to achieving our aim of 'making a difference in the lives of Pacific Islanders'.

Dr Jimmie Rodgers
Director-General
Secretariat of the Pacific Community

Joint country strategies welcomed by members

The development of joint country strategies (JCSs) is a key initiative of SPC's Corporate Plan. Sixteen strategies have been developed to date, with the seventeenth (for French Polynesia) currently being developed. By 2010, the Secretariat will have completed JCSs for all its members with the planned development of strategies for Fiji Islands, Guam, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. Work will then begin on the second cycle of the JCSs.

At the 6th Conference and CRGA 39, delegates responded very positively to presentations on progress being made under the JCSs. The representative of Solomon Islands noted that the Solomon Islands strategy was 'easily approved by cabinet because it reflected Solomon Islands' development goals'.

Samoa's representative said that Samoa welcomed SPC's commitment to ensuring that regional approaches were aligned with national priorities such as those expressed in the 2008–2012 Strategy for the Development of Samoa and said 'this alignment was valuable in focusing attention and resources on key priority areas'.

Looking ahead to the development of the Papua New Guinea strategy planned for 2010, its representative acknowledged the benefits of the JCS approach in coordinating programmes at different levels and in various sectors. She also noted that 'JCSs could provide a good basis for countries to evaluate where they stand in relation to the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness'.

At the beginning of 2009, SPC extended an invitation to other Pacific regional organisations to participate in JCS missions. The response has been positive and most missions now include representatives from one or more of SPC's partner organisations.

The key principles in developing a JCS are an emphasis on national development priorities, joint preparation by the member and SPC, and a participatory multi-sectoral approach. Planning SPC assistance on a country by country basis rather than on the basis of individual programmes represents a significant change of approach in delivering services, and SPC systems and staff work practices have had to evolve to support this change. However, the investment of time and effort by members and staff in the JCS process is justified by the benefits achieved, in particular the better alignment between regional programmes and national development objectives.

Improvements have also been made in the design, implementation and monitoring of JCSs. Recent strategies include summaries of sectoral analyses that provide the context for SPC's assistance to the country. They also include a schedule of activities by year and broad estimates of cost. The Secretariat will continue to improve the design of the strategies in line with feedback from countries and standard programme and project design principles.

On SPC's side, each of the Planning Advisers in its Strategic Engagement, Policy and Planning Facility has desk responsibility for several strategies. They coordinate their development and support JCS monitoring. One of their roles is to extract division-specific activities from all JCSs to assist programme managers in the planning and implementation of their annual work programmes.

JCS reporting and monitoring approaches have also been integrated into SPC's established monitoring and evaluation policies. Divisional reports include annexes listing in-country activities. These annexes form the basis for the preparation of JCS reports for internal monitoring purposes and for joint review by governments and SPC.

From 2010, work will begin on developing the second cycle of JCSs. These will include a review of achievements under the previous JCS, which will provide useful information for further improvements in the implementation of the strategies.

Decentralisation of SPC — plans for further offices

'A network of offices, strategically positioned in terms of function and geographical location, to provide the best possible support to member countries and territories ... one headquarters and four regional offices supported by national coordination offices and country desk officers as needs dictate'.

This vision for the decentralisation of SPC was presented to CRGA in October 2008 by the Director-General in response to the directive of the 4th Conference of the Pacific Community that SPC should 'move its services closer to the people'.

By the end of 2009, in addition to its Noumea headquarters, SPC had two regional offices: the long-established Suva office (Central Pacific) and the North Pacific regional office in Pohnpei. Discussions on a possible regional office for the Eastern Pacific have yet to begin. SPC also has a country office in Solomon Islands and at the end of 2009, final consultations were taking place on offices for Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.

North Pacific

SPC's North Pacific regional office, which was formally opened in 2006, currently has 14 staff members and the capacity to provide services in agriculture (plant protection and development of sustainable agriculture); forestry; veterinary science; public health; HIV and STIs; reproductive health; human development; and statistics and demography.

Both the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Government of Pohnpei State have been extremely supportive of SPC's presence in Pohnpei. The State Legislature has provided additional office space at the Pohnpei Congress building to cater for SPC's office needs. For the longer term, consultations on the concept of a 'Micronesian Village' and residential compound are progressing under the chairmanship of the Vice-President of FSM.



Participants at a health communication workshop in Pohnpei.

Having a presence in the North Pacific has made a discernible and positive difference to perceptions of SPC's role and to its ability to provide services or respond promptly to requests from its northern members. A small sample of the support coordinated or provided through the office in 2009 included assisting FSM, Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) with 2010 census planning and Kiribati with a demographic health survey; formulating coastal resource management plans for some states; completing the tuna tagging project in the subregion; providing health training workshops on TB and HIV; initiating national plans for control of non-communicable diseases; and training on implementation of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women).

Solomon Islands office

SPC's first country office was opened in Solomon Islands in early 2009 following the signing of a host country agreement with the government. One criterion for establishing a country office is that the work programme and budget are large enough to benefit from locally based SPC representation to help monitor implementation and report on progress to both the national government and SPC.

SPC's work in Solomon Islands includes acting as the funding source through which Global Fund grant resources are contributed, project management of the Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study, the results of which were published in 2009, and assistance in providing access to information and communication for remote and rural communities through the Pacific Rural Internet Connectivity System (PacRICS) and One Laptop Per Child project. The Solomon Islands government provides office space in the central business district of Honiara. For the longer term, there have been discussions between the Director General of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), SPC's Director-General, and the Government of Solomon Islands on the option of co-locating SPC's country office with FFA when its current office accommodation is expanded.

Further plans

To explore further opportunities to make its services more easily accessible to members, SPC is discussing with PIFS the option of joint representation at the national level, particularly where one of the two agencies is already present.

In 2009, SPC received a formal request from the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga to consider moving a sizable SPC programme to Tonga. This request was followed up at a bilateral consultation between the Prime Minister of Tonga and SPC's Director-General at the recent Forum Leaders meeting in Cairns, Australia. Tonga confirmed its interest, and offered to host major parts of SPC's Land Resources and Public Health Divisions. SPC will analyse the feasibility of moving part or some of its programmes to Tonga and of establishing other SPC regional and country offices. The outcomes of these assessments will be presented to CRGA 40 in 2010.

The objectives of the decentralisation policy can only be realised with the cooperation and generous support of host governments and SPC is deeply appreciative of their commitment.

Economic Development Division — overview



The Economic Development Division, a new division based in Suva, includes the Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and Digital Strategy Programmes.

The Transport Programme houses the work of SPC's previous regional maritime programme and will also include the development of specific capacity in aviation, involving research and advisory services for members. Capability in land transport research will be added at a later date.

The Energy Programme leads and coordinates work on (i) Pacific energy policy, planning, legislation and regulation; (ii) petroleum – procurement, transport, storage and pricing mechanisms; (iii) renewable energy production; (iv) energy efficiency and conservation; and (v) support for the work of the Pacific Power Association and other bodies in relation to power generation and supply (urban and rural). The programme includes the Regional Energy Programme, which has transferred to SPC from SOPAC.

The Infrastructure Programme is not yet operational but will focus on regional initiatives that add value to national-level outcomes. This work will take into account the role of other infrastructure initiatives such as the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility.

The Digital Strategy Programme focuses on the continued implementation of the Pacific Digital Strategy through both policy and regulatory mechanisms and technical solutions. ICT policy and regulatory work that is currently the responsibility of PIFS will transfer to the programme in 2010. Current work undertaken by SPC, including support for the submarine cable initiative, PacRICS and the Oceania One Laptop Per Child initiative, also comes under the programme.

Extending Internet connectivity

In December 2009, SPC and Pactel International signed a contract to upgrade all existing PacRICS sites (pilot and public good) and extend the free Internet connection for 12 months at 40 public good sites. Growing interest throughout the Pacific (there are nearly 100 active sites) shows that the original thinking regarding the need for a rural and remote Internet service was justified. Current users include schools, medical centres, telecentres, emergency services and local governments.

The improved service will be more efficient (more throughput for the same bandwidth) and will also support an improved voice over Internet protocol (VOIP). However, this will require new modems and transmitters. The cost of the bandwidth will stay the same, despite rising costs from the satellite provider. Pactel will provide a dual service (existing and new systems) until mid-February 2010. SPC's goal is to keep a 'pool' of 40 public good sites running, migrating the successful sites into commercial agreements with Pactel and topping up the pool with new sites.

Improving maritime safety

An estimated 1800 domestic ships provide transport and freight services at various levels in the Pacific Island region. This number demonstrates the high dependency of Pacific Islanders on inter-island shipping and the need for governments to ensure that the safety of passengers and crew is an urgent priority.

International shipping is generally well regulated with soundly based systems and is less of a concern to governments than domestic or inter-island shipping. SPC's Regional Maritime Programme (RMP) brought the issue of domestic shipping safety into the limelight two years ago with a seminar to raise awareness among PICT maritime regulators and shipping companies of substandard practices and to discuss how best the region could improve standards.

Unfortunately, in 2009 the Pacific witnessed two domestic shipping incidents that resulted in huge loss of life and brought to the fore vital lessons for maritime safety regulators and the shipping industry. These tragedies have naturally increased the focus of governments on the need to enforce safety provisions and have also led RMP to place even greater emphasis on this area by promoting the implementation of rigorous safety management systems for shipping operations.

Maritime administrations are being encouraged to include the Non-convention Vessel Regulation (developed by RMP) in national laws to strengthen the enforcement powers of maritime administrations in relation to domestic ships. As a first step towards this initiative, in December 2009 RMP organised a seminar on domestic ferry services, with funding assistance from the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The seminar provided guidance to PICT maritime regulators on the technical, administrative and legal mechanisms that could be used to tackle the challenges of allowing only 'safe' ships to sail Pacific waters.

Regional agreement to improve search and rescue

Pacific Island countries and territories will soon benefit from a regional agreement with Australia, USA, New Zealand and France for improved coordination of search and rescue (SAR) efforts. RMP is leading this initiative, strongly supported by IMO, the United States Coast Guard, Australian Maritime Safety Authority and Maritime New Zealand. The regional agreement is currently in draft form pending endorsement from higher levels of government in the countries involved.

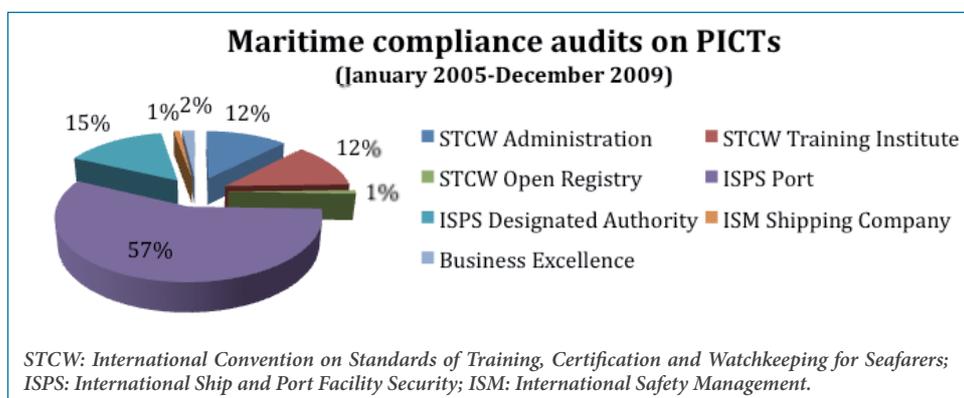


Students practise survival techniques at the School of Maritime Training, National University of Samoa.

Many accidents can be prevented by better planning and education and RMP therefore aims to make a concerted effort to secure funding to proceed with identified joint efforts in this regard. RMP will also continue to develop simple response tools, such as maintaining up-to-date contact lists for SAR centres and points of contact within states. Practical sea safety for small boats will also be promoted with advice on low-cost equipment, such as the effectiveness of using signalling mirrors to attract the attention of aircraft or ships in the vicinity.

Regional audit system to assess compliance with international maritime conventions

In association with the Pacific Islands Maritime Association (PacMA), RMP manages a regional maritime compliance audit system that is unique to the Pacific Islands region.



Established in 2002, with the gradual addition since of more audit types (see figure above), this system has blossomed into a highly successful regime that enables PICTs to assess compliance with the requirements of some of the most critical international maritime conventions. Lack of compliance with these standards has serious consequences, including possible restrictions on sea transportation, trade, and employment of Pacific seafarers on international vessels.



SPC/PacMA maritime auditors during a security audit on Lae Port, Papua New Guinea.

A special feature of this system is that Pacific Islanders are trained by SPC to various auditor levels, thus ensuring they are an integral part of its operation. The number of trained active auditors in PICTs presently stands at 120.

New shipping services in the region

RMP recognises that requirements relating to shipping will become even more stringent over time and is thus focusing on building sustainable systems and institutions that are capable of developing and expanding their capabilities. Small island states (SIS) face greater shipping challenges than other PICTs due to their small populations (and hence small shipping volumes), remote locations, and often a lack of capacity in managing shipping services. These challenges threaten the continuation of even very basic shipping services for SIS and have been consistently recognised by Forum leaders, both through the Pacific Plan and in their 2006, 2007 and 2008 communiqués, and by SIS leaders at their summit meetings.

Since 2007, SPC and PIFS have explored several options to address SIS feeder shipping issues in the region, mainly through studies and consultations. After considering the options, in February 2009, SIS ministers responsible for maritime transport in Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru, and the Secretary of Transport of the Republic of Marshall Islands signed an SIS Ministerial Communiqué agreeing to use Kiribati Shipping Services Limited (KSSL) to provide an initial short-term regional shipping service involving Suva, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Nauru, and Wallis and Futuna (if they wish) to supplement their existing shipping services.



The KSSL ship, Moanaraoi, provides a subregional feeder shipping service to Nauru, Tuvalu and Kiribati. Here, the Moanaraoi is being loaded with cargo at Suva Port, Fiji.

On 14 May 2009, KSSL signed an agreement with the governments of Nauru, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Wallis and Futuna to provide regular feeder shipping services to these countries. The four small island states (SIS) have been confronted with irregular shipping services in the past three years. After the new arrangement had been in operation for only six months, SIS members were commenting positively on the improved shipping services to their islands and the huge savings being made, with an estimated 25% reduction in freight rates.

A third SIS meeting for ministers of maritime transport was held in May 2009 in Tonga to discuss the need to set up a Central Pacific Shipping Commission (CPSC) for the region, similar to the Micronesian Shipping Commission (MSC), which regulates the shipping sector in the North Pacific. In response, RMP organised an inaugural meeting of the CPSC committee in September to draft the necessary legal and institutional framework and agreement required to establish the commission. In December 2009, at a fourth SIS meeting of ministers for maritime transport held in Suva, Fiji, ministers signed an agreement to operationalise CPSC. Its establishment will result in a regulatory system for better control of freight rates and shipping services to the central region. Ministers hope the new commission will have the same positive impact as MSC in the northern Pacific region.

Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division — overview



In 2009, SPC's Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) Division comprised the Oceanic and Coastal Fisheries Programmes. The Director provides coordination and support for both programmes, and for the CRISP (Coral Reef Initiatives for the Pacific) project. (Until a recent change of name, this division was called the Marine Resources Division.)

Staff numbers in the Coastal Fisheries Programme fell during the year as a result of the completion of a major EU-funded project, as well as the impact of currency movements on programme funding. Staff of both programmes made efforts to secure additional project funding, and proposals for a number of division-level projects were also completed during the year. Subject to these securing final approval as planned, the funding situation should improve in 2010.

The 6th Heads of Fisheries meeting was held in February in Noumea and was attended by senior fisheries officials of all member countries and territories. The meeting was chaired on behalf of Palau by Ms Nanette Malsol. The meeting focused mainly on the future strategic direction for the division, and developed draft objectives and results for each section as part of the process of developing a new strategic plan. The meeting made a number of recommendations for new activities to be undertaken in future as part of SPC's services to member countries and territories in the fisheries sector.

