

SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

THE 4th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY
(Koror, Palau, 18 November 2005)

REGIONAL POLICIES, INTER-AGENCY PROCESSES AND THE PACIFIC PLAN

(Paper prepared by the Secretariat)

INTRODUCTION

1. This paper is to update Pacific Community members on the status of some of the inter-regional agency sectoral policy support processes in which the Secretariat is involved, particularly those coordinated by the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP).
2. This is itself an update on a series of occasional papers, last discussed by CRGA 32¹ in 2002. As such, it will not attempt to be exhaustive, but will draw attention to new or significant events in that part of the regional policy arena that involves SPC. As in 2002, the purpose of this paper is to make SPC's role in the work of CROP and other inter-agency processes more immediately transparent to the SPC Governing Council.
3. To recap, CROP² is an arrangement for promoting networking and collaboration between Pacific Island intergovernmental organisations. It is coordinated by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and its membership consists of PIFS, SPC, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP) of the East-West Center, the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the University of the South Pacific (USP) and now, the Fiji School of Medicine and the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment.
4. As well as meeting annually as heads of organisations, CROP also promotes sectoral networking through a series of ad-hoc Working Groups. These working groups collaborate for various purposes: chiefly to keep members updated on each others activities and thus avoid "reinventing the wheel", but also to provide a mechanism for jointly developing draft regional presentations, or position summaries, on broad issues where member countries and territories have requested support through one or more CROP agencies. This mechanism is particularly useful in marshalling multi-agency regional technical advice and support for Pacific Island delegations working on international processes.

¹ This paper is available on the web at <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/reports/crga/32crop.pdf>

² Some informal information about CROP is available at <http://www.piocean.org/CROP/spocc.htm>

5. Whilst certain international processes are sub-sectoral and do not need the full range of CROP agency input (such as the negotiations that occurred towards the agreement of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean), others are extremely broad-ranging, such as the regional preparation for the review of the Barbados Programme of Action at the Mauritius Small Island Developing States meeting in January 2005, where inter-agency working groups considerably improve the efficiency of the regional advisory process to member countries.
6. The regional policy process that has garnered most attention over the past 18 months has been the "Pacific Plan". This particular process is an initiative of the Pacific Island Forum and has been discussed by the SPC Governing Council in the past, including a presentation by the Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat at CRGA 34 last year. The Pacific Plan is potentially far-reaching in its implications, including implications for SPC, and this opportunity will be taken to brief the full SPC membership on recent developments.
7. This paper describes progress in several of these regional policy processes, and some issues are raised for discussion and, if necessary, decision. We will start with sectoral issues and finish with the Pacific Plan.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (TVET)

8. In the Auckland Declaration of April 2004, Pacific leaders called for a plan that emphasized the importance of strengthening vocational training as part of the Pacific Plan and in the context of the 2001 Forum Basic Education Action plan (FBEAP). This was the main agenda of the Forum Education Ministers of Education Meeting in Apia 2005 which agreed to encourage greater support for TVET through regional programmes including PRIDE, SPC, the SPBEA, PIFS among others. The meeting also acknowledged the lead role by the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET) in moving the TVET agenda forward. It strongly urged SPC to host the PATVET secretariat following a regional multi-stakeholder Consultation Meeting hosted by SPC at the SPC Community Education Training Centre in Narere, Fiji, as a response to the mandate by SPC Conference in November 2001, directing the SPC to 'assume the facilitatory/co-ordinating role in preparing an inventory of all HRD institutions in the region that could be useful for member PICTs, including the list of training courses provided and qualifications given'. SPC is therefore already committed to hosting the Secretariat at the CETC in Narere with the regional TVET inventory is being undertaken with assistance from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and PATVET with a target completion date being the end of 2005.
9. Technical Assistance for a regional skills development study from the ADB through Japan's Special Fund was also endorsed in the Forum Ministers of Education Meeting in Apia 2005 where the main agenda was Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). PIFS is the executing agency for the TA implementation with SPC contributing as a member of the TA Advisory Steering Committee which provides policy and strategic guidance, inter-ministerial, inter-country and inter-institutional coordination.

10. Members may recall that the 2nd Conference of the Pacific Community in 2002 spent some time discussing Human Resource Development, and prepared a substantial statement on the subject, concentrating on SPC's role in the strengthening of non-formal and technical/vocational education. Conference was of the opinion that HRD is a fundamental part of SPC's core business, and this was subsequently reflected in the SPC Corporate Plan. The Secretariat is pleased to note this progress on a regional policy-level approach to the subject of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, in addition to the ongoing training carried out by SPC's own sectoral programmes.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

11. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by the International Community, including SPC member countries, in 2000. MDGs provide a framework for coordinating and measuring progress towards a better quality of life for the people of the world. These are national goals and, whilst a large part of SPC's work-programme is, and has always been, to help members to achieve progress in these areas, a system for actually *measuring* this progress has never been developed to common regional and global standards. SPC's activity in this area has therefore become two-fold: one is the continuing broad regional push to assist in the improvement of health standards, alleviate poverty, improve food security, and protect the ecosystem basis of island development; and the other is the strengthening and coordination of national and regional statistical information systems so each SPC member can measure their progress against the emerging global standards.
12. Conference will note that the Millennium Development Goals, and the indicators of progress towards these goals (see Annex I), are very broad, and classify global priorities in a way that reflects mainly social, particularly health, development priorities. This regional MDG support and measurement work has therefore been coordinated by the SPC Social Resources Division. Under the social classification reflected by the MDGs, the entire work area of the SPC's Marine Resources Division, for example, falls under a small subset of two of the MDGs, and none of the list of global indicators used in measuring progress towards the MDGs actually cover the Division's work. This is not to say that the SPC Marine Resources and for that matter the SPC Land Resources Divisions do not contribute towards the alleviation of poverty, the promotion of food security and the protection of the environment, but that the global MDG indicators do not capture most of the particular priorities of the Pacific Islands in the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries areas. The work-areas of these Divisions are classified and measured against global standards through more specifically-targeted international goals, particularly the commitments made by member countries at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. There is also the possibility of "tailoring" indicators for different countries to more appropriately measure national progress in areas that are particularly relevant to the islands of Oceania.
13. With respect to MDG reporting, four SPC island member countries have sent their first report on progress against the Millennium Development Goals to the United Nations so far and 3 are about to do so. In response to a request by Forum Economic Ministers in 2003, regional (SPC) and international (UNDP) organisations mobilized themselves to provide assistance to countries to develop MDG assessment and reporting procedures. The first tangible result of this regional work is the Millennium Development Goals Regional Report published by SPC in January 2005 with funding assistance from UNDP. National statistical and planning departments were closely associated in development of the report, and CROP and UN agencies also took part in this process, with the result that all Pacific Island Countries were able to meet their MDG reporting obligations to the UN in early 2005.

