

SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY**THIRTY-SEVENTH MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS**
(Apia, Samoa, 7–9 November 2007)*FOCUS ON MEMBER PRIORITIES: POLICY MATTERS AND SECTORAL INITIATIVES***AGENDA ITEM 3.1 – JOINT COUNTRY STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY PROFILES
ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS**

(Paper presented by the Secretariat)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Secretariat and its national partners have completed drafts of five joint country strategies (JCS) in 2007 for Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru and Tokelau.
2. As an outcome of the 2005 Corporate Review, the development of JCS encompasses a multi-disciplinary ‘whole of SPC’ approach that facilitates effective programme planning, implementation and monitoring between the member and the Secretariat.
3. The advantages of the JCS outweigh disadvantages and challenges in relation to their development cost and the need to change work habits and mainly programme-based approaches.
4. In line with its focus on small island states (SIS), the Secretariat has targeted the completion of JCS for all its SIS members by 2009. It is also planning to develop a joint Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat - SPC JCS for Solomon Islands, in recognition of the special post-conflict needs of this larger member country.
5. In response to member requests for more easily accessible information on the services the Secretariat has provided, SPC is also compiling ‘country profiles’. These profiles combine basic country facts with an overview of recent and current SPC assistance. They are part of the five completed draft JCS, but are stand-alone documents for other members. In 2007, the Secretariat completed separate country profiles for the Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna, and plans to cover all Pacific Community members within the next two to three years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. CRGA is requested to:
 - i. note the Secretariat’s achievements, challenges and future plans concerning the development of joint country strategies and country profiles;
 - ii. endorse the Secretariat’s intention to complete JCS for the Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, Pitcairn, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna in 2008 and develop further country profiles for other members.

JOINT COUNTRY STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY PROFILES ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS

Purpose

1. This paper seeks to inform CRGA of the Secretariat's achievements, challenges and future plans concerning the development of joint country strategies and country profiles. It also recommends the committee's endorsement of the Secretariat's plans to complete JCS for the Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, Pitcairn, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna in 2008 and develop further country profiles.

Background

2. Based on a recommendation of the 2005 Corporate Review, the Secretariat has developed a number of individual joint country strategies (JCS) in close collaboration and consultation with national partners. JCS outline in one integrated document the scope of planned SPC assistance to an individual member over a defined period. JCS seek to help a country implement its national development strategy where one already exists. The JCS present a 'whole of SPC' approach and have been designed to improve the responsiveness, relevance, effectiveness and strategic impact of the Secretariat's interventions at the country level, and to strengthen priority setting and monitoring. A key principle in their development is a participatory multi-sectoral approach.
3. In 2007, the Governments of Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru and Tokelau engaged with the Secretariat to draw up a JCS. This process involved drafting mutually agreed terms of reference for each JCS. The next step was a desk review of recent, current and already planned SPC country activities and a review of relevant recent country research and other important documents, in particular, national development plans. This was followed by a country visit by a team of SPC staff, led where possible by at least one member of the SPC Executive. The team was made up of representatives of the three divisions and a Planning Unit staff member. During the in-country visit, meetings were held with heads of all relevant government departments and their technical staff, and with representatives of civil society, bilateral development agencies, other CROP agencies and multilateral development agencies. Following this visit, the draft JCS was circulated to all key stakeholders for comment, before being jointly finalised by planning office staff from both national government offices and SPC.
4. As well as the five JCS mentioned above, the Secretariat also agreed during CRGA 36 to prepare country profiles documenting the nature and extent of its recent assistance to individual members. The countries selected were Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna. These country profiles will be available as informal documents at the CRGA meeting and will be used as a basis for developing future JCS.

Features of current JCS initiatives

5. Four of the five current JCS (Cook Islands, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Nauru¹) reflect a common structure that includes an introduction, national development strategy, the Secretariat's forward programme, development partnerships and synergies, and a monitoring framework for the JCS. A number of key documents and tables are annexed to provide contextual information to supplement issues raised in the main text. These include a table of planned SPC assistance during the JCS period, a summary guide to SPC services, and an outline of the country's development context and country facts. The Tokelau document will follow a slightly different structure as it is a joint strategy that also involves other agencies.

¹ Please note that the JCS documents will be made available at CRGA as informal meeting documents.