The Heads of Fisheries meeting also saw the launch of an independent review of the two programmes, and provided an opportunity for officials from member countries and territories to express their views to the two consultants undertaking the review. The mission subsequently sought input from a wider range of stakeholders in seven countries and territories. The findings of the review were mainly positive and included the conclusions that:

- the programmes remain effective;
- SPC is the only regional organisation providing real leadership on many fisheries issues; and
- demand for services remains very high.

The review did identify some shortcomings at the strategic and operational level, however, and made 20 recommendations for improvement. The division accepted nearly all of these recommendations, although full implementation will be delayed in some cases while additional resources are sought. Changes that will become effective at the beginning of 2010 include a restructuring of the Coastal Fisheries Programme into three functional sections, and a change of name to Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME) Division.

A new Strategic Plan for the period 2010–2013 was completed during the year, incorporating the objectives and results developed by the Heads of Fisheries meeting, as well as the major recommendations of the review. The objectives and results were further considered by the Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC) meeting, and endorsed by Forum Fisheries Ministers. The final draft of the plan was approved by CRGA in October.

A major new initiative during the year was the launch of the 'Future of Fisheries' study – a joint project between SPC and FFA that aims to take a longer-term view of the opportunities and challenges that will arise over the next 25 years. Terms of reference, which had been considered by CRGA and FFC, were finalised, and a team of consultants was selected after a competitive process. Fourteen global experts from various disciplines agreed to provide comments and key publications to the team. The draft report was reviewed by a steering committee from the regional agencies. The final report is expected in early 2010 and, after review by the region's fisheries officials, will be presented to the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' meeting for consideration (see box on next page).

The future of fisheries

What will the Pacific Islands' fisheries look like in 2035? We live in a period of rapid change, and most of us find it difficult to predict the future five or six years ahead – never mind a quarter of a century – but to plan effectively it is necessary to take a longer-term view.

The team started by identifying what they considered would be the key drivers of change, which were grouped into seven areas:

- population growth and urbanisation
- patterns of economic development
- the global status of fisheries resources and development
- governance and political stability
- climate change (2035 is one of the dates for Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] predictions)
- limits to fisheries production in the region
- other drivers (mainly economic/trade related) – fuel costs, subsidies and protectionism, technology and innovation, foreign aid, eco-certification

The consultants next assessed the main challenges and opportunities in each of the four fishery production systems: offshore (mainly tuna), coastal, freshwater, and aquaculture. Based on current trends, the drivers, and these predicted challenges and opportunities, the team then developed three 'scenarios' for the future. These focused mainly on the tangible benefits from fisheries, so that governments and other stakeholders can assess what they stand to gain or lose.

The key message of the study is that – unless there is a big improvement in the performance of regional and particularly national fisheries agencies – the outlook for the region's fisheries in 25 years' time is bleak. The next generation of Pacific Islanders can expect to face a decline in local tuna industries, the collapse of many coastal fisheries, widespread degradation of coral reefs, little progress with aquaculture development and reduced production from freshwater fisheries.

To achieve the best case, the team recommends bold action under six main headings:

1. **Reform and build fisheries agencies for better services** – Realising sustainable benefits will depend on improvements to the performance of the national fisheries agencies.
2. **Maximise long-term benefits from offshore fisheries** – Most of the future increases in benefits from fisheries in Pacific Island countries and territories will be associated with the offshore fisheries.
3. **Sustain coastal communities** – Inshore fisheries must be resilient to continue to provide food and employment for many Pacific Islanders.
4. **Feed our growing populations** – With an increase in population of over 5 million in 25 years, there will be a growing gap between supply of fish and the demand for it.
5. **Support private sector winners** – A high degree of cooperation and support for the private sector will be needed.
6. **Give the fisheries sector the high level support it deserves** – Real political commitment and support will be needed to drive the necessary changes.

Oceanic Fisheries Programme

The Pacific's huge stocks of tuna may be the region's greatest natural resource. The Oceanic Fisheries Programme (OFP) provides scientific information and advice to SPC member countries and territories on the status of stocks of tuna and other important species, the ecosystems in which they live, and the fisheries targeting them.

In 2009, OFP continued to focus on its key objectives:

- high-quality scientific information and advice for regional and national fisheries management authorities on the status of, and fishery impacts on, stocks targeted or otherwise impacted by regional oceanic fisheries (Stock Assessment and Modelling Section);
- accurate and comprehensive scientific data for regional and national fisheries management authorities on fisheries targeting the region's resources of tuna, billfish and other oceanic species (Statistics and Monitoring Section); and
- improved understanding of pelagic ecosystems in the western and central Pacific Ocean, with a focus on the western tropical Pacific (Ecosystem Monitoring and Analysis Section).

Tuna fisheries have continued to expand, with a record catch of 2.43 million tonnes recorded for the 2008 calendar year in the western and central Pacific region (Figure 1), about half of which occurred in the exclusive economic zones of SPC members. Approximately three-quarters of this catch was taken by the purse-seine fishery, which targets skipjack and yellowfin tunas for the canned tuna market. Skipjack tuna dominates the catch, with approximately 1.6 million tonnes landed in 2008. A record catch of yellowfin tuna of 540,000 tonnes and a near-record catch of bigeye tuna of 157,000 tonnes were also recorded in 2008. However, catches of albacore tuna in the South Pacific fell to around 52,000 tonnes in 2008.

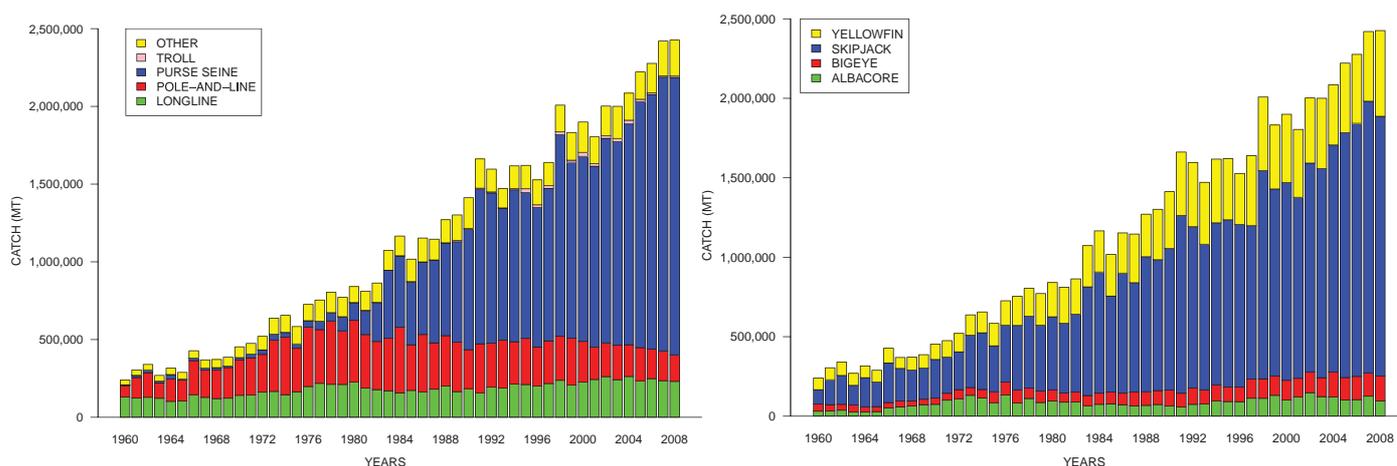


Figure 1. Total catch of tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission area, by gear type (left panel) and by species (right panel).

Stock assessment and fishery monitoring

Regional stock assessments were completed for bigeye, yellowfin and South Pacific albacore tuna in 2009. The assessment for bigeye continues to show that this stock is being fished well above sustainable limits; yellowfin is being fished close to the sustainable limit, particularly in the core western tropical region; while albacore catches are within safe levels. The most recent assessment of skipjack tuna (2008) indicates that the very large catches currently being taken are easily sustainable.

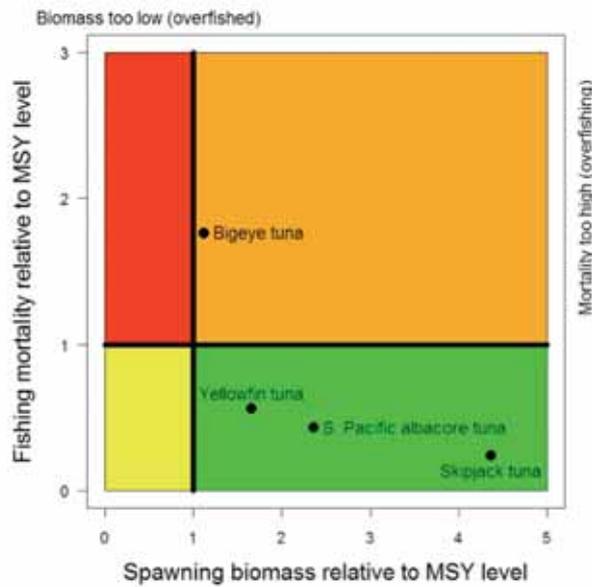


Figure 2. Current stock status of four commercially important species of tuna. The horizontal axis represents the level of spawning biomass (population of mature fish) relative to the level resulting in the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and the vertical axis represents the level of fishing mortality (intensity of fishing) compared to the level resulting in MSY. The area of the graph above the horizontal line (red and orange) indicates that overfishing is occurring, while the area to the left of the vertical line (red and yellow) indicates an overfished stock status.

An evaluation of a number of management measures introduced by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in December 2008 was also carried out. This evaluation concluded that while some of the measures can be expected to reduce catches of bigeye, the failure to constrain the increase in purse-seine fishing effort, various exemptions on the cuts in longline catch and the exclusion of archipelagic waters from the coverage of the measures mean that the management measures will not achieve their aim. Much tougher management action is required if bigeye tuna is to be exploited in a manner that is consistent with the objectives of the WCPFC Convention.

At the national level, national tuna fishery status reports were produced for FSM, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Samoa and Tuvalu, and work was started on the reports for Cook Islands and Solomon Islands. These reports provide an essential resource to PICTs for planning tuna fisheries management and development at the national level. An analysis of the purse-seine fishery in PNG was also completed, and OFP was involved in a number of national consultations organised by FFA to develop the ecosystem approach.

OFP provides considerable assistance to members in the area of tuna fisheries data collection and management. A comprehensive observer database management system (TUFMAN-TUBS) was completed in July 2009. This system will provide national fisheries offices with a useful tool to manage their observer data in the future.

Tuna tagging

The Pacific Tuna Tagging Programme (PTTP) was fully operational through 2009. Two three-month cruises of the chartered Solomon Islands pole-and-line vessel Soltai 105 were completed as planned in 2009. The first cruise covered PNG, FSM, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Solomon Islands, and the second covered Nauru, FSM, PNG and Indonesia. Approximately 90,000 tuna were tagged during these cruises, considerably exceeding targets.

In the eastern part of the region, a collaborative programme between SPC and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission used a long-range hand-line vessel based in Hawaii for tagging in the Line Islands of Kiribati and north of the Marquesas (French Polynesia) during two cruises in May–June and October–November 2009. Tagging activities during these cruises targeted mainly bigeye tuna. The cruises were very successful, tagging 7,786 tuna (7,109 bigeye).



Figure 3. Tuna tagging aboard the Soltai 105, SPC's chartered tuna tagging research vessel.

Overall, PTTTP has now tagged approximately 260,000 tuna, including 886 with electronic tags that provide detailed information on horizontal and vertical movements.

By the end of 2009, approximately 32,500 tagged tuna had been recaptured and the information reported back to SPC, representing an overall tag recovery rate of 12.5 per cent. Tag recaptures are expected to continue for several years, with final tag return rates expected to be about 15 per cent, or around 40,000 returns. These data will provide a vast amount of information that will inform tuna stock assessment and related work for many years, beginning in 2010.



Figure 4. Distribution of PTTTP tagged tuna recaptures: green = skipjack, yellow = yellowfin, red = bigeye.

The programme is currently seeking funding resources to enable tuna tagging to continue at a reduced level on an annual basis. This would provide a continuous stream of data that would be of enormous value in monitoring the condition of tuna stocks and the impacts of fishing.

A separate tagging project to improve understanding of albacore tuna resources (which form the basis of many of the longline tuna fisheries in the south of the region) was carried out in the early part of the year. This involved tagging troll-caught albacore in New Zealand coastal waters that should be recovered after several years as they mature and migrate to where they can be recaptured by longline vessels. Although fishing conditions were poor this year, the project achieved over 90 per cent of its target by tagging 2,766 fish. Further albacore tagging is planned in 2010.

Ecosystem monitoring and analysis

Recent stable isotope analysis has detected differences in the chemical signature between regions, providing important information on the rates of movement of tuna between the western and eastern Pacific Ocean. Stable isotope analysis, along with data from analysis of fish stomach contents (tuna, sharks, billfish and other species) carried out at SPC, and data on fat content, allows researchers to determine predator-prey relationships in the oceanic ecosystem and provides a better understanding of species interactions and cascading effects of fishing activities and climate variations. This information will be used in future stock assessments.

Capacity building

In addition to directly providing scientific services to SPC members, OFP continues to conduct national capacity-building activities in the key areas of fishery monitoring and data management, and provides training in tuna stock assessment interpretation and direct support for observer coordination and port sampling. This support assists members to meet their obligations to WCPFC and to undertake informed management of tuna fisheries within their exclusive economic zones.

A strong focus of capacity-building efforts in 2009 has been the training of a large number of new observers, required to meet the Regional Observer Programme target of 100 per cent observer coverage on purse-seine vessels in August and September. This increased coverage allows monitoring of compliance with new management measures designed to reduce the catch of bigeye tuna. SPC staff were involved in national observer training courses in FSM, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, as well as subregional courses held in Vanuatu and Fiji Islands. This has been a considerable achievement. However, with a target of 100 per cent coverage year-round on purse seiners, challenges remain for 2010 in terms of the numbers of observers needed, coordination and management, data processing, and maintaining the quality of the programme.

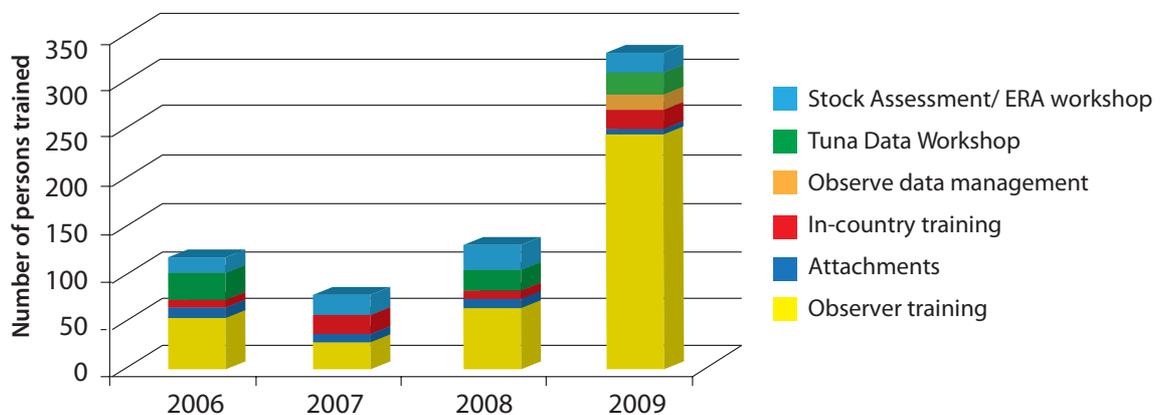


Figure 5. Number of individuals receiving training from OFP, 2006–2009.

Coastal Fisheries Programme

The Coastal Fisheries Programme (CFP) assists SPC member PICTs to manage and benefit from their coastal fisheries by providing advice, training and information. The programme emphasises practical assistance in tackling real-world problems.