14. There are, however, a number of remaining challenges associated with the Millennium Development Goals for Pacific Island countries, beyond achieving the reporting commitments. Customizing goals, targets and indicators, integrating the MDG framework into national planning processes, allocating public resources, and developing relevant government policies are essential for the achievement of these socially-relevant goals by the agreed target date of 2015, and Pacific Island countries have already stressed that significant assistance will have to be provided by development partners during this process.
15. SPC is the lead agency within the CROP system for regional assistance to Pacific Islands countries in achieving MDG integration and reporting processes, complementing the activities of UN agencies at the international level. All the countries that reported individually to the UN, or who are about to do so, have received assistance from either UN agencies or SPC, and the SPC Social Resources Division has set up a special coordination system, the MDG Task Force, to assist countries in integrating the MDGs into their national planning.
16. The first MDG Task Force mission took place in Tuvalu in February 2005 and involved nine SPC advisers (specialists in Planning, Statistics, Health, Youth, Women and Poverty Analysis) and two UN experts. They joined the Tuvalu national MDG Task Force to help facilitate the integration of the MDGs into the Tuvalu National Strategies for Sustainable Development (*Te Kakeega II 2005-2015*). With the assistance already provided by SPC, Tuvalu's sectoral departments are now better equipped to further develop *Te Kakeega II* in keeping with a sound planning, monitoring and evaluating framework involving a participatory and cross-sectoral approach.
17. SPC is prepared to deliver, upon request, similar assistance to other PICTs engaged in the development of their national plans.

PACIFIC ISLANDS REGIONAL OCEAN POLICY AND ACTION PLAN

18. The Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy was approved by Pacific Islands Forum countries at the August 2002 Forum meeting, and its principles were associated with by other SPC island members at the 32nd SPC CRGA meeting. The policy itself formed one of the major planks in the regional position at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), in Johannesburg in September 2002.
19. The Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy has also been introduced to the international community at the UN Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS), and it has more than once been suggested by different UNICPOLOS co-chairs that its principles could be a useful starting point for the development of a possible future global oceans policy. The main point of an Ocean Policy is to provide a common denominator between different, and occasionally competing, ocean-users and sectoral administrations – to provide guidance about what path to take when interests diverge by keeping in sight the “big picture” – a picture that goes beyond fisheries, beyond shipping, and even beyond the interests of individual jurisdictions. The Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy itself is a simple distillation of the various principles already committed to by Pacific Islands in various international and regional conventions and agreements. It is not a blueprint or a set of legal instructions, but a basic statement of fundamental principles to ensure consistency in all future agreements and commitments.

20. A *Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Forum* was held at the University of the South Pacific in January 2004, organised by a Fiji-based subgroup of the CROP Marine Sector Working Group, to discuss how the Policy might be used to generate action in priority areas. The discussion during this meeting of representatives of many different ocean sectors and levels of society formed the basis for an Action Plan³ which was subsequently presented to the Forum Officials Committee in 2004. After a further round of refinement, the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Forum Integrated Strategic Action plan (PIROFISA) was put before CRGA 34 before being submitted to the Mauritius SIDS meeting in January 2005.
21. We understand that progress against the PIROFISA was reported to the Forum Officials Committee in 2005. One of the main initiatives that will be pursued is the development of national Ocean Policies, based on the principles of the regional policy, but elaborated through social consultative processes to take account of the specific systems and priorities of islands groups. Several of the larger SPC member countries and territories are already familiar with this process, but Fiji and Cook Islands are, we hear, the first Pacific Island countries to decide to take this next step of developing a national Ocean Policy. We would be happy to hear about any others that are developing their national policies.
22. As well as national ocean policy development, the PIROFISA also suggests several regional-level initiatives and processes. However, these will need specific impetus. The CROP Marine Sector Working Group has reached the limits of its capabilities and brief as an inter-agency dialogue process, and to take the PIROFISA further – in particular to acquire the funding necessary to implement some of these priorities – will require a dedicated coordinator. The process of taking this further step has been put more or less “on hold” by the CROP working group pending the outcome of the discussion about the Pacific Plan, and in particular the future regional institutional framework that will be required to implement the Pacific Plan.
23. It would however be possible to finance a single specialist post, for a limited period, using existing funding held at SPC for furthering the Ocean Policy process, until the resourcing that is mentioned within the context of the Pacific Plan (Final Draft, Paragraph 12) comes to pass. The aim of this short-term position would be to promote proposals and coordinate support specifically for the development of national ocean policies conforming to the regionally-agreed basic principles of PIROF.

References: The final text of the policy itself is at <http://www.piocean.org/oceanpolicy.htm>. The Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Forum is described at <http://www.piocean.org/oceanforum.htm> and CRGA 30 Working Paper 5.1 is available at <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/Reports/Meetings/CRGA/30Ocean.pdf>

REGIONAL FISHERIES ISSUES

Tuna Fisheries and their Impacts

24. The Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (normally shortened to “WCP Fisheries Commission”, or “WCPFC”) is moving onto full operational mode following 10 years of gestation. The Commission however remains primarily a meeting-place for member countries and territories to agree on measures to control and maintain tuna fisheries, and most of the actual work will continue to be done by member countries (for those with national capacity) and by existing regional fisheries organisations (for those without full national capacity), although any work specifically on behalf of the Commission will be increasingly financed by the Commission itself. The next meeting of the Commission, preceded by the first substantive meeting of the Compliance Committee, will be held next month in Pohnpei.

³ PIROFISA – the “Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Framework for Integrated Strategic Action”

25. The first substantive meeting of the Scientific Committee was hosted by New Caledonia and SPC at SPC Headquarters in August 2005 and led to an updated consensus agreement between the world's leading tuna fishery scientists about the status of stocks in the region. SPC has updated its Policy Brief on Tuna Fisheries and their Impacts as a result of this new understanding and this report is appended as Annex V. The main change, compared to the 2004 assessment, is that the regional yellowfin tuna stock, whilst not yet overfished, will become so if current levels of fishing mortality continue and the status of the stock does not otherwise improve. Yellowfin thus joins bigeye tuna on the list of oceanic species where regional action is desirable.
26. If the region decides to take action to head off these challenges, the next meeting of the WCPFC in December could be an opportunity to reach agreement on mechanisms for reducing overall fishing mortality on these two species. We would note in passing that the new Vessel-Days Scheme for managing the effort of purse-seine fleets, currently being considered by the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, will also go some way towards addressing this challenge, although a mechanism for managing the impact of longliners may also be needed to provide a complete solution.
27. However, SPC is a scientific advisor when it comes to the management of tuna fisheries. Whilst we can draw the attention of the region to pending problems with tuna stocks, and other bio-ecological issues, it is up to other mechanisms to evaluate the significance of those problems and to decide what type of action might be taken to address them.
28. One of the issues that is under our remit however is the reliability of our estimates of oceanic fishery stock status. It is difficult to say anything with great accuracy about the numbers and distribution of underwater creatures in an area as vast as the Pacific Ocean, particularly when they are counted indirectly, through those that happen to be caught by fishing boats fishing at certain depths, in certain areas, with certain types of gear. We do not rely entirely on fishing vessel logsheets however, and will be implementing a new tuna tagging and recapture programme as soon as possible. Funding for this multi-country exercise will be incremental, and we are grateful to the Government of Papua New Guinea which, through its National Fisheries Authority, has already started the ball rolling with a pledge of K100,000. It would be useful if Conference were to recommend that other potential partners support this practical exercise.