6. Whilst the JCS reflect a more comprehensive and strategic longer-term approach, there will still be capacity to respond to urgent or ad-hoc requests for SPC assistance.
7. A major benefit of the JCS design process has been the encouragement of a multi-disciplinary approach to national and sectoral planning on both the Secretariat's side and at the national level.
8. The JCS approach has provided a means for the Secretariat to engage with senior national policy makers, and opportunities for the Secretariat to promote initiatives such as the MDGs, draw attention to other social and economic development opportunities, and act as an advocate for current and emerging concerns.
9. Additionally, and in the interest of donor harmonisation and of minimising the burden on Pacific Community members, the Secretariat has worked with other regional agencies and development partners to explore ways of cooperating in developing and implementing the JCS.

JCS development challenges and plans

10. The initial target of presenting five JCS to CRGA 37 that have gone through a full endorsement process at national level was ambitious. Done properly, the process takes more time than initially expected. Responses times at national level, at the level of partner agencies and within the Secretariat also tend to be longer than expected in initial work plans, as the development of JCS competes with other commitments.
11. Given resource availability and the emphasis on the special situation of SIS, the priority for the development of JCS will be SPC's SIS members. Although a larger country, a JCS for Solomon Islands is scheduled for 2008 given its special post-conflict needs. The Secretariat is proposing the following development schedule for JCS:

| 2007 (for information) | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Cook Islands | FSM | American Samoa | Fiji Islands |
| Kiribati | Niue | French Polynesia | Guam |
| Marshall Islands | Pitcairn | Northern Marianas | New Caledonia |
| Nauru | Solomon Islands | Palau | Papua New Guinea |
| Tokelau | Tuvalu | Samoa | Vanuatu |
| | Wallis and Futuna | Tonga | |

12. The JCS for Solomon Islands will be developed in collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, which has an in-country representative. Similarly, the fact that SPC has its Pohnpei Regional Office is expected to make the preparation of the FSM strategy much easier.
13. The plans for 2009 and 2010 are subject to change in line with resource availability and pending further discussions with the SPC members concerned.

14. The JCS approach to programme service delivery presents a challenge to the conventional way of managing resources as it is based on a more systematic, national needs-focused approach to activity scheduling, implementation and monitoring. As a result, the various SPC sections will be required to liaise more closely with their national counterparts to ensure workplans are consistent with national development plans and to make certain that services are provided at the appropriate level and delivered at the right time. Although monitoring the JCS will place an additional responsibility on both the national planning office and the Secretariat's Planning Unit, the anticipated benefits are expected to justify the extra resources required.
15. Like all good plans and strategies, the JCS need to be monitored and revised as necessary according to circumstances. As reflected in the Corporate Plan, the Secretariat is endeavouring to strengthen its strategic engagement at the national level by means of more frequent in-country consultations by senior management. It is anticipated that where they exist, the JCS will be a key focus of these discussions and will function as a major mechanism for improving communication with national decision makers and officials.

Country profiles

16. Country profiles are available for Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna and are integrated into the existing five JCS. They reflect a common structure as follows: a synopsis of the member's development background; a summary of the Secretariat's assistance during the period 2005–2007; a table of planned SPC assistance during 2008; and a summary of country facts.
17. Compilation of country profiles requires time and effort to collect information across a large number of SPC programmes. This challenge will hopefully diminish as SPC's information systems are strengthened and as JCS are developed and implemented. The Regional Maritime Programme and Land Resources Division already have activity reporting systems in place that allow relatively easy extraction of the relevant information.
18. Another key difficulty is accurate attribution of cost of regional services to individual countries. For example, a significant amount of SPC's assistance is provided at a regional level (e.g. the work of the Oceanic Fisheries Programme) and is therefore difficult to apportion to individual SPC members. The cost of technical assistance (i.e. SPC staff time) is also not incorporated in the current costing methodology. Country profiles and JCS therefore tend to underestimate significantly the value of SPC assistance.

Conclusion

19. While there are challenges with their development, the joint country strategy and country profile initiatives have proved to be very useful processes as they provide a functional reference point for both the Secretariat's programme staff and national counterpart planners to facilitate coordinated service delivery. Additionally, they provide SPC and other stakeholders, including other CROP agencies and multilateral development partners, an opportunity to provide information on their respective plans and programmes, thus helping to avoid duplication and address any resource shortfalls. They also allow member countries to comprehensively view the nature and the extent of the agreed level of the Secretariat's support over the period of the JCS.