CFP’s objectives, as stated in the 2006–2009 strategic plan, are to assist PICTs in developing coastal ecosystem management systems and sustainable development and management of nearshore commercial fisheries, and to consolidate a regional support framework for sustainable aquaculture. The work of the programme during 2009 falls into six broad categories: coastal fisheries management, coastal resources assessment, nearshore fisheries development, aquaculture, training and fisheries information.

Coastal fisheries management

Coastal fisheries management work has successfully introduced the ecosystem approach into community-based management initiatives in a number of PICTs. Fisheries staff are now familiar with the concepts, guided by a new handbook produced by SPC and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), *The ecosystem approach to coastal fisheries and aquaculture in Pacific Island countries and territories*, which provides a workable approach to this complex subject. In support of this effort, SPC has commenced a new initiative with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and TNC to further develop guidelines for the implementation of the ecosystem approach to coastal fisheries management. With many PICTs currently implementing community-based fisheries management programmes, the initiative will integrate the FAO EAF process into SPC’s community-based management programme to enable easier uptake at both local community and national level. This merger of approaches is referred to as the community-based ecosystem approach to fisheries management (CEAFM), and represents a combination of three different perspectives: fisheries management, ecosystem management and community-based management. The guidelines present a generalised approach that requires the involvement of a broader range of stakeholders and access to the expertise and experience of several government agencies in addition to a fisheries agency. The new guidelines will be finalised in early 2010.

Coastal resources assessment

Coastal resource assessment has been dominated by the work of the long-running coastal component of the EU-funded Pacific Regional Oceanic and Coastal Fisheries Development Programme (PROCFish/C) and its sister project, the Pacific Regional Coastal Fisheries Development Programme (CoFish). Both projects concluded in 2009, with all staff contracts finishing at different times of the year. This has greatly limited the ability of CFP to assist members in the area of coastal resource assessment. However, all of the country reports (covering up to five sites in a country) for the 17 participating countries and territories were finalised during the year.

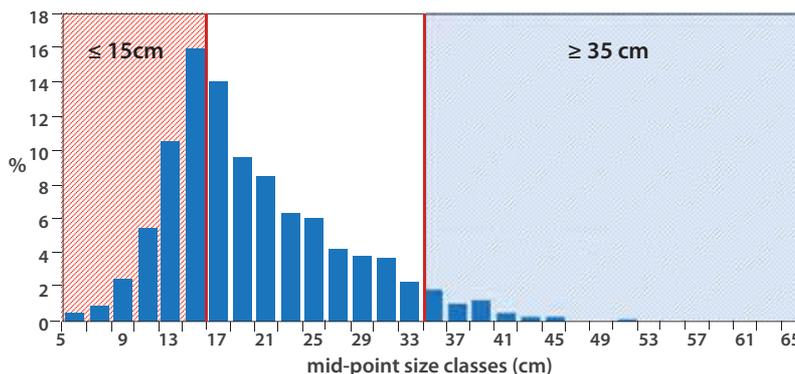


Figure 1. Percentage of commercial fish by size class throughout the region (5–65 cm).

Another of the main objectives of the PROCFish/C and CoFish projects was to undertake a comparative assessment or regional analysis of the data to try to identify indicators of reef fishery status across the 63 sites surveyed. Most of the analysis has been completed and a report will be finalised in early 2010. One of the interesting findings of the finfish assessments was the generally small size of the fish recorded during underwater visual census surveys (see Figure 1).

The database generated by this project provides a valuable resource for future analysis, including the development of simplified resource survey methods. Resource assessments and assistance with sustainable management of beche-de-mer fisheries was also provided in FSM (two states) and Tonga.

The Live Reef Fish Trade Initiative has developed management plans to ensure sustainable use of aquarium fish in Vanuatu, Marshall Islands and Kiribati (Kiritimati Island), while in Fiji Islands the guidelines for the food fish trade were reviewed. A database for recording aquarium fish exports and landings is also being finalised and will be trialled in early 2010 in Vanuatu, Tonga and Fiji.

Ciguatera fish poisoning appears to be increasing in some countries in the region. CFP provided assistance to Vanuatu with ciguatera surveys in two locations. Monitoring for ciguatera is becoming essential in some locations, with Samoa, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands and Kiribati requesting advice in 2009 and possible technical assistance in the future.

Nearshore fisheries development

The nearshore fisheries team continued to establish sustainable fish aggregating device (FAD) programmes for coastal communities with deployments and training in Nauru, FSM and New Caledonia. Eleven fisheries officers or trainers of fishing crew were themselves trained on bycatch mitigation, to reduce the capture of endangered species by commercial tuna fisheries. New bycatch mitigation requirements have been adopted by WCPFC and will enter into force in 2010. In addition, section staff coordinated a hook exchange project in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. The goal of the project, now monitored by the Ministry of Marine Resources, is to ensure the longline fishery is using more 'turtle-friendly' large circle hooks.

In a new initiative in nearshore fisheries, SPC coordinated two feasibility studies on the potential for sport fishing development in Cook Islands. An action plan for this development was endorsed by the Ministry of Marine Resources and at the end of 2009 implementation of the plan was well underway.

The successful pilot project in New Caledonia in 2008 on using fish waste to make silage continues to attract interest from other PICTs. Fish silage is made from ground fish waste and can contribute to the enriching of soils, particularly in the region's atolls. A second fish silage project was launched in October in Niue Island and an increasing number of requests for technical information or assistance have been received by SPC in 2009.

Aquaculture

The work of the aquaculture team ranges from assistance with the development of broad national policies and strategies (with national strategies completed for Solomon Islands and Wallis and Futuna) to technical assistance with specific projects and trials. Consultative work was also carried out with Tonga and the strategic plan for this country will be released in 2010. A regional consultation to determine future directions for tilapia farming was held in late 2009 and involved renowned experts on this topic as well as representatives from several PICTs.

The Aquaculture Section was involved in launching and running a diverse range of aquaculture projects in several PICTs in 2009. To date, 18 mini-projects have been developed by the section along with its partners from James Cook University, USP and the WorldFish Center. The projects are funded by ACIAR (Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research). Eleven of them have progressed to full funding, commencing

in 2008 and 2009. The diverse projects aim to ease bottlenecks in Pacific aquaculture, targeting small-scale income generation. Examples include setting up facilities for breeding sea cucumber (sandfish) in Fiji, setting up facilities for breeding clownfish for the aquarium trade in Vanuatu, development of a private sector coral culture venture in Tonga, and trials for farming local tilapia strains as well as trialling growth performance of marine finfish under locally formulated diets in Solomon Islands. All of the current mini-projects possess elements that promote and enhance capacity, whether through technology transfer, training, mentoring or involvement of students.

The Aquaculture Section was also successful in coordinating a regional approach to meeting disease-reporting requirements for import of live aquarium fish and invertebrates into the EU, which was approved by the European Commission during the year. In 2008, the EU banned entries of live aquatic animals from countries that were not members of OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health). SPC facilitated an agreement with the EU that allows all PICTs to export there again, provided they provide the required information to PAHIS (Pacific Animal Health Information System).

Training

Many of the programme's activities, including some of those mentioned above, involve training and capacity building, but some specific highlights in this area during 2009 included: assistance in developing a purse-seine training module for the National Fisheries College of Papua New Guinea, which will meet the training requirements of crew for their growing tuna industry; a training needs assessment for the staff of the Fisheries Department of Tonga, with follow-up activities to improve performance; a sub-regional workshop for participants from Tuvalu, Kiribati, Fiji, Samoa, Cook Islands and Vanuatu covering monitoring techniques for spawning aggregations of reef fish; and the Pacific Islands Fisheries Officers Training Course (practical fishing module) held in Santo, Vanuatu, and attended by 11 fisheries officers from eight countries.

Fisheries information

The Information Section continued to provide a range of technical information (Fisheries Newsletter and special interest group bulletins) for fisheries professionals across the region, as well as meeting the needs of countries for assistance with the production of high-quality documents. Special publications were prepared for New Caledonia (booklet on the main seabird species in New Caledonia), Tonga (Fisheries Facts and Figures), Tuvalu (production of two posters covering main fish species in the country) and Vanuatu (National Marine Aquarium Trade Management Plan) during the year. In addition, the 2009 version of the SPC coastal and oceanic fisheries programme digital library was produced in a CD format as well as being made available through the SPC website.

There is growing interest within PICTs to incorporate and expand the community-based ecosystem approach to fisheries management (CEAFM) nationally, with PICTs requesting attachment training of staff to develop national frameworks for the implementation of their respective CEAFM programmes. In 2009, nine senior staff members from fisheries departments and departments of environment from Tonga, Samoa, American Samoa and Vanuatu undertook attachments with SPC. The highlight of the attachments was the participation of Mr Ray Tulafono, Director of the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife, in developing a CEAFM model for the territory. His participation reflected the importance of coastal fisheries management for his government, and resulted in the development of a new CEAFM bill, which is now in the process of being approved. The Coastal Fisheries Management Section was instrumental in developing and drafting this bill, as well as assisting with the completion of draft legislation for Samoa covering coastal fisheries and aquaculture.

CRISP – protecting the region’s coral reefs

The Initiative for the Protection and Management of Coral Reefs in the Pacific (CRISP), sponsored by France and established by the French Development Agency, is part of an inter-ministerial project that began in 2002. CRISP aims to develop a vision for the future of these unique ecosystems and the communities that depend on them. The programme aims in particular to introduce strategies and projects to conserve their biodiversity, while developing the economic and environmental services that they provide both locally and globally. CRISP also has a role in fostering greater integration in this area between developed countries (Australia, New Zealand, Japan and USA), French overseas territories and Pacific Island developing countries.

In his 2009 report on the status of marine managed areas (MMAs) in the South Pacific, Hugh Govan indicates that the CRISP programme has contributed to the support or setting up of about 10% of all existing MMAs (around 450). With regard to applied ecosystem management, the Polynesian eco-regional analysis (involving Cook Islands and French Polynesia) was expected to be completed by the end of 2009. In terms of integrated coastal management, the GERSA (Integrated Watershed/Coastal Zone Reef Management: from Satellite to Stakeholder) project conducted by the IRD (Institut de recherche pour le développement) team in Fiji, French Polynesia and Vanuatu has resulted in a total of nine technical reports dealing with governance and watershed management as well as erosion control.

The CRISP programme also continued its work in improving scientific knowledge in 2009, with studies on the settlement behaviour of fish larvae and on the connections between fish populations in a marine protected area (MPA) network. In parallel, a review on post-larval capture and culture for fish and invertebrates was compiled by Bell and others and published in *Reviews in Fisheries Science*. In the area of bioprospecting and active marine substances, four articles were published on chemical compounds identified from Pacific Island sponges, while new species of sponges and algae were discovered in French Polynesia, Fiji and Vanuatu. An illustrated manual on the identification of crustaceans from the Pacific region and coral species from New Caledonia was expected to be released by the end of 2009 along with other reports.



(Left) Moorea (French Polynesia) Marine Area Management Plan supported by the CRISP Programme. (Right) Ecolodge supported by CRISP as part of the establishment of the Emua MPA, North Efate (Vanuatu).

Post-larval capture and culture, which is one of CRISP’s key areas, has recently been granted new funding from the French Global Environment Facility to enable continued support of both marketing and technical development in this field. Work has already started with the French company Ecocean, in collaboration with Hawaiian Sea Life, in Pacific Island countries and territories such as Kiribati, Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. The Coral Reef and Uses (CoReUs) team from IRD is examining the recruitment process for molluscs in Vanuatu and the implementation of new techniques for post-larval capture.

Dissemination of knowledge and lessons learned has occurred at various levels, including through participation in international conferences and symposia. The 11th Pacific Science Inter-Congress (PSI 2009) was a major event for CRISP in terms of exchange of scientific information. In April 2009, during the International Coral Reef Initiative meeting, CRISP coordinator, Eric Clua, gave a presentation on climate change and its impact on fisheries, leading to a request for a presentation at the next meeting in Monaco in January 2010, in collaboration with a specialist on this topic, Johann Bell from SPC. The Second International Marine Protected Areas Congress meeting (IMPAC2) in Washington DC was an opportunity to raise awareness on social issues linked with setting up MPAs. The Pacific Regional Conference on Marine Managed Areas in Moorea was held in November 2009. This event, which was co-organised by CRISP, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the French Marine Protected Areas Agency, concentrated on developing the network of MMAs throughout the region.



(Left) Hoa nets used for the collection of reef fish and crustacean larvae in Bora Bora (French Polynesia). (Right) Identification of reef fish larvae by the BoraEcoFish team.

Knowledge dissemination also occurred through the release of a new version of the ReefBase Pacific DVD with a new feature allowing updates from the online database, 'ReefBase Pacific Information Portal: Livelihood, fisheries and biodiversity'. The CRISP website has also been expanded, with over 100 products now available online. CRISP is aiming to release a DVD containing all reports and publications by the end of the programme, in December 2010. CRISP programme outputs will ultimately also be available through SPC's digital library.

Monitoring of coral reef resources is continuing through the support of the Polynesian and Melanesian nodes of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, which released 'Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2008'. This support has also included technical workshops in Fiji (2008) and Samoa (September 2009) to promote the implementation of CoReMo3 software throughout the Pacific region to harmonise coral reef monitoring methods.

To raise decision-maker and stakeholder awareness, an economic task force coordinated by Nicolas Pascal was initiated within CRISP. A major economic study currently being conducted in Vanuatu will complement Hugh Govan's study on locally managed marine areas in the South Pacific.

Finally, most technical training took place in Fiji. More than 100 people took part in workshops in 2008 and the first three months of 2009.

Land Resources Division – overview



The Land Resources Division (LRD) places emphasis on an integrated and participatory approach and this is a key factor in enabling it to support PICTs in meeting the challenges of the 21st century. These challenges — the most demanding the sector has had to address in recent times — include climate change, unsustainable practices, particularly in managing forests, increasing food prices, and land management and conflict minimisation.

Many of these challenges are influenced by global events and world market demands. To ensure that the Pacific Islands' voice on these issues is heard beyond the region, LRD assists PICTs by actively engaging at relevant international forums such as the United Nations Forum on Forests, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

In 2009, a new facility to house the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT) at the SPC Narere compound in Suva, Fiji Islands, was completed. This facility will also house two of LRD's thematic groups, Forests and Trees, and Forestry and Agricultural Diversification, including the EU-funded Facilitating Agricultural Commodity Trade (FACT) project.

Plant health and biosecurity and trade facilitation continued to be hallmarks of the division's functions. Substantial assistance was provided to PICTs, including in pest and disease surveys; biological control of invasive species and integrated pest management; research and development on pest and disease control and quarantine treatments of fresh produce; harmonisation of national legislation to comply with sanitary and phytosanitary requirements; facilitation of inter-regional and international trade; and capacity building in a broad range of technical areas, including through the Import-Export Biosecurity Technology Centre facility. Unfortunately, despite its important role and the impressive results achieved in assisting plant protection, the current lack of financial support is preventing adequate staffing and operation of the Plant Health team and the outlook remains uncertain.

The Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific (DSAP) project has made a positive and lasting impact on the lives of rural farmers and communities, including women and youth in PICTs. Although DSAP I was completed in December 2008 and DSAP II concluded at the end of 2009, graduate research assistants and research and extension assistants continue to maintain an active network, thereby completing unfinished work, and planning and implementing new activities in their own countries.

Pacific Island nations see increased exports of agriculture and forestry products as a way to reduce trade deficits, alleviate rural poverty and stem urban drift. The aim of the FACT pilot project, which is being implemented by LRD through its Forests and Trees, and Forestry and Agriculture Diversification programmes, is to sustainably increase the quality and range of exports of Pacific agriculture and forestry products. In 2009, FACT worked with more than 14 exporters in six Pacific ACP countries, and conducted independent reviews and analyses of these partner Pacific Islands agricultural and forestry export businesses and associated value chains.