References: The report of the WCPFC Scientific Committee can be found at http://www.spc.int/oceanfish/Html/WCPFC/SCI/scientific_committee.htm#report

Deep-sea bottom-trawling, High seas and Seamounts

29. Unlike tuna fisheries, where at least 3 regional agencies (WCPFC, FFA, SPC) now provide complementary support to Pacific Island countries, one regional fisheries issue which currently has no corresponding regional advisory mechanism is the management of "straddling stocks", including bottom trawling on the high seas of the region. Annex VI contains a brief which was jointly developed by SPC and FFA for the Forum, on request of the Forum Officials Committee, after the issue was raised by the Government of Palau.
30. As explained in Annex VI, the main reason for this lack of regional capacity is because no commercial bottom-trawl fisheries for straddling stocks have yet developed in the western tropical Pacific. However the continual raising of the profile of this, and related, issues at the international level, suggests that action to develop a pre-emptive framework management regime for such fisheries, should they become feasible, would be beneficial. There is also the point that it will be much easier, quicker, and cheaper, to develop a basic management regime for an oceanic fishery where the only real interests are those of coastal States, and where no Fishing Nations are yet operating.

31. A rapid framework agreement, under the principles of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA), would enable various effective actions to be taken, and enforced, at the regional level, including a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling until such time as a comprehensive conservation and management regime is negotiated. Such an agreement would alternatively provide a legal mechanism for declaring high seas Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) forbidden to certain kinds of fishing gear, or for preventing the taking of certain species, should the region so decide.
32. The decisions of the October Pacific Islands Forum meeting on this issue will be presented to Conference, which may wish to task SPC with taking certain aspects further, as appropriate. It may also be noted by Conference that the UN General Assembly has called upon member countries to urgently cooperate to set up arrangements to manage bottom fisheries, and Conference may wish to provide some feedback from this region to the Assembly, which will be sitting in November 2005 to, *inter alia*, further consider this issue.

REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES

CROP health and population working group

33. A major activity undertaken by this Working Group within the last two years has been to support the development and implementation of the Pacific Regional Strategy on HIV /AIDS (2004-2008). The Strategy was endorsed at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in 2004. The implementation plan and Monitoring and Evaluation framework for the strategy have been the primary focus for the group over the past twelve months, and the completed version of both outputs has been presented to the 2005 Port Moresby Forum meeting and to this year's Conference (see Annex II). On-going efforts are required to restrict the explosion of HIV/AIDS in the Pacific and effective implementation of the Strategy will address this threat to health, social, economic, poverty and security in the Pacific.
34. The Pacific Regional Strategy Implementation Plan (PRSIP) is a living document. It is important to act quickly on the more immediate and obvious problems without necessarily waiting for a complete long-term action plan to be negotiated. However, it is recognised that there are number of gaps in the plan that have still to be addressed, particularly in how the plan relates to non-Forum SPC member territories.

The New International Health Regulations

35. The International Health Regulations (IHR) are a global legal framework to prevent international spread of diseases. The current version of IHR was established in 1967 and has a limited scope. Extensive revision was requested at the World Health Assembly in 1995, and carried out subsequently. In May 2005, WHO Member States adopted the revised IHR⁴.
36. The revised IHR cover a broader scope of disease than ever before, and set out new requirements and core obligations for both countries and WHO. Therefore IHR (2005) implementation will entail comprehensive assessments of national surveillance and response systems, followed by long-term planning and adequate resource allocation to build strong capacities at each level for detection, verification, notification and response to disease outbreaks and other public health events.

⁴ to be referred to as the "International Health Regulations (2005)"

37. Most PICTs do not have sufficient infrastructure such as laboratory capacity or skilled personnel to implement the revised IHR and do not see it as a feasible goal to establish such capacity, especially within the target timeframe. Therefore, the Pacific Island Ministers of Health Meeting held in Samoa in March 2005, agreed⁵ that the existing Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN) mechanism and services (i.e. PacNet, LabNet and EpiNet), be utilised to meet the requirement for revised IHR within the Pacific island countries and territories and to strengthen capacity in each country and territory.

The Influenza Pandemic Threat

38. The outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza A (H5N1) in Asia raises serious concerns about a possible influenza pandemic⁶. Very high mortality and morbidity are inevitable if such a pandemic occurs since the human population does not have immunity against the pandemic virus. Whole societies are likely to be affected. For PICTs, this could have devastating effects (see Annex IV).
39. It is therefore critical that the “Samoa Commitment” recommendation that PPHSN, including WHO, SPC and other partners, continue to provide technical support to assist countries and territories to develop and implement national influenza pandemic preparedness plans to minimize the negative impact of a pandemic must be fast-tracked with great urgency. At national level, a multi-sectoral task force including civil society should be established to develop a national pandemic preparedness plan. This process should be led or coordinated by the Ministry of Health, based on existing plans and mechanisms. It is imperative that the new plans be tested at the national level. Despite the urgency, most PICTs still do not have national preparedness plans established and tested. Through the PPHSN, SPC is committed to strengthen surveillance and response capacities and the preparedness to influenza pandemic in the region, and to seek the additional resources required to make it more timely and effective, especially with regards to influenza pandemic preparedness
40. The Secretariat has been engaged in urgent consultations with development partners and is continually updating member PICTs on the real dangers associated with possible transmission of the HPAI virus within the island countries and territories. Whilst it would be good for all PICTs to have fully developed and tested national pandemic preparedness plans within the next two years, given the unpredictability of the disease, a concurrent, multi-country/territory (compact) approach is urgently required to ensure all PICTs have working plans within a shorter time-frame. It is essential to include veterinarians and livestock specialists in this initiative – given that animals are the principle hosts for the HPAI virus. Unfortunately, much of the emphasis at the present time had been focussed on human transmission. Australia and New Zealand had been very supportive of the Secretariat’s efforts to ensure that all PICTs have working national pandemic preparedness plans as a matter of urgency.

Pacific Health Fund

41. The public health profile of the Pacific Islands region is somewhat different to most other developing country regions. The often talked about ‘health transition’ where the disease status of countries shift from a predominantly communicable disease profile to a non-communicable profile has not been the case in this region, where almost all PICTs currently experience a ‘double-disease burden’ comprising a high prevalence of communicable diseases as well as increasing incidence and prevalence of non-communicable diseases. In addition the emergence of new diseases such as the avian influenza has added a new dimension to the disease profile.

⁵ “Samoa Commitment: Achieving Healthy Islands”

⁶ global epidemic caused by a new subtype of influenza

42. The threshold levels for access to the Global Fund to combat HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) are based on more populous regions and have made it difficult for Pacific Islands to secure support in addressing the latter two diseases. Annex III describes a proposal for a Pacific Health Fund (PHF), which would be tailored to the health profile of this region. The actual disease coverage will be broader than just the three diseases currently addressed under the GFATM. The PHF will support interventions to address priority non-communicable and communicable diseases, pandemic preparedness responses and other important health challenges that lend themselves to strategic regional and/or national intervention. The PHF will not replace the Global Fund, but will rather supplement it in fields where this region needs specific attention, and its operation will draw very substantially on the successful experiences of the Global Fund (see Annex III).

Regional Planning for Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

43. The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) provides Pacific countries with a unique opportunity to reduce one of the leading causes of disease in the Pacific. In March 2005 Pacific Ministers for Health recommended that all Forum Member States ratify the FCTC and also urged Territories to take actions consistent with the Convention. Nine of the 14 Pacific Islands Forum Member States have now ratified this global treaty, and SPC hopes that members who have not already done so will ratify the Convention. Full participation by Pacific Islands in the first Conference of the Parties would provide optimum access to resources; enable collaboration on reporting requirements; and enable effective policy, legislative and programme sharing.
44. SPC hosted the first Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM) for the Pacific in August 2002 and is willing to further such collaborative developments. For example, SPC could facilitate development of common positions on issues for the first Conference of the Parties in February 2006 if members wish SPC to pursue this course of action.

Reference: Pacific ratification status: http://www.spc.int/AC/Tobacco/tobacco_fctc_Status.html
Global ratification status: <http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/countrylist/en/>

National alcohol policies

45. Global and national concerns on alcohol policy have recently been covered by meetings at SPC and the World Health Assembly. In particular a framework for country action points on alcohol has been developed that could assist the development of national policy which aims to reduce alcohol injury, violence and traffic crashes, increase drinking age, improve licensing and training on enforcement as well as regulating the marketing and sponsorship of alcohol.
46. While there is no development of a formal Pacific action plan on alcohol, the opportunities for collaboration on key areas such as training and enforcement have been highlighted. Police training initiatives offer one area of potential regional collaboration with considerable impact. The most recent meeting report from Auckland will be used as a guide to the current development of the WHO Western Pacific Regional Plan of Action on Alcohol.
47. A coordinated audit of current policies and legislation in the Pacific, to identify gaps and to develop a programme of assistance and targeted training for the benefit of individual countries and territories, will be carried out shortly.

Reference: Recommendations from the September 2004 meeting and the follow up to this meeting are available at: http://www.spc.int/AC/Tobacco/tobacco_alcohol_countryInfo.html

REGIONAL COLLABORATION IN AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT

48. In September 2004, Pacific Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry endorsed SPC's move to integrate the services it provides to its members, in crops, animals and forests, embodied in the Land Resources Division's Strategic Plan 2005-2008. The Ministers made a number of recommendations including that SPC should:
- assist members to develop comprehensive policies and strategies for sustainable use and management of their natural resources;
 - use the region's rich human resources in its capacity building initiatives;
 - specifically target youth to make use of opportunities in the agriculture and forestry sectors;
 - give special attention to atoll agriculture because of their limited genetic base, poor soil conditions and the significant impact of global warming;
 - actively coordinate regional activities relating to international agreements that impact on agriculture and forestry development and ensure that members are kept informed;
 - strengthen its activities against the threat of zoonotic diseases to the Pacific particularly through surveillance and monitoring;
 - continue to assist members in mitigating and reducing the impacts of natural disasters.
 - Ministers also encouraged members to consider endorsing the Regional Germplasm Centre Material Transfer Agreement, ratifying the International Treaty and signing the Establishment for the Global Crop Diversity Fund.
49. Helping members develop national agriculture and forestry related policy is a new initiative, highlighted in the SPC LRD Strategic Plan and for which appropriate personnel is being recruited. Coordination of technical inputs from the crops, animals and forests sectors into national policy frameworks would require close consultation with national personnel at the policy making levels as well as with other relevant international and regional organisations.
50. Moves are afoot to reconvene the CROP Land Resources Working Group. This would enhance opportunities for sharing information between partners and should lead to increased regional collaboration in the areas mentioned above, and also in areas which other CROP agencies are leading.
51. The Pacific Islands Biotechnology Working Group, for which SPC LRD is the Secretariat, met in February 2005 and agreed on the need to improve recognition of the role biotechnology plays in sustainable development in the Pacific. The group felt that there was a need for biotechnology to be embedded in a larger science and technology framework. Within national government frameworks and the establishment of a science and technology/biotechnology policy, various issues could be addressed, such as the development of policies that ensure consumer awareness and protection for products used. In a move towards developing a regional biotechnology policy, SPC Land Resources Division has been representing the Pacific in the development of policy briefs for biodiversity, science and governance, and biotechnology for the ACP region⁷, and two meetings have already been held in 2005. The biotechnology policy brief is in the final stage of preparation, before presentation of a draft.

⁷ "ACP" is the acronym used by the European Union to collectively label the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions, for development cooperation purposes. The ACP group consists of those non-European countries that are eligible to sign the Cotonou Agreement with European Union countries.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

52. The proposed Digital Strategy of the Pacific Plan will have implications for SPC. The Digital Strategy proposes that Pacific Islands Forum Heads of Government will:
- i) Reaffirm the fine principles and necessary deeds outlined in the CAP (Communications Action Plan 1999) and PIIPP Pacific Islands Regional ICT Policy and Strategic Plan 2002) and declare that Forum Island Countries will vigorously pursue the roadmap contained in those documents. In turn, the commitment to open markets, to let the private sector invest, to promote, educate and create the environment for ICTs to leverage efforts in every sector of the economy, will be rewarded by the whole Pacific community using its resources to underwrite this process in a concentrated, cohesive and coordinated manner.
 - ii) Establish a Pacific Islands ICT Council (PIIC) which will be the regional engine for ICT development and coordination. The Council will be composed of high level representatives of, *inter alia*, the present CROP ICT Working Group, PITA, PICISOC and the users and private sector through such entities as the proposed Regional Private Sector Organization (RPSO).
53. An effective SPC response to the objectives and implementation contract of the Digital Strategy will be defined in the 2006-8 SPC ICT Strategic Plan, which will describe action to achieve priority outcomes, taking into account likely available financial resources and expertise. In early discussions with the Forum Secretariat, it has been suggested that SPC's particular role in the regional ICT support framework should include the following issues:
- statistics on Pacific Island ICT usage, including the data necessary to formulate a Digital Access Index
 - assisting countries to include ICT components in all sectoral planning processes that SPC programmes are involved in;
 - helping groups of member governments to harmonise ICT platforms to facilitate skills-sharing, training, bulk-purchasing, and regional-level support;
 - supporting the development and implementation of CROP sectoral networks;
 - taking an active and responsive role in regional ICT bodies (particularly the proposed Pacific Islands ICT Council);
 - playing an active part in TVET - vocational training in ICT in the region.

PACIFIC ISLAND STATISTICAL SYSTEMS

54. SPC's Demography/Population and Statistics Programme undertook two policy reviews for the Pacific Plan taskforce in October 2004, concerning the current state of population and development, and socio-economic information in the region. The objective of these reviews was to evaluate data access, availability, quality and utilization and their implications for evidence-based policy development and planning. Copies of both reviews are available from www.spc.int/demog.