LRD will continue its partnership with GTZ through the SPC/GTZ Pacific-German Regional Programme on Adaptation to Climate Change in the Pacific Island Region. The four-year programme began in January 2009 and will address climate change issues in agriculture, forestry and land use in SPC member countries.

Several of the above projects are discussed in more detail in the articles that follow.

LRD structure

The division is structured into seven teams and three support teams that work in seven thematic areas: animal health and production, biosecurity and trade support, crop production, forestry and agriculture, forests and trees, genetic resources, and plant health. Regular reports on progress in achieving the LRD's objectives are presented to meetings of Pacific Heads and Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry, to development partners, and to SPC's members at CRGA.

Climate change response integrated into Tonga's forest policy

SPC this year welcomed a new programme into its Land Resources Division: the SPC/GTZ Pacific-German Regional Programme on Adaptation to Climate Change in the Pacific Island region. This four-year programme is the continuation of a long and successful partnership between SPC and GTZ (German Technical Cooperation). The programme aims to build the capacities of member PICTs and organisations to adapt to, and mitigate, climate change impacts in the agriculture, forestry and land management sectors.

The new SPC/GTZ programme is working to ensure that response to climate change is integrated into all aspects of national forest policies in the region.

During its first year of operation, the programme collaborated with the FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands on integrating climate change response into the Tonga National Forest Policy. FAO has been supporting the government of Tonga in the review of its forest policy, and all parties recognised this as an opportune entry point for the integration of climate change-related issues.

A comprehensive stakeholder consultation process saw the development of 14 policy statements specifically addressing climate change. These statements relate to mainstreaming aspects of climate change that will directly impact on Tonga's forest and tree resources, and those aspects that will affect Tonga's ability to sustainably manage these important resources for present and future generations.



(Left) Agroforestry systems, such as this one in Tongatapu, are promoted in the new Tonga Forest Policy. (Right) The 'Eua National Forest Park, Tonga. Forests play an important role in both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Several of the new policy statements are designed to support Tonga's contribution to global efforts to stabilise atmospheric greenhouse gas levels, in accordance with its commitments as a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol.

The revised Tonga National Forest Policy includes the following climate change-related elements:

- climate change mitigation – conserving and building carbon stocks within forest and soil resources; participating in global mitigation programmes; promoting renewable wood materials for construction and fuel
- climate change adaptation – promoting the use of trees in vulnerable coastal areas; promoting protection of mangrove forests; research and development into resilient trees species; building technical capacity; understanding the role of trees and forest ecosystems in food security
- awareness raising – ensuring communities understand the role of trees in mitigating and adapting to climate change
- international assistance – seeking international support to protect and sustainably manage Tonga's forest resources and to support climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives

The policy also strongly promotes capacity development for institutions, technical officers and local communities to develop an enabling environment for its implementation.

The SPC/GTZ regional programme will undertake a similar consultation process for the Vanuatu forestry policy.

CePaCT: Supporting the region in achieving food and nutritional security and economic growth

The aim of the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT) is to assist Pacific Island countries and territories to conserve the region's genetic resources, and to provide access to the diversity they need, when they need it. These services can assist farmers in recovering from a natural disaster, aid the region to resist pests like the taro beetle, facilitate adaptation to a changing climate and even help address diseases linked to nutritionally poor food.



Kiribati trial evaluating taro varieties received from CePaCT.

Conservation is the core business of the centre, with priority given to the region's staple crops: taro, yam, sweet potato, banana, cassava and breadfruit. The centre houses over 15,000 accessions in all. The taro collection is the largest collection of taro diversity globally with over 800 accessions. However, efforts are currently focused on building up regional collections of banana, breadfruit and yam in recognition of the diversity that exists in these crops in the Pacific. This diversity needs to be conserved, evaluated and made available to countries so that farmers can use this resource to improve food production and income generation. The centre not only conserves the region's valuable genetic diversity, but also undertakes the important mission of distributing it, making it available for growers throughout the Pacific. Regional quarantine services recognise that virus-tested plantlets (tissue cultures) are a safe method for importing plant material. In 2009 CePaCT distributed over 8,000 sweet potato, banana, cassava, yam, Irish potato, taro, breadfruit, vanilla, Alocasia and Xanthosoma plants to PICTs for evaluation and use.

These services strengthen the region's resilience in the face of natural disasters. For example, CePaCT played a role in assisting Niue's recovery from the devastation caused by cyclone Heta in 2004. The centre was able to help regenerate Niue's taro from its stored germplasm, thus allowing Niue to continue to use local varieties that could have been lost forever as a result of the cyclone.

CePaCT was also involved in a project to minimise the risk of spread of the taro beetle pest from Viti Levu to Taveuni in Fiji. The project established a taro genebank on Taveuni, which is the major taro growing area and is free of the beetle. The genebank provides planting materials to local farmers in an effort to remove the temptation for them to bring it from Viti Levu, possibly spreading the infestation. Spread of the taro beetle could be devastating to the many Taveuni farmers who grow taro for export.

Crop diversity has been recognised globally as an important tool in adapting to a changing climate because the development of climate-resilient crops depends on having diversity available to work with and evaluate. CePaCT is well-placed to assist PICTs in managing climate change by ensuring access to and availability of crop diversity, and for this reason, the establishment of a 'climate-ready' collection is now a major component

of the CePaCT work programme. This collection will provide farmers with a range of diversity that will assist in sustaining food production in a range of climate scenarios.

Diversity also provides the region with the means to address lifestyle-related diseases. The increase in diseases such as hypertension and diabetes has been connected to the consumption of nutritionally poor food, often imported. In contrast, traditional food is often nutritionally rich. Some varieties of crops such as banana and breadfruit provide high levels of beta-carotene, which is the precursor to Vitamin A, an excellent weapon in the fight against these diseases. One variety of banana may contain 30 micrograms per 100 grams of banana, whereas another variety may contain over 6000 micrograms. Foods rich in carotenoids, such as beta-carotene, have antioxidant properties, which also help to protect against such chronic diseases as cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

This was an important year for CePaCT with the uniqueness of both the taro and yam collections, and their importance for ensuring food security, being acknowledged at the international level with the signing of a long-term agreement with the Global Crop Diversity Trust. The trust has agreed to provide funding support ad infinitum for these collections. This agreement is the first to be signed with a genebank outside of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres.

CePaCT joins global system

CePaCT is now part of the global genetic resources system, which supports food security by encouraging the sharing of genetic resources. The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) is a global treaty for food security and sustainable agriculture. In June of this year, the Honourable Taua Kitiona, Samoa's Minister of Agriculture, formally placed the collections of CePaCT, held in trust for PICTs, into the treaty system at the opening ceremony of the 3rd Session of the Governing Body of the treaty.



‘The signing of these agreements by SPC has been fully endorsed by the Pacific region, recognising we live in one world, despite the miles that often exist between us all. To survive the many challenges of this century we need to work together, sharing our resources and importantly further recognising that genetic diversity found in genebanks today may become the most important resources we have in shaping an effective response to climate change.’

Hon. Taua Kitiona Sulala, in his address to the Governing Body of ITPGRFA

New facility for CePaCT

The recent recognition internationally of CePaCT – the Pacific region’s genebank – reflects the growing awareness of the importance of crop diversity at the global level. Similarly in the Pacific, there is increasing acknowledgement of the role of crop diversity. This has led to a significant increase in requests to CePaCT for conservation, distribution and research. As a result, a new facility was constructed, some 10 km outside of Suva at SPC’s CETC site in Narere. The new centre, which was opened in September 2009, provides a significant increase in space and has been built to international standards. It will enable SPC to significantly improve all its services in genetic resources in the region for years to come.

CePaCT is unique in the Pacific and is a resource that has been built up over the years through the support of PICTs and the commitment of donors and SPC. Importantly, it is a resource the Pacific region now truly values for its role in conserving traditional crops and trees and providing ‘new’ material to fulfill all the functions required of diversity.



The new CePaCT facility in Narere, Fiji, was officially opened on 25 September 2009.

New FACT project working with private sector to expand exports

Through the new FACT pilot project, SPC is directly assisting private enterprises to overcome some of the barriers faced by exporters of agricultural and forestry products in the Pacific. Successful exporters provide local farmers and producers with an expanded and stable market for their products, benefiting local communities.

The principal aim of the European Union-funded FACT pilot project is to sustainably increase the quality and range of exports of Pacific agriculture and forestry products by helping transform selected commercial ventures into export-orientated, demand-driven enterprises that will consistently supply overseas markets with competitive products.

An independent technical advisory group comprising representatives from the private sector, the University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Islands Trade and Investment Commission has selected 15 agricultural enterprises from Fiji Islands, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu that will receive assistance through the FACT project. They include Balthan (Western) Ltd in Fiji Islands and Direct Management Ltd in Solomon Islands.

Balthan, an exporter of root crops based in Suva, is one of five FACT enterprises selected from Fiji Islands. With assistance from FACT, Balthan is extending its agro-processing operations to Vanua Levu, providing marginalised farmers with a vital outlet for their produce. Initially Balthan’s new facility in Labasa will process plantain, coco yam, cassava and taro. This venture will generate a consistent income for farmers in the surrounding area of Vanua Levu, which will provide a welcome shift for families in an area where marketing of produce has always been a considerable challenge.



The Pacific region now has a Pacific Organic Standard to guide organic agriculture production.

In Solomon Islands, FACT is working with four enterprise partners, including Direct Management Limited (DML), a cocoa exporting company supporting communities by providing an alternative source of livelihood. FACT is assisting DML in constructing a shed for cocoa bean storage and providing technical assistance to DML's network of cocoa producers to improve supply and quality. Margaret Ilala, DML's Director, believes FACT's assistance has been timely, accelerating the company's plans to boost its cocoa supply and marketing efforts. FACT production technician Sanfred Smith is now working with DML's potential cocoa suppliers on better field sanitation to improve their production. The FACT team is tasked with revitalising the existing cocoa plantations, bringing them back into production and tackling black pod disease. As part of this effort, farmers have received training in integrated pest and disease management (IPDM) of their cocoa plantations.

FACT's engagement with DML may contribute to improvements for the Solomon Islands cocoa industry as a whole. The project introduced the use of IPDM to cocoa farmers in Honiara. Now this management programme is being more widely adopted, with the aim of increasing production of high-quality beans across the industry.

Bringing Fair Trade to the Pacific

The Fair Trade marketplace is expanding rapidly. However, Pacific enterprises and organisations have limited access to this market. They are impeded by a range of challenges, including current certification structures.

FACT is collaborating with Australian National University postdoctoral fellow, Dr Anna Hutchens, who is conducting a two-year research project on Fair Trade in the Asia Pacific region. This will include an Alternative Governance Project identifying the variety of ways in which enterprise and farming groups organise themselves in the Pacific. The project encompasses a period of data collection, comprehensive analysis of six enterprises in Fiji Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, and briefings on project findings for the World Fair Trade Organisation, Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International and key ethical buyers.

FACT envisages the resulting data will inform international stakeholders on the unique challenges faced in the Pacific and facilitate a shift in Fair Trade standards, a crucial first step in increasing market access for Pacific producers. The case studies generated will be used by SPC and others to disseminate information to the wider community and encourage the adoption of best practice techniques by Pacific Island growers and exporters.

Other activities

In 2009, FACT also:

- conducted a food processing and product development course for the students of SPC's Community Education and Training Centre (CETC) in Narere, Fiji Islands. The aim of the course was to provide attendees, who came from around the region, with tools to help them earn a livelihood by adding value to agricultural and forestry products;
- supported the Heads of Forestry Meeting in September;
- participated in the Kiaorana festival in Auckland to promote Pacific Island products;
- was actively involved in food processing courses in the northern Pacific, where approximately 30 new products were developed; and
- conducted training in information communication technology and food safety in Solomon Islands.

Animal disease reporting systems needed to support trade

EU trade restrictions on the export of ornamental fish and molluscs (clams) from the Pacific region are an issue for a number of SPC members. The restrictions, which were introduced in January 2009, were imposed due to lack of national animal disease reporting systems. To facilitate the resumption of trade, LRD is providing technical assistance to affected PICTs to help them establish systems for disease information management and international disease reporting that satisfy EU requirements.

A regional workshop on international reporting of animal diseases highlighted improved trade as one of the benefits of having an internationally recognised animal health status. The Nadi workshop (6–9 April, 2009) was attended by representatives from Pacific member countries. It also highlighted the 'in-country' benefits for animal health agencies of establishing and maintaining national disease surveillance and information management systems. Such systems enable early detection of disease outbreaks and through monitoring, reduce the impacts of endemic diseases.



Colourful Tridacna maxima are highly sought after by the international aquarium trade.

The SPC-organised workshop was held in collaboration with FAO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). OIE is recognised by the World Trade Organization as the standards setting body for animal health issues including disease reporting. SPC has signed a memorandum of understanding with OIE to promote the adoption of its standards in Pacific countries. Of SPC's 22 Pacific Island member countries and territories, only Fiji Islands, New Caledonia, Vanuatu and the Federated States of Micronesia are currently OIE members.

The Pacific Island region enjoys favourable animal health status, for both terrestrial and aquatic animals. However, many PICTs do not have well-documented disease surveillance and information management systems to underpin international disease reporting and the development of potential trade opportunities. 'Mad cow' disease provides a good example of the issues involved. Although the disease has never occurred in the region, a country such as Fiji is unable to develop a beef export market because it does not have a system of documented surveillance to meet international requirements to demonstrate freedom from the disease.

During the workshop, participants were introduced to the transboundary animal disease information management system (TADinfo), an FAO developed user-friendly database application that can be used as a national animal health information management system. TADinfo includes modules, such as field observations, abattoir observations, active surveillance, livestock populations and vaccination programmes, that can be used as required to record information. It also has a GIS (geographic information system) interface to enable disease information to be displayed via country maps. This enables trends in disease occurrence and spread to be analysed and control measures to be modified or adapted if required.

Sessions on international disease reporting and the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) were led by OIE information management specialists. WAHIS is an online disease reporting system that countries can use to provide emergency notification to trading partners of significant disease outbreaks. The WAHIS system also enables half-yearly and annual animal health status reports to be submitted, providing valuable information for import risk assessments to facilitate safe international trade in animals and animal products.

Workshop participants completed numerous 'online' disease reporting exercises to familiarise themselves with the data entry and reporting features of the WAHIS application. They were also informed of the procedure for joining OIE and the benefits and assistance it provides.

As a key outcome of the workshop, OIE granted all SPC members access to the WAHIS disease reporting system. This will enable all PICTs, not just OIE members, to provide reports to OIE on their animal health status. PICTs wanting to export ornamental fish to Europe will thus be able to satisfy EU requirements and may also be able to develop other opportunities for exporting animals and animal products.

Support for improved quarantine and plant protection systems

SPC has provided the secretariat for both the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation (PPPO) and the Regional Technical Meeting on Plant Protection (RTMPP) since they were established. These two bodies have for a long time guided the work of plant protection, biosecurity and trade facilitation agencies in PICTs at both policy and operational levels. Their meetings have also been instrumental in shaping the broad direction and nature of assistance provided to member countries and territories by SPC.

Over 50 regional and international delegates met for the 6th PPPO Meeting and 14th RTMPP Meeting held in Port Moresby, PNG, 29 June – 3 July, 2009. The meetings were hosted by PNG's National Quarantine Inspection Authority, with funding assistance from SPC and ACIAR.

The concerns of the meetings included the need for more trained professionals in plant health sciences to support farmers and quarantine services in their respective roles in improving production and facilitating trade. Lack of human resources for effective delivery of plant health services remains a challenge for the Pacific region.

Important research and development needs include an update of the status of pests and diseases of most crops, and improved diagnostic capacity for gaining access to export markets. At present, samples of new pest incursions are sent overseas for identification, which is an expensive exercise. Having the capacity to carry out this activity in-country speeds up pest information updates and subsequently market access.