55. The review highlighted data quality (including lack of data) and timeliness as factors critically jeopardizing access and utilization, alongside technical skills shortages at the data capture and processing stage, and the absence of analytical and communication skills to interpret and make best use of the information. It also noted that utilization is further compromised in a culture averse to evidence-based decision making, where policy development and strategic development plans are largely the result of political decisions without reference to empirical evidence, and where there is often little dialogue between key data producers (national statistical agencies) and key users (national planning agencies).
56. To redress these imbalances, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Demography/Population and Statistics programme is addressing several of these issues, in collaboration with other agencies involved in data and information management issues in the region, including AusAID, ADB and UNFPA, some of which are addressed in various Pacific Plan documents. These concentrate on the need to undertake regular collections of quality data and timely dissemination of information, and for all national agencies involved in this process to start adopting a more pronounced customer/client and stakeholder focus, a greater emphasis on service than on product, and greater attention to user-relevance and user-friendliness in all operations, rather than remaining with traditional data products, or what is easiest to produce.
57. Electronic data access and dissemination via national websites and CDs, and innovative communication and analytical tools like SPC's PRISM website and the development of decision-support tools for policy analysts and planners, such as national population geographic information systems (PopGIS) are examples of recent developments.
58. In addition to the assistance SPC provides to statistics bureaus and planning departments, significant resources have recently been or shortly will be injected by development partners (UNFPA, AusAID, ADB, NZAID) to improve this situation. SPC has been chosen as the executing agency for these projects. As we are approaching the new census round, SPC is increasing its capacities to assist the PICTs in improving their data and developing their planning processes.
59. The Pacific Plan recognises the growing importance of reliable, comprehensive, and objective information for regional development purposes and nation-building and planning, and mentions the need for a comprehensive Regional Statistical Office. As it has for decades, SPC will continue to play a central role in assisting in the improvement of not only high-level national statistics through continued support to National Statistical Offices, but in integrating detailed statistics in certain sectors⁸. The new Strategic Plan for the SPC's Demography/Population and Statistics Programme Plan amalgamates the previously-separate SPC Demography/Population and Statistics Programmes, and envisages the establishment of a completely comprehensive Regional Statistical Office. Appended as Annex VII to this paper is a concept proposal for this one-stop-shop statistical information service.

PACIFIC PLAN AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

60. Mr Greg Urwin, Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, has accepted SPC's invitation to speak about the "Pacific Plan for strengthening regional cooperation and integration," and on related issues including relations between the Forum countries and the territories in the Pacific. This section of the paper provides a brief background to his presentation to Conference.

⁸ the internationally-recognised work carried out by SPC on oceanic fisheries statistics may be noted in this regard

61. The decision to develop the Pacific Plan came from the Forum Leaders' Decision (Auckland Declaration) made at the special leader's retreat in Auckland in April 2004, in response to the recommendations of an Eminent Persons Group⁹ that reviewed the Forum. The Leaders view the Pacific Plan as the principle means through which to achieve a vision of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity for the Pacific region. It's important to reiterate that the Pacific Plan is an "overarching" strategy for weaving the region closer together. It is not a "blue print for the future" that makes other regional strategies subservient. Other already agreed priorities that are being implemented through other regional mechanisms complement the priorities identified in the Pacific Plan¹⁰.
62. At the 2004 Apia Forum Meeting, Forum Leaders established a Pacific Plan taskforce comprising officials from the Forum Island countries to draft the Pacific Plan and, following consultations with stakeholders, have it presented to the 2005 Papua New Guinea Forum. CROP organisations, including SPC, were invited as observers in the taskforce, and have been providing assistance, as required.
63. Throughout the plan's development, the Secretariat placed a particular emphasis on ensuring that the non-Forum members of the SPC are included in the consultations about the plan. The Secretariat played an active role in facilitating the dialogue between the Secretary-General and the non-Forum members of the SPC, including joint visits by the SPC's Director-General and the PIFS' Secretary-General to American Samoa and Guam to discuss the plan and relations between the Forum and the territories in the Pacific.
64. The final draft of the Pacific Plan¹¹ that was presented to the Forum Leaders in Port Moresby in late October is attached for information of members as Annex VIII. The regional priorities covered under the Pacific Plan are categorised under each of the four areas¹² defined as the key goals of the Forum in the Auckland Declaration; – (i) Economic growth; (ii) Sustainable development; (iii) Governance and (iv) Security. This paper will not go into the details of the plan as the Secretary-General has kindly agreed to brief Conference on it, with particular attention to the decisions by Forum Leaders in Papua New Guinea.
65. Of particular interest to members of the Pacific Community is the new policy on Associate membership¹³ at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, which if approved by the Forum in PNG will offer increased opportunities to SPC's member territories for closer interactions and participation with the Forum and its governance structures.
66. One further important issue of direct interest to the SPC membership is the outcome of an independent review of regional institutions in the Pacific, commissioned by the Forum Secretariat, as part of the Pacific Plan process. The review was intended to look at the "relevance and effectiveness of existing regional institutional mechanisms against emerging regional priorities under the Pacific Plan," and was done by consultant Anthony Hughes.

⁹ The Eminent Persons Group consisted of: Sir Julius Chan (Papua New Guinea) (Chair), Bob Cotton (Australia), Dr Langi Kavaliku (Tonga), Teburoro Tito (Kiribati), and Maiava Iulai Toma (Samoa).

¹⁰ Final Draft – Pacific Plan – para 12.

¹¹ http://www.forumsec.org.fj/docs/PPlan/Final_Draft_Pacific_Plan.pdf

¹² Pacific Islands Forum – Special Leaders' Retreat, Auckland, 6th April 2004: The Auckland Declaration and Leaders' decisions

¹³ 2005 Pre-Forum FOC

67. The report, “*Strengthening Regional Management: A Review of the Architecture for Regional Co-operation in the Pacific*,” proposes a significant restructuring and merging of the management, administration and other common services of 5 CROP agencies, including SPC. (The Hughes report is attached to this paper) It proposes a merged secretariat, to be called the *Pacific Commission* that would serve two governing councils, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Conference of the Pacific Community. The Work programmes of the 5 CROP agencies would re-organise under directorates, operating from existing locations.
68. The Pacific Plan and the Hughes report have important implications for the region and its regional institutions. The Pacific Plan recognises that regional organisations will play a key role in the implementation of the plan. As such, the Pacific Plan task force is looking to develop a “regional institutional framework that is appropriate for the new forms of regionalism in the Pacific for the implementation of the Plan.” To achieve this, the Pacific Plan task force has agreed to establish a ‘working group’ to further analyse the Hughes report with a view to provide the report to the 2006 Forum. It is intended that this will also be submitted to the respective governing councils of the other CROP agencies.
69. The Secretariat seeks the views of SPC member member countries and territories on the Hughes report, in particular, the next steps. One option may be for SPC to request the inclusion of some non-Forum SPC members in the ‘working group’ established by the Forum rather than establishing a separate working group of its own.