SPC continues to provide technical assistance to member countries to assist them in complying with their obligations under international conventions such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGREFA), UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Support for biosecurity operations

The Biosecurity Information Facility was developed by LRD to support PICTs in meeting biosecurity requirements. This web-based information system provides guidance on operating a national quarantine/biosecurity service as required by trading partners, with instructions on workplace procedures and information on technical and legal issues to support decisions made at critical points in import and export clearance of all types of commodities. Further development of the facility with the addition of references and links to databases and other information systems has increased its usefulness for daily quarantine and biosecurity operations.



American Samoan quarantine staff examine cultural artifacts.

Over the past eight years, LRD has also assisted several PICTs to review, update and harmonise their national biosecurity laws. This activity has been part of a broader programme – the Pacific Regional Economic Integration Programme funded by EU – focused on increasing regional economic integration through facilitating regional and international trade, preventing the introduction of invasive species, pests and diseases and other regulated articles, and fostering closer working relationships between all border management agencies.

Public Health Division — overview



The Public Health Division (PHD) was established in January 2009, replacing the previous Public Health Programme, which was part of SPC's Social Resources Division. The decision to establish the new division was based on the recommendations of an independent review of SPC's public health activities in 2006 (Tukuitonga et al. 2006) and also on the rapid expansion of the health programme in recent years in terms of its scope, funding and staffing levels. Its establishment acknowledges that healthy Pacific communities with access to good public health systems are a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development across all sectors.

During 2009, good progress was made in PHD's efforts to support members in prevention, control and management of a range of diseases, including HIV, tuberculosis (TB), malaria, pandemic influenza, and non-communicable diseases. For example, the recent H1N1 influenza outbreak in the Pacific provided first-hand evidence that most of the PICTs that received capacity building through the Pacific Regional Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Project (PRIPPP) had acquired sufficient capacity to monitor the influenza pandemic.

The cure rate for TB in most PICTs has been maintained above 90% and case detection above 80%, showing that current trends for prevalence and mortality rates are on track to meet the 2010 regional goal. TB case detection has been expanded to vulnerable populations, particularly prisoners and people in outer islands in 11 PICTs, in an effort to further reduce TB transmission.

The malaria annual parasite incidence rate continues to show positive downward trends, with Solomon Islands reporting 82.3 cases per 1000 population and Vanuatu 14.7 / 1000, compared with 199 / 1000 and 74 / 1,000 respectively in 2003.

For the first time, a number of PICTs are now able to diagnose chlamydia (STI) at their national laboratory following the provision of equipment, consumables and training by the STI programme within PHD. This is a significant outcome given the high prevalence of chlamydia amongst the general population.

Grants to support the implementation of national non-communicable disease strategies have been made to eight PICTs following a period of sustained technical assistance provided by PHD together with its strategic partner in the 2-1-22 programme, the World Health Organization (WHO).

PHD has joined with other divisions within SPC as well as external partners to support national food summits in a number of countries during 2009 through inter-sectoral approaches, and the mobilisation of wide ranging technical assistance.

Three PICTs (Nauru, Palau and Solomon Islands) received technical assistance from PHD to undertake national studies that identify their most important health priorities and the extent to which these priorities

and resource allocations are reflected in national budgets and development partner financing through regional and bilateral funding streams. The studies, which were completed in 2009, also examined the main determinants of health. In two PICTs, the study results have already been used to support consultations with donors.

Challenges in public health

The 'Healthy Islands' vision that was first articulated during the inaugural meeting of Pacific Ministers of Health in 1995 recognises that health outcomes are heavily influenced by determinants that lie beyond the health sector, such as education, water and sanitation, food supply and nutrition, and gender disparities within society.

Despite successes, public health challenges in the Pacific include communicable diseases such as TB, dengue, malaria and sexually transmitted infections (STI), while non-communicable diseases account for approximately 78 per cent of all deaths. Emerging or previously undocumented health issues such as rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease, trachoma, anaemia, gynaecological malignancy, depression and mental health issues are not being adequately addressed, and often have clear linkages to social determinants.

Over recent years, there has been a significant growth in development assistance for health funding in the Pacific through new types of funding modalities that principally address specific diseases. Although countries have received some benefits from the increase in funding, improvements in health outcomes across all sectors of the community have been less than optimal, and implementing scaled-up health responses has been a struggle for many countries in their efforts to utilise the additional funding. Difficulties include staff recruitment and retention in critical areas, and systems that hamper the flow of funds from central administrations to the provinces/outer islands to support operational costs. Disease-specific funding approaches may also have resulted in inequities within health systems.

The national health systems that provide services remain fragile, and are inadequately financed. A chronic shortage of qualified health care workers impacts on the provision of primary health services and on the ability of PICTs to sustain more advanced levels of prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care services over the longer term.

New strategic plan

In October 2009, following substantial consultation and development over a period of several months, SPC's governing body endorsed the new PHD strategic plan for the period 2010–2014. Closely linked to both the SPC and Healthy Islands visions, the plan signals a shift in strategy towards a 'whole of health' multi-sectoral approach. This approach builds on SPC's ability to address many of the social determinants of health that lie outside the traditional realm of the health sector.

There will also be increased emphasis on aligning the division's work plan with stated national priorities, and on integrating the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the ACCRA Accord and the Cairns Compact into all aspects of the division's work with members, donors and partners. Systems will be further developed or modified, and a new monitoring and evaluation performance framework put in place in 2010 to ensure high standards are achieved, not only in terms of quantity and delivery of services, but also in terms of the sustainability and quality of our outputs.

The division will continue to support countries in accessing funding for health priorities, with an estimated USD 11.4 million (or 51 per cent) being earmarked in its 2010 budget to be channelled directly to member countries to support salary and operational costs, the procurement of essential transportation infrastructure, in-country training and specialised technical assistance from a range of key partners. PHD will continue to advocate with donor partners for a more flexible and predictable aid architecture for health in the Pacific, with improved alignment of funding to country priorities.

Tackling non-communicable diseases through healthy lifestyles

SPC's Healthy Pacific Lifestyles (HPL) Section assists PICTs' efforts to deal with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, respiratory diseases and injuries from accidents. NCDs are responsible for a large percentage of the deaths in the region. HPL is helping PICTs manage NCDs and reduce their incidence by addressing the key risk factors linked to them, such as unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, tobacco use and excessive consumption of alcohol. In most PICTs, the high prevalence of these primary NCD risk factors is reflected in the rate of intermediate risk factors for NCDs such as obesity, raised blood pressure and high levels of glucose in the blood.

The battle against NCDs is guided by the Pacific Framework for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, which was agreed to by the region's health ministers. Out of this framework came the 2-1-22 programme implemented by WHO and SPC (two organisations, one programme, serving 22 countries and territories). Australia and New Zealand have committed AUD 18.5 million and NZD 6 million to the programme over four years.

New impetus

The programme gained considerable momentum in 2009 with the finalisation of 10 new agreements between SPC and individual PICTs for funding national NCD action plans. Many projects were supported through an HPL-administered small grants scheme. A third stream of 2-1-22 funding managed by WHO also contributed to the development and strengthening of ongoing healthy lifestyle interventions.

The programme supported hundreds of projects, campaigns and activities in PICTs covering areas such as education, gardening, legislation, public displays, promotions, publicity, training and workshops. For example, activities included working with community groups and schools to educate the public on healthy eating, promoting physical activity, advertising the dangers of tobacco and alcohol, and aiding the introduction of legislation to protect communities and curb undesirable practices.

In 2009, SPC recruited specialists in physical activity, communications, and monitoring and evaluation to join HPL's advisers on nutrition and alcohol and tobacco control. The team is led by Dr Viliami Puloka. A regional monitoring and evaluation framework was developed for all 22 PICTs and publicity for the 2-1-22 programme increased significantly with extensive exposure in newspapers, regional magazines, television and radio. A new website for the programme was created at www.spc.int/hpl and the magazine Pacific Island Nutrition (PIN) was relaunched as Pacific Islands NCDs.

Under the guidance of a joint management committee made up of representatives of PICTs, implementing agencies (SPC and WHO) and donor agencies (AusAID, NZAID), capacity to deal with NCDs at country and regional levels improved greatly in 2009. The flow of funding into countries and territories increased and SPC expects this to accelerate in 2010 as projects become fully operational.

First Pacific regional forum

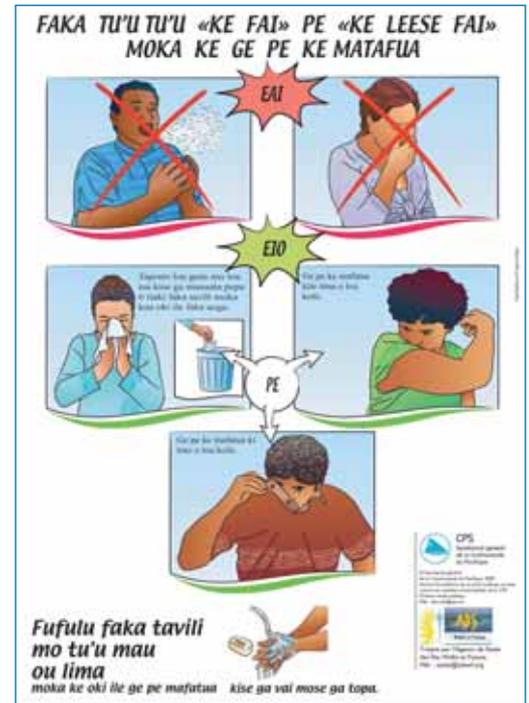
NCD officers in PICTs also benefited from a major innovation in 2009 funded under 2-1-22. The first Pacific NCD Forum was held in August in Nadi, Fiji. It was especially beneficial for NCD practitioners in countries and territories with very limited access to resources.

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Specific assistance was provided for procurement with funding from New Zealand and Australia, particularly for PICTs that needed supplies of Tamiflu and personal protective equipment. The latter included surgical masks, latex examination gloves, aprons/gowns, and alcohol-based hand disinfectant.

The Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN) also played an important role in the response. PacNet and PacNet-restricted were widely used for information sharing and dissemination. There were extensive discussions on options for border closure/strict quarantine in a worst-case pandemic scenario. Timely updates on PICT and global situations were also posted.

The eighth biennial meeting of Pacific Health Ministers held in Madang in July 2009 acknowledged the value of PacNet and PacNet-restricted in keeping authorities well informed and providing a site for discussion of response options and priorities as the influenza A (H1N1) pandemic developed. PPHSN was jointly established in 1996 by SPC and WHO.



An issue of Inform'ACTION (No. 31), the PPHSN information bulletin produced by SPC, was dedicated to pandemic influenza A (H1N1). It included nine articles from seven PICTs describing their in-country experiences with surveillance for H1N1 and their responses.

Through the CDC laboratory-based influenza surveillance project, national laboratories in American Samoa, CNMI, Cook Islands, FSM, French Polynesia, Guam, Nauru, Niue, Palau, PNG, RMI, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna were given assistance for in-country influenza testing. Financial and organisational support for specimen referral was also provided.

To support public awareness of 'flu prevention measures, several PICTs requested health education posters on infection control (particularly hand washing, and coughing and sneezing etiquette). SPC provided most PICTs with hard copies of the hand washing poster and made materials available through email and on the PPHSN website for PICTs to adapt. In addition, advice for businesses on the implications of more severe control measures was provided through an article in Islands Business magazine.



Healthcare workers in New Caledonia (left) and Samoa (right), wearing personal protective equipment while working during the pandemic influenza A(H1N1) outbreak in 2009.

Given the importance of risk communication, and the gaps frequently found at country level in this area, a tri-agency initiative has started between SPC, UNICEF and WHO to support in-country risk communication. The initiative assisted PICTs in developing new educational material or adapting existing materials (posters, radio spots, etc.), providing media training for spokespersons and strengthening communication plans and systems.

The effective response to the influenza pandemic by PICTs can be in part attributed to the positive impact of the pandemic preparedness work carried out by the section, essentially through the four-year Pacific Regional Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Project (PRIPPP), which has been operating since 2006 (see story on page 49). National health authorities recognised the value of their pandemic preparedness plans in implementing immediate and longer term responses to influenza A (H1N1).

TB still a public health threat in the region

The year 2010 marks the halfway point for the Global Plan to Stop TB (2006–2015). Considerable progress has been made in efforts to prevent and control TB in PICTs, but it is clear that further efforts and new and innovative methods are needed if the region is to stay on track to achieving its targets.

The Pacific Island region is home to an estimated 29,000 TB cases, with 18,000 cases of active TB diagnosed every year. A dreaded form of TB, multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB), has emerged, with outbreaks reported in the northern Pacific accounting for an estimated total of 600 MDR-TB cases in the region.

SPC, its technical partners – WHO and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) – and National TB Programmes in PICTs are accelerating innovative country-focused community outreach activities to improve case finding and access to TB services nationwide.

Activities include the conduct of house-to-house surveys and sputum collection in high-risk areas by community members; mobilising church leaders, women's groups, the Red Cross, etc. to reach different population sectors; screening vulnerable populations such as prisoners and migrant workers; tightening TB policies at national borders; providing TB preventive treatment to diabetics and HIV-positive people exposed to TB; and strengthening collaborative activities between national TB and HIV programmes.

In May 2009, SPC's TB Section, in conjunction with the WHO Western Pacific Region Office, held a meeting for managers of Pacific TB and HIV programmes in Fiji Islands. The first day of the meeting included discussion and planning of collaborative activities. On the two following days, National TB Programme managers focused on the prevention and management of MDR-TB, ensuring a reliable drug supply, and monitoring and evaluation of National TB Programmes.

Representatives from 18 countries and territories took part in the meeting and agreed on a number of recommendations that will serve to strengthen TB and HIV services and the prevention and control of MDR-TB in the region. These recommendations will be actioned by country programmes with support from SPC, WHO WPRO and other partners in the region.

PRIPPP takes unique approach in addressing emerging diseases

The Pacific Regional Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Project (PRIPPP) has brought human health and animal health specialists together to help equip the region to effectively address outbreaks of new or re-emerging communicable diseases such as avian influenza and pandemic influenza. The 2009 influenza A (H1N1) pandemic tested the systems in place, allowing countries to identify strong points and areas needing improvement.

PRIPPP, which is implemented by SPC, is designed to build the capacity of PICTs to deal with the potential threat of avian influenza, pandemic influenza and other emerging diseases. It is a four-year project funded by AusAID and NZAID, and will be completed at the end of June 2010.

PRIPPP has been instrumental in improving the capacity of countries and territories to deal with an outbreak of a new or re-emerging communicable disease. The project has helped improve outbreak response planning, assisted with legislative changes to improve cross-sectoral work, provided training in infection control and laboratory techniques and supplied anti-viral medicine and items for protection against cross-infection as well as new equipment and facilities in some PICTs.

The project is unique for SPC in that it has brought together expertise from the animal and human health sectors to work on improving capacity for surveillance and response to disease outbreaks. Traditionally, there have been few specialists in the field of animal health in the Pacific. However, it is critical for animal and human health staff to work together closely to be able to quickly identify and respond to zoonoses (diseases that begin in animals but can be passed on to humans), which can cause serious health problems. Probably the most well known zoonosis is avian influenza (AI), but there are others, such as leptospirosis and brucellosis, that are important in the Pacific region. In May 2009, as part of the collaboration between animal and human health laboratory staff, joint training was conducted at the Central Public Health Laboratory in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (PNG). The training covered:

- laboratory techniques and equipment operation and basic maintenance;
- quality assurance testing and management;
- preparation and proper packaging of specimens for sending to referral laboratories in other countries; and
- administrative procedures for influenza surveillance and identification.



Participants in Port Moresby joint laboratory training sessions, May 2009.

Participants from PNG's human and animal health sectors were able to work together on updating their knowledge and skills in the application of laboratory techniques and management as well as on strengthening their collaboration at the national level.

The 2009 influenza A (H1N1) pandemic was a serious test of countries' and territories' ability to detect and respond to disease outbreaks. We saw that there is still much work to be done in improving routine surveillance systems in laboratories and in the field. Stronger surveillance capacity and improved analysis of the information that comes from this surveillance will allow clinics, hospitals and health systems to better track routine disease outbreaks (such as influenza, dengue and leptospirosis) and to treat patients accordingly. In the same way, improvements in animal health systems will allow PICTs to better identify and respond to disease outbreaks and protect animal export markets and the livelihoods and health of Pacific Islanders. PICTs will also need to continue to strengthen national and regional partnerships and collaboration so that all the parties that are involved in a fully-fledged disease response – health professionals, quarantine and customs departments, animal health professionals, police and business – can work together to minimise the likely effects of a disease outbreak in their respective countries.

HIV awareness campaign for Pacific Youth Festival

An HIV awareness campaign coordinated by SPC's HIV Section was designed specifically for the Pacific Youth Festival in Suva (July 2009) with input from young people from around the region. They worked in collaboration with the Fiji Ministry of Health and National Advisory Committee for HIV and AIDS, as well as UNFPA. In addition to the campaign, seminars and workshops on HIV-related topics such as reproductive and sexual health were held as part of the main festival programme.

During the festival, a combination of communication methods, including peer education, TV and radio spots, a daily newsletter, printed materials and items such as banners, posters, T-shirts, bags and water bottles, were used to encourage young people to adopt safe sexual behaviours and to have an HIV test.

Safe sex kits containing both male and female condoms were distributed and condom dispensers were installed at various festival venues. HIV and STI testing services were also available along with pre- and post-test counselling.



Pacific rugby player, Ratu Nemani Driu Nasiganiyavi flanked by two young people at the Safe Festival campaign launch.

Around 400 safe festival bags containing condom wallets, water bottles, t-shirts and sexual health information were distributed to participating countries. At least 15% of young people contacted by peer educators took an HIV test, with another 75% intending to have a test in the following six months. The campaign received an approval rating of 98% from young people surveyed.

A well-known Pacific rugby player acted as an ambassador for the campaign, which was aimed at encouraging youth delegates to make thoughtful decisions on their sexual behaviour. Fijian-born Ratu Nemani Driu Nasiganiyavi (aged 21), who plays professional rugby for the New South Wales Waratahs, said that because of its popularity, the sport was a great tool for gaining attention on other subjects such as HIV.

He also encouraged parents to talk about issues relating to sexuality with their children in order to help them make the right choices.

Ratu Nemani was keen to continue his role as an ambassador for promoting HIV awareness in the Pacific, recognising that change takes time: 'We are setting the foundations now and I feel obliged to continue,' he said.

Meeting the special health needs of young people

The regional adolescent health and development (AHD) strategic plan for 2009–2010 calls on the 10 countries funded and supported by the multi-country AHD Project to strive to improve access to sexual reproductive health and development services by young people (10–29 years) across the Pacific Islands. The project is supported by UNFPA, UNICEF and SPC.

By the end of 2009 Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu had integrated some form of youth friendly services into their primary health care systems, especially into national reproductive health and HIV/STI programmes.

The key interventions of the AHD project in the 10 countries in 2009 were political and policy advocacy initiatives; in-school Family Life Education; promotion of clinics providing youth friendly services; and community-level peer education and outreach campaigns.

The countries involved in the project are striving for greater political and policy commitment to recognising adolescent health as a key focus of national reproductive health and youth policies. On a positive note, Youth Friendly Service Centres are showing evidence of their potential to reach more young people. Currently, in eight countries, a total of 52 clinics based at these centres offer clinical sexual health services to adolescents. The centres also provide social and sporting activities.

Fiji's Our Place, Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association clinics, Marshall Islands Youth to Youth clinics, the Betio AHD-RH clinic in Kiribati, Tonga's Family Health Clinic and the Tuvalu Family Health Association's clinic all provide popular services for youth. However, the little data available show that overall utilisation of clinical services at these centres is still very low, with around only 5% of the total targeted population taking advantage of the special services offered. Improving access to services, through integration with other public health programmes, and increasing their utilisation is thus a priority area for the project over the next three years.

Social Resources Division — overview



The programmes of the Social Resources Division (SRD) contribute to the commitment PICTs have made to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and to ratifying international conventions and treaties such as CEDAW. SRD has programmes in four main areas: human development, statistics and demography, human rights and media. These programmes help PICTs strengthen their capacity to address issues relating to human rights, gender equality and youth empowerment, and help ensure leaders have sound and timely data on which to base policy decisions.

Human Development Programme

The Human Development Programme provides technical assistance that focuses on gender, youth, culture and community-based approaches to development across all sectors. The programme collaborates closely with other programmes and divisions to ensure that these concerns are incorporated in all of SPC's work.

Priorities include promoting an integrated approach to social policy, programmes and services; building national capacity to respond to human and social development needs; producing and disseminating information to promote and support human development; and strengthening and building partnerships and networks with community, faith-based and civil society groups working in these areas.

Human Development Programme staff are based in New Caledonia and at the Community Education Training Centre (CETC) in Fiji. The programme also has staff at SPC's North Pacific regional office and the country office in Solomon Islands.

Statistics and Demography Programme

The Statistics and Demography Programme works closely with national statistics offices, and in 2009 continued to provide technical assistance, training and capacity supplementation for activities related to population censuses, household surveys, and administrative databases. The data that are collected and disseminated provide policy-makers with a basis for informed decision-making and planning. In particular, the programme's activities contribute to PICT assessment of progress towards achievement of most of the MDGs. In relation to the MDGs, good data are essential for appropriate policy making and targeting of resources. However, the range of statistical outputs available in the region is limited, and statistics are often disseminated late due to inadequate support for national statistics offices. As a result, it remains difficult

to measure progress in achieving the MDGs. Upgraded and expanded country and regional statistical information systems and databases – across all sectors – are vital if PICTs are to effectively guide and realise their development aspirations.

The Statistics and Demography Programme is based in New Caledonia and has a staff member located in Pohnpei to ensure its services are more readily available to North Pacific members.

Regional Rights Resource Team

The Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) specialises in human rights and governance issues, and provides assistance to PICTs in ratifying and reporting on international conventions. In general, PICTs have a low rate of ratifying such conventions and agreements and small government offices struggle to meet reporting requirements.

The priorities of RRRT during 2009 were to support Pacific policy-makers and decision-makers in adopting and applying human rights principles and practices, including democracy and the rule of law, and strengthening the capacity of agencies to develop, promote and apply human rights principles. RRRT also worked with civil society groups to advocate for and defend human rights and good governance, with special emphasis on marginalised groups including women and children. The team is taking a lead (in partnership with other key stakeholders) in building a mandate to establish a regional human rights mechanism.

Most staff members are based in Fiji, although three were relocated to Vanuatu in 2009.

Regional Media Centre

The Regional Media Centre, which is based in Fiji, has two distinct roles: (1) providing media training to governments, the private sector and communities in PICTs, and supplementing capacity when requested; and (2) providing media production services, on a cost-recovery basis, to PICTs and SPC programmes.

The Regional Media Centre provides a unique resource for the region. SPC is the only regional organisation in the Pacific that can obtain significant amounts of free radio and television airtime to promote awareness of issues of direct relevance to PICTs and their development partners (e.g. gender equality and development, and HIV and AIDS).

Gender stocktake: Assessing progress towards achieving gender equality

With SPC assistance, six Pacific countries have begun taking stock of the capacity of their governments to include gender perspectives in policy, strategy and decision-making. The focus of the stocktake is on gender mainstreaming capacity – or the ability of government departments and national institutions in every sector to consider and address the different needs and contributions of both sexes.

By gauging existing resources and identifying gaps and areas for improvement, the gender stocktake initiative aims to help national governments build their capacity to mainstream gender across all sectors with technical assistance from SPC and its partners.

Ministries and government departments or sections in charge of gender equality and women's affairs can facilitate gender mainstreaming through their resources and expertise. But to be effective these structures require political commitment and accountability, a supportive organisational culture and more technical capacity across the whole of government.

The stocktake is looking at government-wide efforts, particularly in critical areas such as ministries of finance and planning, justice, education and health, and also at the capacity of national gender equality offices. It will identify strengths, constraints and changes needed to empower these national offices and to increase the ability of line and central ministries to mainstream gender. This in turn will help governments achieve the objectives outlined in the Pacific Platform for Action, the Pacific Plan and other regional and international frameworks relating to gender equality.

The first phase of the project is being carried out in Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Tonga. The stocktake will gradually be rolled out in all 22 PICTs.

The project is being run by SPC's Human Development Programme in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank and United Nations Development Fund for Women.

RRRT: Addressing violence against women through legislative responses

SPC's Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) works to promote human rights in the Pacific. One field of emphasis for the programme is violence against women. A new RRRT project is addressing this human rights issue by working with governments to implement laws that are based on global best practice but tailored for the Pacific context.

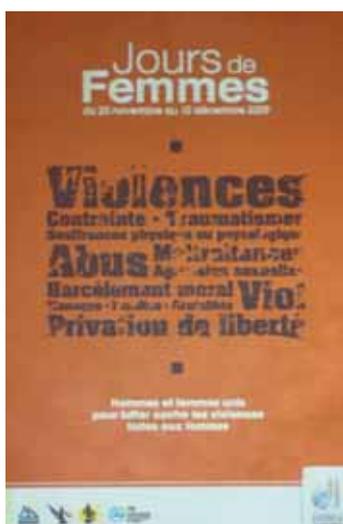
Violence against women is a significant threat to the economic, social and cultural well-being and security of Pacific Island societies. The 40th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting in Cairns in August 2009 recognised sexual and gender-based violence as pervasive and underreported. Commitment was made to eradicate this violence and to ensure that all individuals have equal protection of the law and access to justice.

The current laws (legislation, court decisions and legal practices) in place in the Pacific are outdated and remain largely ineffective in securing justice for women who are victims of violence, whether inside or outside the home. A complete examination of all legislation relating to violence against women and within the family is required. The reason for this is that violence against women is not just a criminal issue; it is also a social issue, and any legislative response must reflect this and address it within the Pacific context. RRRT is partnering with SPC's Human Development Programme, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Population Fund, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre and the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme to address this complex issue through the provision of support to PICT governments for integrated and comprehensive legislative approaches.

RRRT was fortunate to receive funding from the UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women to implement a project titled 'Changing laws, protecting women: Lobbying for legislative change in violence against women / family law in order to enhance protective legislation for women and girls in six PICTs'. The goal of the project is to improve legislation to protect women by implementing high-quality campaigns for

Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women's lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence – yet the reality is that too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned.

UN Secretary General
Ban Ki-moon
8 March 2007



reform of family law and laws relating to violence against women in the six participating PICTs. The aim is to build a cadre of skilled national level legislative supporters and advocates specialising in legislation addressing violence against women and family law. Assistance will be provided through timely and individual technical assistance in advocacy, lobbying and law reform. This will include the use of established networks of community paralegals, members of parliament, lawyers, magistrates and civil society organisations.

The project's approach involves establishing or building on existing committees active in countering violence against women in each PICT to be champions and advocates in supporting and expediting legislative change. Draft legislation, based on the comprehensive integrated model considered global good practice, will be developed in partnership with the country groups.

Country focal officers are established in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Nauru, Samoa, Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu. The country focal officers will convene national consultations on violence against women and support the work in legislative reform in their countries.

Outcomes of the project will include the implementation of effective lobbying campaigns and supportive advocacy groups as well as country-specific legislative drafting instructions drawing on global good practices. Partnerships between SPC, our UN and donor partners and Pacific Island governments are key in this project.

Family Health and Safety Studies in Solomon Islands and Kiribati

Over the last two and a half years, a team of researchers has gathered and analysed data on family health and safety in Kiribati and Solomon Islands. Thousands of women aged from 15 to 49 were interviewed during the Family Health and Safety Studies, which focus on the experiences of women and children. Men were also interviewed. The studies have been undertaken in three Pacific countries so far (the first was done in Samoa eight years ago). They replicate WHO's multi-country study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women.

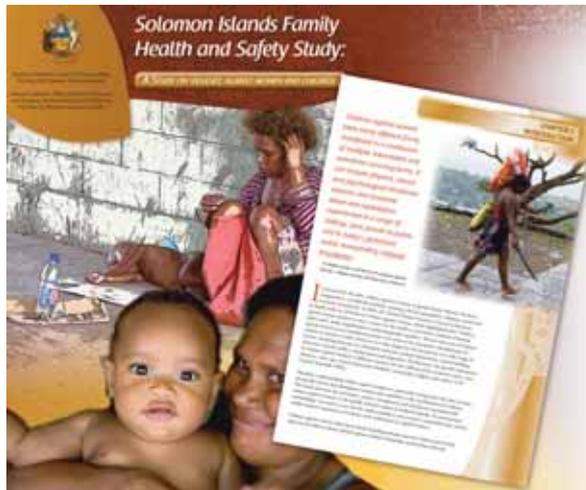
The report on the Solomon Islands study was released in November 2009 in Honiara. The findings of this first nationally representative research on violence against women and children in Solomon Islands are disturbing and government leaders have taken a strong stance on tackling the problem.

Speaking at the report's launch, Solomon Islands Deputy Prime Minister, Fred Fono, said 'My government is committed to leading the nation in zero tolerance for violence through the development of a national policy on the elimination of violence against women.'

The research indicates that women suffer high levels of violence. Of the 3500 Solomon Islands women interviewed, two out of every three reported that they had experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner. Nearly one in two women had been sexually assaulted before reaching the age of 15, and one out of 10 pregnant women experienced violence during pregnancy. Seventy percent of women who had been abused had not told anyone.

The Solomon Islands study also explored factors contributing to violence against women. These were found to include the social acceptance of violence against women (73% of the women interviewed saw violence

as justified in certain instances); the frequent use of physical punishment as a form of ‘discipline’ against women; and the common practice of physically disciplining children, thus introducing a cycle of violence. Marital rape and partner violence are not at present criminal offences in Solomon Islands and there are few support services for women suffering such violence.



Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study

The study also examined the co-occurrence of violence against women and children in the same household. Results showed that in households where women had experienced violence from a partner, there was a high likelihood that he had also abused the children.

Men who were interviewed mentioned four main factors that contributed to partner violence: ‘bride price’, alcohol, acceptability of violence as a form of discipline, and the power imbalance between women and men.

The study makes a number of recommendations including the following:

- Disseminate the findings of the study to increase national awareness and understanding of the causes and consequences of violence against women;
- Promote recognition of the relationship between violence against women and violence against children;
- Build the capacity of medical personnel, police and the judiciary, and develop guidelines to help professionals deal with cases of violence.

The research has led to the development of national action plans in both Solomon Islands and Kiribati to eliminate violence against women. The plans are being developed in a consultative process involving the government, police, the health sector, NGOs and various development agencies. They will also cover policies and legislation to protect women and children affected by violence.

SPC’s Director-General, Dr Jimmie Rodgers, says efforts to address violence against women need personal, public and political commitment.

‘Leaders in our region need to lead from the front. They must demonstrate genuine political will, founded on the principle of mutual respect for one another and equality of all people in Pacific Island countries and territories regardless of race, colour, gender or social standing. They must value all their people equally and protect all of them equally.’

The findings of the as yet unpublished Kiribati study have also received strong recognition from government leaders. His Excellency Anote Tong, President of Kiribati, said that men must take the lead in stopping

violence against women: ‘We should encourage our people, especially us men, to respect and honour the important role that women play in fostering development in our families and the nation as a whole.’

Both studies were coordinated by SPC with funding from AusAID and UNFPA. The report of the Kiribati study is in the final stages of preparation for publication. Similar studies are planned by Tonga and Vanuatu.

CETC upgrades level of studies

The Community Education and Training Centre (CETC) made good progress in 2009 in implementing the key recommendations of a review carried out the previous year. The review identified a number of areas in which CETC could increase the value of its programmes in community development and business training. The resulting changes have included providing advanced studies in specialist areas and national-level training in business and vocational skills. CETC is also seeking formal accreditation as a training provider.