CONCLUSION

70. This paper has presented a very brief summary, and pointers to more information, about a few of the inter-agency sectoral consultative activities that SPC is involved in, particularly those which are aimed at assisting member countries and territories collectively with the development of regional sectoral policy frameworks and strategic plans. The list is not exhaustive, rather it aims to update members on some highlights of activities SPC has been involved in over the past twelve months.
71. The Conference is invited to:
 - i) Provide guidance as necessary to the Secretariat on potential next steps in the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy (PIROP) process, noting that at least two SPC island members are beginning to look at the development of National Ocean Policies, and noting that some regional capacity in this new field will be needed if members are to efficiently marshal international assistance and share expertise;
 - ii) Take note of the strong collaborative mechanisms developed by SPC and its regional development partners to assist countries and territories in the integration of customized MDGs into National development plans and strategies and invite governments and administrations to fully use this potential.
 - iii) Endorse the HIV/AIDS Pacific Regional Strategy Implementation Plan (2004-2008) as a living document , urge countries and territories to implement the plan at national level and the continued extension of partnerships among countries, territories, regional agencies and development partners in mobilising resources in support of the plan.
 - iv) Endorse the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control at the Pacific Community regional level (this would of course be an informal and indicative level of endorsement and would not commit any individual member to ratification nor side-step national processes and consultations necessary for national ratification);

- v) Note the need to be prepared at all levels for the spread of transmissible diseases to, and between, islands, particularly in relation to the current threat posed by Avian Influenza, and
- vi) Endorse the concept of the Pacific Health Fund and task the Secretariat with reporting on progress towards achieving this financing facility at the next SPC Governing Council meeting;
- vii) Recognising the growing importance of objective statistical information for sound decision making including for national, regional and international development planning, endorse the decision taken by SPC to enhance its capacity to assist PICTs to regularly produce quality macro-economic data and encourage the Secretariat to consider plans to implement the concept of a 'one-stop-shop' statistical information service for PICTs in areas such as population, economic & trade statistics, social statistics and natural resource statistics.
- viii) Note that the status of the indicators for the regional stock of bigeye tuna remain pessimistic, despite the recent and probably temporary upturn in catch rates, and that the yellowfin tuna regional stock status indicators have recently triggered warnings, and take these warnings into account when considering regional tuna fishery management measures during the next meeting of the WCPFC;
- ix) Welcome the support by Papua New Guinea for a new Regional Tuna Tagging Project, and urge other partners to contribute joint funding to this regional exercise;
- x) Provide guidance to the Secretariat, in the context of any recent Forum decisions, on the next steps to take on the question of the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks in the western tropical Pacific, and the related issues of high seas bottom trawling and seamount protection and, should it be warranted, to provide feedback to the UN General Assembly on the consensus will of the region on this issue;
- xi) Note the progress of the Pacific Plan; and
- xii) Provide comments to the Secretariat on the recommendations of the Hughes Report on strengthening the capability of regional institutions to work more effectively together, – and consider the inclusion of some non Forum SPC members to the working group being established by the Pacific Plan taskforce / PIFS to review the report.

12 October 2005

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS - INDICATORS AND TARGETS

Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target 1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day

Indicators

- [1. Proportion of population below \\$1 \(PPP\) per day](#)
- [2. Poverty gap ratio \[incidence x depth of poverty\]](#)
- [3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption](#)

Target 2. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Indicators

- [4. Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age](#)
- [5. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption](#)

Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education

Target 3. Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

Indicators

- [6. Net enrolment ratio in primary education](#)
- [7. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5](#)
- [8. Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds](#)

Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 4. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015

Indicators

- [9. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education](#)
- [10. Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old](#)
- [11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector](#)
- [12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament](#)

¹⁴ From <http://www.spc.int/mdgs/MDGs/MDGs.htm>

Goal 4. Reduce child mortality

Target 5. Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate

Indicators

[13. Under-five mortality rate](#)

[14. Infant mortality rate](#)

[15. Proportion of 1 year-old children immunized against measles](#)

Goal 5. Improve maternal health

Target 6. Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

Indicators

[16. Maternal mortality ratio](#)

[17. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel](#)

Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target 7. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

Indicators

[18. HIV prevalence among pregnant women aged 15-24 years](#)

[19. Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate](#)

[19 a Condom use at last high-risk sex](#)

[19 b Percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS](#)

[19 c Contraception prevalence rate](#)

[20. Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years](#)

Target 8. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

Indicators

[21. Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria](#)

[22. Proportion of population in malaria-risk areas using effective malaria prevention and treatment measures](#)

[23. Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis](#)

[24. Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under DOTS \(internationally recommended TB control strategy\)](#)

Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 9. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources

Indicators

[25. Proportion of land area covered by forest](#)

[26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area](#)

[27. Energy use \(kg oil equivalent\) per \\$1 GDP \(PPP\)](#)

[28. Carbon dioxide emissions per capita and consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs \(ODP tons\)](#)

[29. Proportion of population using solid fuels](#)

Target 10. Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation

Indicators

[30. Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural](#)

[31. Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban and rural](#)

Target 11. By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Indicators

[32. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure](#)

Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development

Target 12. Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. *(Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction - both nationally and internationally)*

Target 13. Address the special needs of the least developed countries.

Indicators

[33. Net ODA, total and to LDCs, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income](#)

[34. Proportion of total bilateral, sectoral-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services \(basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation\)](#)

[35. Proportion of bilateral ODA of OECD/DAC donors that is united](#)

[36. ODA received in landlocked countries as proportion of their GNIs](#)

[37. ODA received in small island developing States as proportion of their GNIs](#)

Target 14. Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States *(through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly)*

Indicators

[38. Proportion of total developed country imports \(by value and excluding arms\) from developing countries and from LDCs, admitted free of duty](#)

[39. Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries](#)

[40. Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as percentage of their GDP](#)

[41. Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity](#)

Target 15. Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term

Indicators

[44. Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services](#)

Target 16. In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth

Indicators

[45. Unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 years, each sex and total](#)

Target 17. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries (*no Pacific country data available*)

Indicators

46. *Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis*

Target 18. In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

Indicators

47. *Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population*

48. *Personal computers in use per 100 population and Internet users per 100 population*

ANNEX II

PROGRESS OF THE PACIFIC REGIONAL STRATEGY ON HIV/AIDS (Paper presented by SPC at the Pacific Islands Forum Officials Committee 2005)

Note: The HIV/AIDS Pacific Regional Strategy Implementation Plan will itself also be tabled at the Conference meeting. It is too large to include in this paper.

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this paper is to report on the development and implementation of the *Pacific Regional Strategy (PRS) on HIV/AIDS (2004-2008)*.

BACKGROUND

2. In 2002, HIV/AIDS was discussed for the first time at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting, where it was acknowledged as a development issue that could have devastating impact on the economies, societies and security of the region. In August 2003, leaders again discussed HIV/AIDS and called for a regional strategy to be developed in time for consideration by the 2004 Forum Leaders Meeting. A regional HIV/AIDS initiative supported by the Australian and French governments commenced in January 2004, with the strategy being endorsed at the 2004 Forum Leaders Meeting.
3. HIV/AIDS is a pervasive threat to the Pacific, with prevalence continuing to expand. Data obtained from 18 of 22 Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) as of December 2004, indicates over 10,000 confirmed HIV/AIDS cases in the Pacific (see Attachment 1). Given these data, while the *Pacific Regional Strategy Implementation Plan (PRSIP)* is still being finalised (inception meeting scheduled for September 2005), it is important to note that numerous interventions contained within the PRSIP are being concurrently undertaken while the plan is finalised.
4. Implementation has been impeded in the first half of 2005 by the exceedingly high-level demands placed on countries and regional agencies in respect to re-negotiating the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) Round 2 Phase II proposal and developing an extended proposal for Round 5. With these issues now addressed, an increase in implementation efforts to stymie the spread of HIV/AIDS in the region is taking place.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS – COMPONENT 1: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

5. The Asia Pacific Leadership Forum (APLF) on HIV/AIDS and Development has been appointed as the lead agency to manage the Pacific Leaders Champions Program. In October 2004, more than 60 Pacific parliamentarians gathered in Suva to discuss and deliberate on their role in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the region. The outcome of the meeting was the signing of the “Suva Declaration on the role of the Parliamentarian against HIV/AIDS in the Pacific”. The declaration saw leaders commit to enhancing their involvement in the areas of advocacy, legislation and resource mobilization. The recent establishment of a position to oversee the implementation of the APLF program, has increased capacity to expand these initiatives. For example, an initial Leadership Mobilisation workshop for 10 countries is shortly to be conducted by the UNDP in conjunction with UNAIDS. Additionally, individual advocacy plans for Champions have been commenced and under the auspices of UNAIDS, development of an advocacy plan for the Pacific completed.
6. Since the endorsement of the PRS a number of regional meetings have incorporated HIV/AIDS in their meeting agendas: (a) November 2004 (Conference of Representatives of Governments & Administrations, Noumea, New Caledonia) – progress against areas identified in the PRS and the need to support and strengthen coordination in the region; (b) March 2005 (Pacific Health Ministers Meeting, Apia, Samoa) – progress in the 3x5 initiatives of WHO and development of partnerships by SPC; and (c) April 2005 (National Planners and Statistician Meeting, Noumea, New Caledonia) – presentation of HIV/AIDS as a “hidden epidemic” in the region in conjunction with the Demography Section of SPC.
7. Through the Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Project (PRHP), country supervisory visits have been undertaken to provide technical support to update national HIV/AIDS strategic plans and access funds for implementation. Nine Pacific Island Countries (PICs – Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) have national HIV/AIDS strategic plans. With the exception of Fiji and Vanuatu, the plans were at least five years old and required updating. The Solomon Islands (Nov 2004) and Kiribati (March 2005) have developed new five-year HIV/AIDS strategic plans. Similarly, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) has commenced this process (April 2005).
8. The PRHP Grants Scheme aims to provide access to funds that will contribute to the development and implementation of multi-sectoral national HIV/AIDS strategic plans. The first round of the Competitive Grants Program received 27 proposals from eight countries. Applications were assessed by the Independent Grants Assessment Panel (IGAP), with 12 proposals approved (Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and a joint multi-country Cooks-FSM proposal) to the value of A\$1.3 million. These programs will support the functions of National AIDS Councils (or their equivalent), ensure a local response to the identified priorities and enable effective scaling up of the HIV/AIDS response at the country level by providing support to a wider range of organisations.
9. Second Generation Surveillance (SGS) involving the assessment of knowledge and behavioural factors in high-risk vulnerable groups e.g. sex workers and commercial seafarers, has been completed in six countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu). Training to refine the SGS mechanism and systems has been undertaken, with the resulting data informing specific interventions for these groups. The SGS data systems will be shortly extended to other countries.
10. UNAIDS has completed a review of HIV/AIDS related legislation in nine countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, Cook Islands, RMI, PNG, Samoa, Solomon and Vanuatu). Further reviews are currently being contracted and will be progressively undertaken in the remaining countries.

11. Training to develop a HIV/AIDS workplace code has commenced in Fiji through the International Labour Organisation (ILO), with a rollout to other countries scheduled upon completion.

12. Through the PRHP and in partnership with Capacity Development Organisations (CDOs) in eight PICs, first level training has been conducted on the design and management of effective HIV responses. Higher-level HIV project design and management (PDM) workshops to reinforce the important role of participants in implementing their national HIV/AIDS strategic plans were subsequently conducted in Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Approximately 80 participants from NGOs, faith-based organisations, CDOs and government organisations participated in the PDM workshops. The workshops will be progressively undertaken in other countries as national HIV/AIDS strategic plans are updated.

13. The AIDS Ambassadors program, managed by PIAF, is a unique and innovative initiative for the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Pacific Islands. The success of the program has been confirmed by the on-going and numerous requests from various groups to include interventions from AIDS Ambassadors in their awareness activities. It is also seen in the positive response from the different audiences approached. Through the existing two AIDS Ambassadors, a further 10 HIV positive participants have been trained. The program will be expanded to involve two more countries once the training has been completed. PIAF has also collected feedback from local organisations that have assisted the 'AIDS Ambassadors Outreach program'. The multimedia package (radio, print, video) entitled Positive Lives: "The Faces and Voices of HIV" was launched during World AIDS Day in Fiji. PIAF is now planning distribution and publicity of the package.

14. The World Council of Churches in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have conducted a series of workshops reviewing the theological training curricula for South Pacific Association Theological Schools (SPATS) with respect to inclusion of HIV/AIDS issues. In June 2005, the last of these workshops was conducted in Fiji to finalize a curriculum on HIV/AIDS for theological schools. It is intended that this curriculum will be taught in the 25 member schools of the Pacific theological colleges. This will help church leaders become part of the efforts to fight HIV/AIDS in the context of moral values, religion and culture. The document will become a useful tool in teaching future church leaders and pastors on issues of HIV/AIDS and how the church should take up the challenge to teach HIV/AIDS with linkages to biblical teachings.

15. Collaboration between WHO, UNICEF, PRHP, SPC and the GFATM has resulted in the conduct of a regional training workshop to strengthen the capacity of professionals to care and support People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). The three-part training program consisted of: a) a week long training workshop in Suva for all participants; b) networking for core teams from each country consisting of physicians, nurses, midwives, counsellors, PLWHA and representatives of relevant NGOs, from five PICs (Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu); and c) clinical attachments for physicians, obstetricians, gynaecologists and midwives at hospitals and clinics that provide HIV/AIDS treatment and care in Australia and New Zealand. A total of 10 clinicians have been trained – three obstetricians, three midwives and four physicians.

16. These core teams then implement their specific care, treatment and support action plans at the country level. This initiative on HIV/AIDS treatment and care represents a significant achievement in collaboration among regional organisations and programs. Agencies/projects pooled resources to deliver the training program, resulting in a better outcome for PICs than any of the agencies/projects could have achieved individually. At a meeting to review the training program, coalition members endorsed extension of the training to other countries and expanding the collaborative approach to additional areas of capacity strengthening such as HIV counselling.