Highlights of CETC’s activities in 2009 included:

- revision of the community development course
- opportunities for multi-entry level studies in community development and for advanced studies in specialist areas
- development of modular courses
- national-level training in business and vocational skills
- staff professional development



Dr Divina Balwan, a coconut processing consultant from the Philippines, explains to CETC students how virgin coconut oil (VCO) is produced.

Revision of Community Development Training Programme

Changes were made to the annual seven-month Community Development Training Programme to meet formal accreditation requirements. Successful completion of the course now leads to a 'Certificate in Applied Community Development Studies' with two qualification levels, Level II and Level III. Other changes to this programme include:

- an upgrade in the status of the course, with provisional accreditation being sought from the Fiji Higher Education Commission. CETC is also seeking accreditation as a registered training provider;
- a new focus, with CETC to provide a mix of formal and non-formal training along with technical services in the community development sector;
- a move to decentralised delivery of courses and assessment of results against competency standards.

CETC is currently developing a range of progressive competencies in modular format, in several community development fields (e.g. nutrition, project management, resource management, health, livelihoods, agriculture, community enterprise and community governance). In future years, there will be courses available at different levels, allowing advanced students to specialise. There will also be expanded options for course delivery and study opportunities.



Successful students shown with CETC staff at the 2009 graduation ceremony.

Business Development Advisory Programme

CETC's other main programme is its Business Development Advisory Programme, which is an extension of the Business Training Of Trainers course started in 2004. With support from the Commonwealth Secretariat, the programme has now moved to country-level training. The targets are community enterprises, entrepreneurs and business facilitators or mentors supporting enterprise growth in the informal sector.

The programme was piloted in 2009 and uses 'virtual' and 'face to face' capacity development activities in several business development and management areas including finance, marketing and research, product design and development, product enhancement and innovation, quality control and standards, service delivery, networking and advocacy. It is aimed at enhancing the skills of the growing pool of CETC-trained business advisors able to provide MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) technical support to community-based ventures.

The programme is expected to progress further in 2010 with the addition of community livelihood skills training. CETC's training partners will contribute additional technical skills. Activities will include regional training for business development facilitators and providers and making support available through CETC's MSME portal.

Looking ahead to 2010

The vision for CETC, under the Human Development Programme's strategic plan for 2008–2012, is to be a Pacific Centre of Excellence in Community Development, offering flexible and responsive human development approaches and services to SPC's members. The strategic plan states that 'CETC will develop into a strategic human development training centre' under the broad objective of building national-level capacity to respond to human and social development needs.

While CETC will seek accreditation from the Fiji Higher Education Commission, the Centre will continue to offer modules and training to communities on a needs basis in such areas as nutrition, health and enterprise development. In 2010, it will work on further developing training modules for its business advisory programme.

CETC's national level training programmes are based on sound partnerships and it will continue to develop and expand these partnerships with other SPC programmes and with national-level agencies in 2010.

Regional statistics programme effective at the national level

Detailed, accurate and up-to-date statistics are key to evidence-based decisions and policy-making. SPC's Statistics and Demography Programme is the region's primary statistical programme. The programme is taking advantage of the efficiencies possible through a regional approach to strengthening and supplementing national statistical capacity.

Regional programmes and activities have considerable potential to make tangible improvements to statistical development and systems at the national level. In particular, this approach enables significant economies of scale, as is illustrated in various current and past SPC initiatives.



In the Pacific Plan, leaders acknowledged the importance of high-quality, timely data by calling for an 'upgrade and extension of country and regional statistical information systems and databases across all sectors.' At a subsequent Forum Economic Ministers Meeting in 2006, a regional statistical benchmark study on strengthening statistical services through regional approaches was commissioned. Two key objectives were to assess the current capacity of national statistical offices (NSOs) and to develop options for strengthening the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of statistics. The report of the study was completed in mid-2009. It emphasises that while considerable progress has been made in recent years, many

countries still lack capacity to collect, process, analyse and disseminate statistics because they do not have enough qualified staff, adequate operating budgets, or strong political support from national governments. The study recommended expanded roles for the statistical programmes of SPC and the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) to help advance statistical development across the region.

With 13 established positions, SPC's Statistics and Demography Programme has gradually developed a team of statistical specialists who cover a broad range of thematic applications. The team includes a census and household survey technical support group, giving SPC members a 'one-stop shop' for technical assistance and training in all areas of census and survey design, data collection, data capture and processing, analysis and dissemination. All these fields require specific technical training, skills and experience. However, many NSOs cannot afford to recruit and retain people with these skills as such specialist services may not be needed year-round. Pooling their expertise and operating from one base enables staff of SPC's Statistics and Demography Programme to benefit from each other's skills and thus provide a more comprehensive service to members than is possible by deploying statistics advisors to individual NSOs. This latter model of technical assistance and capacity building was commonly used in the 1980s and 1990s but has been superseded by the greater advantages of making assistance available at the regional level.

A regional pool of technical resources also promotes more cooperation between PICTs, as advocated by the Regional Benchmark Study and SPC's own Statistics2020 strategy. For example, NSO staff with specific technical expertise may undertake short-term posts in other NSOs that require such skills. This is another good example of a regional approach yielding tangible outcomes at a national level. This strategy, which is gradually being introduced, will be particularly beneficial to NSOs in small island states that cannot afford to employ statistical specialists, even in key sectors.

A more pronounced regional focus has the potential to substantially improve both statistical processes and outputs at the national level. The growing use of core sets of census and household survey questionnaires saves NSOs considerable time and money in the preparation of statistical surveys. It also allows the sharing of training manuals and approaches, data entry and processing systems, and publication and dissemination strategies – in other words, it allows more efficient use of SPC's technical resources. In addition, it helps enhance data quality, with census and survey instruments and manuals being regularly updated and improved. And last but not least, a regional approach facilitates access to a growing set of common statistics in all countries.

A set of common statistics is a key strategic priority of the Pacific Plan and forms a core strategic objective of the Statistics and Demography Programme in coming years. The establishment of a Minimum National Development Indicator Dataset across sectors and countries is aimed at providing regionally comparable development statistics to enable well-informed decision-making and facilitate regular tracking of development progress at the national and regional level. Importantly, the dataset contains all the Millennium Development Goal indicators. Phase 1 in the development and implementation of the dataset is complete and consultations have begun with regional and international technical agencies in Phase 2. These consultations will be extended to all Pacific Island countries in Phase 3, to ensure the final list of indicators addresses comparable user requirements at national, regional and international levels.

Second Pacific Youth Festival held in Fiji

At the 2nd Pacific Youth Festival held in July in Suva, Fiji Islands, 300 young people from 15 PICTs discussed issues centred on four main themes: promoting healthy living; Pacific identity; climate change adaptation; and governance, peace and security. SPC provided support for several aspects of the festival, including technical seminars and a safe sex campaign.



Seminar participants at the Pacific Youth Festival.

The festival programme included a daily schedule of presentations, panel discussions, workshops and training sessions culminating in evening cultural performances by the different delegations.

For organisations like SPC, the festival provided an opportunity to work with young people directly and to help build their capacity and knowledge. It was also an opportunity to reinforce networks with civil society organisations working in the area of youth development to strengthen collective responses and improve programmes offered to young people. SPC Youth Adviser, Rose Maebiru, said the festival was successful thanks to the young people themselves, with their engagement in the issues, their enthusiasm for learning and the wealth of ideas they contributed to the discussions.

At the end of the festival, participants drafted an official declaration highlighting the outcomes of their week-long discussions. The declaration is addressed to governments, development agencies, non-governmental and civil society organisations, local communities and young people throughout the region. Among the issues considered to be of urgent concern for Pacific youth were:

- lack of employment skills and opportunities to develop skills;
- lack of policies or professional support facilities and services for mental health;
- loss of traditional values on the one hand, and on the other, lack of acknowledgement of the impact of urban culture on young people's sense of identity;
- limited awareness of the projected impacts of climate change and people's unwillingness to adopt more environmentally friendly attitudes;
- obstacles to active and effective youth participation at national, institutional and local levels; negative attitudes toward such participation; and political instability.

Delegates from the following PICTs attended the festival: American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. Student delegations from French Polynesia and New Caledonia also travelled to the festival.

Pacific Legislatures for Population and Governance – an organisation co-hosted by SPC



Since 2007, SPC and UNFPA have co-hosted the joint Secretariat for the Pacific Parliamentary Assembly on Population and Development (PPAPD) and the Forum of Presiding Officers and Clerks (FPOC). At the combined 3rd General Assembly of PPAPD and the 8th FPOC Meeting in Cook Islands in November 2009, Pacific legislators decided to merge the two organisations to form the Pacific Legislatures for Population and Governance (PLPG).

The new organisation will be based in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. PLPG's mission is to 'engage and support legislators in advocacy and legislative actions to promote population and development issues and to improve the quality of governance in the Pacific'.

The ongoing operations of PLPG are guided by a constitution and presided over by an Executive Committee that provides strategic oversight to the PLPG Secretariat. The committee includes five Speakers of Pacific legislatures – a Chair (Cook Islands), three Vice Chairs (Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands and Tokelau) and a Treasurer (Federated States of Micronesia).

The Executive Committee also includes seven non-voting ex-officio members, namely SPC, UNFPA, PIFS, UNDP, Asian Forum for Parliamentarians on Population and Development, Australia and New Zealand.

The ex-officio members of the Executive Committee will provide ongoing strategic and operational advice to the Executive Committee through a Project Management Advisory Group, which will meet quarterly. The latter will review and provide programmatic and technical advice to the PLPG Secretariat in relation to project management and implementation, the strategic direction of the PLPG, work planning and resource mobilisation.

Other highlights of the year for PPAPD and FPOC prior to their merger include the establishment of Parliamentary Groups on Population and Development in Samoa, Nauru and Niue; regional and national advocacy activities by PPAPD-FPOC Champions and other Pacific parliamentarians; participation at the Pacific Youth Festival and other international conferences; a successful resource mobilisation campaign; and adoption of key strategic documents including a strategic plan and communications and advocacy strategy.

The Secretariat's overall vision is to achieve excellence in providing effective and reliable service to partners and members of PLPG through sound policy advice and the efficient delivery of high-quality programmes. In this regard, the Secretariat aims to deliver an innovative, effective, and coordinated process for programme planning, implementation and monitoring that will assist Pacific legislators in addressing population and development issues and improve the quality of governance and legislative processes.

Communiqué

Sixth Conference of the Pacific Community



Communiqué Sixth Conference of the Pacific Community

Nukualofa, Kingdom of Tonga, 12–13 October 2009

Introduction

1. The Sixth Conference of the Pacific Community was held in Nukualofa, Kingdom of Tonga, from 12 to 13 October 2009. It was officially opened by Her Royal Highness, Princess Salote Mafile’o Pilolevu Tuita. The Conference was attended by heads of state and government of Tonga and Niue; deputy heads of government of Cook Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia; ministers of Australia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu; a member of the legislature of American Samoa; the governor of Pohnpei State, Federated States of Micronesia; ambassadors and high commissioners of France, New Zealand, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Pitcairn Islands and Tuvalu; and senior officials of Fiji Islands, French Polynesia, Tokelau, the United States of America, and Wallis and Futuna. Representatives from the Commonwealth Secretariat, Fiji School of Medicine, Oceania Customs Organisation and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) attended as observers.
2. The Prime Minister of Tonga, the Honourable Dr Feleti Vaka’uta Sevele, chaired the Conference and the vice-chairperson was the representative of Cook Islands.
3. The Conference expressed its appreciation to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Tonga for their warm welcome and generous hospitality and for the excellent arrangements made for the meeting.
4. The Conference also extended its profound sympathy to the Governments and people of American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga on the tragic loss of life, injury and devastation caused by the tsunami in late September, to Tonga and Kiribati for the lives lost in recent ferry accidents, and to other countries in the region that suffered catastrophic events during the year.
5. The Conference considered and approved the recommendations presented to it by the 39th meeting of CRGA (Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations), which was held the previous week in Nukualofa from 6 to 9 October. In addition, the Conference noted the decisions of CRGA 38, which was held at SPC headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia, 13–16 October 2008.
6. The Conference also considered and reached resolutions on issues covered in its substantive agenda.
7. This communiqué is based on the decisions resulting from both the recommendations of CRGA 39 and the agenda of the Sixth Conference of the Pacific Community.

Director-General’s report

8. The Conference accepted the Director-General’s report for 2009 and commended the work of the Secretariat. It addressed the following specific areas of the report.
 - 8.1 Decentralisation – The Conference welcomed the update on the implementation of its decision to ‘move services closer to people’ through decentralisation of the organisation beyond Noumea and Suva, noting the Secretariat had taken a cautious approach in light of the potential cost implications. The Conference acknowledged with appreciation the commitment by host countries to support the regional/national offices of SPC as well as the Secretariat’s efforts to improve its systems to support the decentralised delivery of services. It also noted the Secretariat’s intention to present to CRGA 40 in 2010 a full analysis of the costs relating to each of its offices, including

all decentralised offices, emphasising that decentralisation must be cost effective and not at the expense of service delivery.

The Conference noted the request from the Government of Tonga to consider the relocation of some of SPC's programmes to Tonga. The Secretariat will consider this request in the context of its organisational restructuring and will report on the issue to CRGA 40.

- 8.2 Global economic crisis – The Conference acknowledged that the global economic crisis has impacted on all members of SPC and noted that SPC had to curtail some services during 2009. It commended the staff and management of SPC for agreeing to forego the approved increases in remuneration in 2009, in the face of the financial crisis, to safeguard the provision of services to members.
- 8.3 Arrears in members' assessed contributions – The Conference expressed concern about the level of arrears in members' assessed contributions, recognising the impact of these arrears on SPC's capacity to provide services, and requested members in arrears to settle their dues in full or agree on a payment schedule with the Secretariat by 31 December 2009.
- 8.4 Organisational restructure – The Conference commended and supported the Director-General's proposed two-phase reform of SPC's organisational structure and systems, which will take place over 2010 and 2011. It noted that the new organisational structure is likely to be based on themes rather than sectors and will be shaped to optimise the services delivered to members.

SPC's work programme

- 9. The Conference endorsed the recommendations from CRGA 39 in relation to SPC's work programme as follows:
 - 9.1 Land Resources – The Conference acknowledged the work conducted by SPC's Land Resources Division in a range of areas including trade, biosecurity, adaptation to climate change, food security, plant protection and animal health. In particular, it commended SPC on the recent opening of a new facility to house the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT) in Suva, Fiji Islands. The centre holds large collections of Pacific crop and tree varieties that are well-adapted to various Pacific conditions. It noted that the collections are being made available to the region's farmers and communities through plant tissue-culture techniques. In particular, the Conference commended SPC on the development of 'climate-ready' seeds, including salt-tolerant and flood-tolerant varieties, to support efforts to adapt to climate change, improve food and nutritional security and increase domestic and export trade in agriculture and forestry products.
 - 9.2 Marine Resources – The Conference acknowledged the work of SPC's newly renamed Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division in providing research, training and technical assistance in one of the Pacific region's most important economic sectors. In particular, the Conference recognised SPC's work in scientific assessment of tuna stocks, which is fundamental to tuna fisheries management in the region, noting that the ongoing and very successful tuna tagging project is providing vital information in this regard. The Conference acknowledged the work as a good example of a programme that is best carried out at the regional level, especially as there is no national capacity for such assessment and regional assessments must be undertaken by an unbiased regional organisation. Representatives commended SPC and the Forum Fisheries Agency on undertaking a joint study on the future of Pacific fisheries to help determine the direction of the sector.

- 9.3 Public Health – The Conference acknowledged the work of SPC’s Public Health Division in helping to prevent communicable and non-communicable diseases and its support for strengthening health systems in member countries and territories. It commended the division’s efforts to assist members to better prepare for disease outbreaks, noting that SPC’s pandemic preparedness project contributed to most countries and territories having the capacity and equipment on hand to mount an effective response to the recent H1N1 pandemic influenza outbreak. It supported the continued provision of assistance to SPC to sustain this emergency preparedness and response capacity in the region. The Conference supported the division’s new strategic plan, which focuses on addressing the wider determinants of health, such as education, gender equity, adequate sanitation and clean water and livelihoods, in addition to addressing the diseases common to the region. It welcomed the cross-sectoral approach being taken by SPC in collaboration with development partners to ensure the most effective application of resources for health.
- 9.4 Social Resources – The Conference commended the efforts of SPC’s Social Resources Division to assist members to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and meet commitments to international conventions and treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It welcomed SPC’s work on issues relating to human rights, gender, youth, culture and community leadership, noting the relevance of these issues to sustainable development. The Conference also expressed appreciation for the work of the Regional Media Centre.

The Conference acknowledged the support provided to national statistics offices by the Statistics and Demography Programme, noting the results achieved in member countries and territories. The Conference also noted the need for upgraded and expanded national and regional statistical information systems and databases across all sectors as a prerequisite to improving the availability of high-quality statistical outputs.

The Conference noted the outcomes of the socio-cultural research on gender-based violence and violence against children in Kiribati and Solomon Islands. The research project was funded by Australia and UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) and implemented by SPC in collaboration with the governments of Kiribati and Solomon Islands. The Conference noted further that efforts need to be made to step up responses at national and regional levels to address this issue. It acknowledged Australia’s commitment to work with SPC to explore effective mechanisms for reducing gender-based violence as a priority for Australia and all countries and territories in the region.

- 9.5 Economic Development – The Conference acknowledged SPC’s role in establishing a new feeder shipping service between Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, using a Kiribati state-owned vessel. This new feeder service has already resulted in lower freight rates and more frequent and reliable shipping. The Conference was pleased to note that SPC’s Regional Maritime Programme will incorporate a system for safety audits on domestic ships in its existing audit regime, in consultation with counterparts in Australia and New Zealand, along with other efforts to improve the safety of the region’s domestic fleets.

The Conference acknowledged the utility of the Pacific Rural Internet Connectivity System (PacRICS) in enabling communication with rural areas and outer islands. Each PacRICS site is capable of providing Internet access to a wide area (around 50 square kilometres), allowing sharing of costs. The Conference noted that the system proved to be particularly valuable during the recent tsunami disaster where it provided the only electronic communication channel to and from Niuatoputapu (an outer island of Tonga) for up to two weeks after the event and greatly assisted in coordinating relief efforts. PacRICS is the only satellite communication system that both covers the entire Pacific Island region and is suitable for use as a low-cost disaster

surveillance and response tool. The Conference supported the request for a further year of bandwidth funding to support the PacRICS initiative, which provides the region with a robust and responsive communication backbone that can be used for education, health and disaster response purposes, noting in particular that the equipment required is compact and inexpensive and, in the event of a disaster, can be landed and set up with relative ease.

The policy agenda

10. The Conference addressed and endorsed actions on the following key policy agenda items presented by the Secretariat.
 - 10.1 Reform of the Regional Institutional Framework (RIF) – The Conference endorsed the final decisions on the framework, which were reached after exhaustive consultation and discussion and a historic joint meeting of the SOPAC (Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission), SPREP (Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme) and SPC governing councils, as well as subsequent individual special sessions of these councils in mid-2009. Representatives noted that the decisions were also endorsed by Forum Leaders and that implementation plans for various aspects of RIF have been developed by SPC in partnership with PIFS, SOPAC, SPBEA (South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment) and SPREP. As a result of these decisions, from January 2010 the majority of SOPAC’s core work programme will become the SOPAC Science and Technology Division of SPC, and SPBEA will be merged with SPC, initially as a stand-alone programme in 2010. SPC will assume the role of lead coordinating agency for the regional energy sector. SOPAC’s current energy and ICT outreach programmes will become part of the new Economic Development Division of SPC together with the transport, infrastructure and ICT functions being transferred from PIFS.
 - 10.2 Long-term sustainable financing strategy for SPC – The Conference commended the proactive stance taken by SPC in seeking to develop a long-term sustainable financing strategy for the organisation. It endorsed the establishment of a subcommittee of CRGA to assist the Secretariat in undertaking an in-depth analysis of the core functions that SPC should provide and the most appropriate funding modalities. This analysis will provide the basis for developing the long-term financing strategy. The Conference endorsed the terms of reference and membership of the subcommittee and noted that it will report its findings to CRGA 40 in 2010.
 - 10.3 Tracking development progress – The Conference recognised the efforts made by SPC to develop a system to assist members in regular monitoring and reporting of development progress against national and international development targets, including the MDGs. To enhance members’ access to relevant development data, SPC is working with stakeholders including members to agree on a core set of indicators for Minimum National Development Indicator Datasets. The next step will be to finalise the initial dataset, which will be shared with development partners and members to ensure it meets their monitoring and tracking requirements. The Conference noted that the work will ultimately result in a monitoring system that will allow tracking of development in real-time, based on collection and compilation of high-quality statistics, and further noted that achieving this aim will require investment of additional resources at national and regional levels.

In this regard, the Conference welcomed with great appreciation the announcement by Australia that it will provide AUD 10 million to SPC over the next four years to support the work being led by SPC to improve the timeliness and quality of statistics in island member countries and territories to achieve real-time monitoring of development progress and enhance evidence-based decision-making. It noted the priority that Australia accords to further developing and improving statistical services in member countries and territories. The Conference also noted that

Papua New Guinea has included statistics as the fifth key priority to be supported by Australia under the Australia-Papua New Guinea Pacific Partnership Agreement and commended this approach to other members in their own consultations with Australia.

- 10.4 Mapping priorities in health – The Conference welcomed SPC’s work on mapping priorities in health in three member countries and endorsed the extension of the mapping exercise to other countries and territories to provide a representative sample of SPC members. The Conference noted that the end result of this work will be a document that (i) lists the top priorities for improved health outcomes at regional and national levels; (ii) demonstrates the links between these priorities and decisions or agreements made at regional and international levels that impact on health, such as the Pacific Plan, MDGs, and decisions by the WHO World Health Assembly and Regional Committee of the Western Pacific Regional Office; (iii) demonstrates the link between national priorities and budget allocations by governments and the non-government sector, especially churches and development partners; (iv) documents all stakeholders contributing to health development in the region and identifies what they each do, the level of resources they each provide and how these resources are made available to members; and (v) analyses efforts made by governments and administrations to address the social determinants of health that exist outside the health sector. The Conference acknowledged that the document will give members a context for deciding how best to invest in priorities that will help achieve desired health outcomes through ‘whole of government approaches.’ The document will also be useful in consultations with development partners. It noted that additional resources will be required to implement a wider trial of the mapping exercise and encouraged development partners to support the Secretariat’s efforts to complete the mapping exercise as soon as possible.
- 10.5 Joint country strategies – The Conference acknowledged the value of the joint country strategies (JCSs) that have been developed between members and SPC. The Conference also noted progress with the development, implementation and monitoring of the strategies and supported the Secretariat’s plans to complete strategies with Fiji Islands, Guam, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu in 2010 and to start on developing a second-cycle strategy with Marshall Islands. The JCSs outline in one integrated document the scope of SPC’s planned assistance to an individual member over a defined period. They present a ‘whole of SPC’ approach and are based on working jointly with members to improve the responsiveness, relevance, effectiveness and strategic impact of interventions at the country level, and to strengthen priority setting and monitoring. Key principles in developing the strategies are joint preparation, an emphasis on national development priorities (as stated in members’ national sustainable development strategies/plans) and a participatory multi-sectoral approach. The Conference welcomed the Secretariat’s approach to involving other CROP (Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific) organisations in developing the JCSs, noting that this process may in time lead to CROP-wide JCSs with members.
- 10.6 SPC and the Pacific Plan – The Conference commended SPC for its initiative in mainstreaming relevant Pacific Plan priorities into its core business and welcomed the publication SPC and the Pacific Plan, which gives detailed information on SPC’s contribution to implementing the Pacific Plan across the 14 sectors in which SPC works.
- 10.7 The Cairns Compact – The Conference acknowledged the purpose and intent of the ‘Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific’ and expressed its appreciation to the Secretary General of PIFS, Tuiloma Neroni Slade, and the Director-General of SPC for presenting a joint paper on the Compact. The Conference endorsed the goals of the Cairns Compact and encouraged the Secretariat, where feasible, to contribute to its successful implementation in collaboration with PIFS.

The conference theme:

'Maximising impacts of regional programmes at national level'

11. The Conference commended the government of the Kingdom of Tonga for selecting a theme that was both relevant and timely for regional organisations. The Conference reiterated the value of regional services to members, as aptly demonstrated by the detailed divisional presentations to CRGA 39 and through statements from member representatives on the theme.
12. The Conference expressed particular appreciation for the presentations made by representatives of national institutions and non-government organisations, noting that the benefits they described showed the real impact of SPC's work at ground level. The Conference requested that similar presentations on specific sectors such as health be made at future meetings, noting that the presentations demonstrated how SPC's services both supplement and complement the work of members' own institutions and programmes.
13. The Conference acknowledged the benefits delivered by SPC's programmes and the impacts made in many sectors at the national level. In this regard, it directed the Secretariat to ensure that the changes following on from the RIF reform result in further enhancement of services. It recognised that SPC's initiatives in decentralising its operations and developing joint country strategies with its members have greatly improved the implementation and coordination of regional services in Pacific Island countries and territories.
14. The Conference stressed the need for regional programmes to be closely aligned to national sustainable development strategies and plans, noting the need for continuing coordination of service delivery, both by SPC itself and by members at the national level to avoid duplication and maximise impact. The Conference directed SPC to continue collaborating with other partners working bilaterally or multilaterally at national level in the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action, the Cairns Compact, the Pacific Aid Effectiveness Principles and the Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration. It also noted the need to ensure there is a common monitoring and evaluation framework that is consistent with the national-level framework to monitor the impact of regional services at national level.
15. The Conference also acknowledged that members need to ensure a receptive environment and better coordination between sectors at national level, especially through capacity building of government departments and institutions.
16. The Conference emphasised the need to address key constraints to economic growth, such as lack of resources for infrastructure, and the importance of ensuring these areas are integral parts of national sustainable development strategies. In this regard it noted the early impact of the feeder shipping service between Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, and requested exploration and coordination of other subregional initiatives in areas that involve groups of members or opportunities between members.
17. The Conference requested that SPC continue supporting the provision of appropriate ICT, in particular the PacRICS and OLPC (One Laptop Per Child) projects, and continue to play a role in facilitating access by members to the SPIN (South Pacific Information Network) submarine cable.

Pacific Economic Survey

18. The Conference noted with appreciation the joint presentation made by PIFS and Australia on the Pacific Economic Survey and commended Australia for undertaking this important work, recognising that for many members it provided information that would be extremely useful in their own national planning processes.

Financial administration and management

19. The Conference commended SPC on receiving clean audit reports, for the 13th successive year, for its 2008 financial records and Staff Provident Fund. It approved the balanced budget presented by the Secretariat for 2010. Total anticipated income and expenditure for 2010 is 68,418,000 CFP units, comprising combined (SPC, SOPAC and SPBEA) core budgets of 14,150,600 CFP units and non-core budgets of 54,267,400 CFP units (programme funding: 9,319,400 CFP units; project funding: 44,948,000 CFP units). The Conference noted that some recently approved funding had not been included in the budget it approved and that these funds would be incorporated in a revision of the budget.

Working papers for CRGA and conference

20. The Conference acknowledged the quality of all the papers and presentations given at the meeting. It welcomed the clear focus on impacts and outcomes, noting that the detailed reporting of programme activities at the national level made it easier for members to appreciate the value of the services that SPC provides in each sector.

Evaluation of the Director-General's performance

21. The Conference unanimously agreed to reappoint the Director-General to serve another two-year term in accordance with the unanimous recommendation of CRGA 39.

Year 2011 conference

22. The Conference accepted the offer from the Republic of the Marshall Islands to host the Seventh Conference of the Pacific Community in 2011, and agreed that according to the rules of procedure, Marshall Islands will provide the chairperson. The Secretariat will advise regarding the vice-chairperson.
23. The Conference also noted the expression of interest by Cook Islands in hosting the Eighth Conference of the Pacific Community in 2013.

Opening the forum, SPC's Deputy Director-General, Mrs Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu, reminded delegates that NCDs were to a large extent preventable and that the solutions were available to the region.

Keynote speaker Dr Colin Tukuitonga, the Niue-born Chief Executive of New Zealand's Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs and former Head of Surveillance and Prevention of Chronic Diseases at WHO, told the forum that not enough was being done to reduce the incidence of NCDs. He said that although all parties had been very busy and there was a high level of awareness in the region regarding NCDs, there was still a lack of concrete achievements. He called for a renewed emphasis on engaging communities as active partners.

Another speaker, Public Policy and Regulatory Specialist Mr Dave Clarke, said the region should regard NCDs as a public health emergency more serious than cyclones and pandemics. He said policy and legislation should encourage people to move away from eating products such as mutton flaps. But he noted that importers were also members of the community and should be involved in dialogue.

Country representatives discussed action at the national level. For example, the forum heard that Tonga has established an independent Health Promotion Foundation. Tobacco legislation has been passed and there are bans on smoking in public places and on selling single cigarettes to minors. Every new road constructed in Tonga must have a footpath for safe walking.

In Samoa, a small grant scheme has supported community projects to improve and promote healthy living. The parliaments of Nauru and Vanuatu have passed the Tobacco Act. The challenge now is to implement and enforce the provisions of the act. And in Nauru, the government has introduced a variety of physical activity, healthy diet and smoking control programmes.

The forum adopted 19 issues and recommendations to be put before PICT health ministers that focused on how to turn plans and policy into actions and engagement with communities for results.

They included calls for more legislation, engagement with food importers, promoting key messages in schools, and following through with surveillance, monitoring and evaluation. The next forum will be held in Nadi in June 2010.

Support for surveillance and control of communicable diseases

PHD's Public Health Surveillance & Communicable Disease Control (PHS & CDC) Section provided intensive support for PICT responses to pandemic influenza A (H1N1) in mid-2009. The pandemic had the potential to become a devastating event, but prompt and in most cases effective action at the regional and national level was carried out in line with measures being taken worldwide.

SPC provided both technical and in-kind (procurement) support to PICTs in partnership with WHO, AusAID, NZAID and the Pacific Island Health Officers Association.

Together with WHO, rapid and timely guidance was provided in areas such as surveillance, clinical management, diagnosis and laboratory methods, sampling and shipping of samples, and provision of information to the public and travellers. Other interventions included advice on social distancing, border control including passenger screening and quarantine, and triage protocols. Advice was provided through PacNet, by email, phone or country visits.

MEMBERS

American Samoa

Australia

Cook Islands

Federated States of Micronesia

Fiji Islands

France

French Polynesia

Guam

Kiribati

Marshall Islands

Nauru

New Caledonia

New Zealand

Niue

Northern Mariana Islands

Palau

Papua New Guinea

Pitcairn Islands

Samoa

Solomon Islands

Tokelau

Tonga

Tuvalu

United States of America

Vanuatu

Wallis and Futuna



CONTACT DETAILS

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

SPC Headquarters
BP D5
98848 Noumea Cedex,
New Caledonia
Telephone: +687 26 20 00
Fax: +687 26 38 18

SPC Suva Regional Office
Private Mail Bag,
Suva,
Fiji Islands
Telephone: +679 337 0733
Fax: +679 377 0021

SPC North Pacific Regional Office
P.O. Box Q,
Kolonias, Pohnpei, 96941 FM,
Federated States of Micronesia
Telephone: +691 3207 523
Fax: +691 3202 725

Email: spc@spc.int
Website: www.spc.int