17. National-level Behaviour Change and Communication (BCC) workshops were conducted in Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Samoa and Solomon Islands. Close collaboration with the Suva-based PRHP team has enabled BCC workshops to follow and consolidate on the PDM workshops.
18. In collaboration with Wan Smol Bag (WSB) and the GFATM, a generic regional CD-ROM resource focusing on youth and risky sexual behaviours has been developed ("Mr Right Guy"). Following evaluation, focus testing and feedback 'The ABCD's of HIV/AIDS' (originally developed for the Palau arts festival 2004) and small myth/fact cards have been reviewed and re-printed. Resources are being provided in printed and electronic form to countries, agencies and individuals upon request (enabling easier translation into vernaculars as well as multi-use e.g. for local presentations). The resources are distributed as part of the surveys conducted for the SGS program.
19. Supported through GFATM, a team of experts in the region compiled a training manual on STI clinical management for PICs based on the WHO guidelines. The manual is being piloted in five countries (Kiribati, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu). Following the training, materials will be finalized and extended to incorporate other countries.
20. An inaugural Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing (VCCT) program has been conducted for Fiji. Significantly, this program has incorporated both sexually transmitted infection (STI) and TB Managers, which is particularly important in respect to HIV/TB co-infection. Extension of this approach to other countries will be progressively rolled-out.
21. Laboratory training on testing procedures, screening and quality control to ensure blood safety prior to transfusion, have been conducted through WHO and GFATM in Kiribati and Tuvalu.
22. Policies to Prevent Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) were assessed in seven countries (Kiribati, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). Based on this initial assessment training supported by UNICEF, WHO, FSMed and UNFPA was conducted and incorporated into the subsequent training for care, treatment and support as previously discussed.
23. Training and technical support (building on regional training – see 16) has been provided by WHO in collaboration with UNICEF, GFATM and PRHP for core teams at the country level consisting of a physician, obstetrician, nurse counsellor, midwife, PLWHA and NGO representative. Priority countries involved in this foundation work have been Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga & Tuvalu. Further follow-up is being conducted incountry by WHO to strengthen care, treatment and support frameworks. This initiative will be shortly expanded to a further four countries in the next 12 months.
24. A regular monthly notification by WHO on pre-qualified Anti-retrovirals (ARVs) to countries and regional partners is being distributed electronically to country representatives on the regional HIV/AIDS Technical Working Group (TWG). This will assist countries in decisions regarding selection of suppliers from which to procure ARVs and other HIV medicines.
25. With support of the GFATM and in collaboration with the Fiji Ministry of Health, Fiji Pharmaceutical Services (FPS) has been strengthened to provide a central ARV procurement mechanism for the region. A pharmacist position funded by the GFATM, has been established at FPS to commence this work. With support of WHO, further training and skilling of this officer has been undertaken to ensure appropriate, adequate and timely provision of ARVs regionally.

26. To further develop surveillance and response capacity, funds have been provided via the GFATM to increase staffing and improve equipment at Maitaka House in Fiji, in its move to become an accredited level two laboratory facility.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS – COMPONENT 3: REGIONAL COORDINATION

27. The regional communications strategy on HIV/AIDS has been developed and implemented via the Pacific AIDS Alert (PASA), AIDSTOK email list and updating of the regional HIV/AIDS directory.

28. A meeting of Key Focal Points (KFP) was conducted in Suva (April 2005), to further identify the existing resources and gaps. Following the KFP meeting, an informal meeting with development and other partners was held to report on implementation progress and to outline the need to seek additional resources to support implementation. On-going prioritisation of areas for support is required given the need to increase funding to fill existing resource gaps.

29. Submissions for Round 2 phase II funding under the GFATM have been completed with contract negotiations finalised. Funding for Phase II (commenced July 1, 2005) was reduced on the basis of the GFATM review of Phase I to \$2,127,925 – a shortfall of \$1,149,075 on the original proposal. However, on a positive note a further submission under GFATM Round 5 has been submitted and extends the countries involved to 14 - inclusive of American Samoa, Nauru and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Clarification of the outcome of the Round 5 bid is expected in early October.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS – COMPONENT 4: PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

30. Following endorsement of the PRS in August 2004 by the Forum Leaders, an initial implementation plan was developed in consultation with countries and regional organizations in December 2004. Additional refinement occurred via the Regional Strategy Reference Group (RSRG) and other regional partners in February 2005.

31. The HIV/AIDS Adviser presented the working version of the PRSIP to the SPC executive. Salient points relating to management of the implementation plan and increasing SPC's capacity to do so, were raised and discussed. To ensure effective management and monitoring of the implementation program, it was agreed that further positions within the SPC HIV Section would be established and funded in line with the PRSIP. This included a short-term support officer to enhance organisational capacity and a long term HIV/STI Specialist position to add further strength in the area of HIV medicine (principally Component 2 of the PRSIP).

32. A meeting of Key Focal Points (KFP) consolidated the alignment of required activities with the existing regional initiatives. Significantly, a number of regional partners identified areas that can be supported and incorporated into their work plans, thereby enhancing regional coverage and collaboration. Agencies included APLF, FSMed, ILO, PIAF, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFem, USP and WHO.

33. To further enhance coordination, a PRSIP Regional Coordination Group (PRCG) jointly chaired by the SPC and UNAIDS as the two focal points for the region, is being established. Country and implementing partners along with a representative from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat will aim to manage the overall coordination of HIV/AIDS initiatives in the region, monitor and review the PRSIP. Arrangements for the PRCG are to be finalised at the upcoming round of meetings scheduled for September.

34. The longer term implementation plan (PRSIP) and a joint annual work plan by regional partners, will be finalised at the September inception meeting for the PRS (a summary of outcomes will be available prior to the Forum meeting). Through the process of developing the GFATM Round 5 submission and refining the PRSIP, a number of gaps in available funding for key and demonstrably effective interventions were identified, predominantly within Component 2 (e.g. scaling up VCCT services, aggressively addressing STI diagnosis and treatment, enhancing PMCTC services, intensive work with high-risk and vulnerable groups, and condom advocacy, distribution and social marketing). Importantly, steps have been taken to address these gaps and ensure that funds are available to support action in these areas. Furthermore, while partnerships and coalitions between existing organisations have been consolidated and expanded, the potential involvement of the Asian Development Bank in the PRSIP will also be of additional benefit in addressing resource gaps.

35. The draft M&E framework developed in December 2004 is currently being piloted in a number of countries. The Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (MERG) will receive these results to further assess the utility of the M&E framework and make necessary refinements. To ensure coverage of key implementation indicators, the results will be assessed in light of the revised PRSIP and annual joint work plan that will be confirmed at the September inception meeting.

CONCLUSION

36. Over the past 12 months, there has been significant progress on finalising and implementing the PRSIP. However, although the plan remains to be finalised, it is important to ensure that flexibility within the PRSIP is available to ensure optimal implementation. As a “living document” the PRSIP must be responsive to changes in circumstances and aim to address critical issues as they arise through well-developed and strategic mechanisms including the PRSIP Co-ordination Group and MERG.

37. Considerable continuing efforts are required to restrict the explosion of HIV/AIDS in the Pacific. The PRSIP provides the structure to effectively address this threat to our health, social and economic situation in the Pacific. Crucial to this on-going offensive against HIV/AIDS is strong leadership and the political commitment of countries. SPC and relevant regional stakeholders are now in a position to fully implement the PRSIP over the next 12 months and looks forward to reporting on the major impacts of the PRS at the next SPC governing council meeting and the Forum meeting in 2006.

Cumulative reported HIV, AIDS & AIDS death cases and HIV crude incidence rates per 100,000 population Pacific Islands Countries and Territories, New Zealand & Australia (31st December 2004 or date specified)

Country	As at Dec 2004	HIV cases (including AIDS cases)	Mid year population(June2004)	Cumulative HIV incidence rate per 100,000 (95% CIs)	AIDS Cases + (AIDS related deaths)	Male (HIV including AIDS)	Female (HIV including AIDS)	Unknown (HIV including AIDS)
MELANESIA		10,645	7,444,100	143.0 (140.3 to 145.7)	1,956 (422)	5,336	4,893	416
Fiji Islands	Dec 2004	182	836,000	21.8 (18.6 to 24.9)	25* (17*)	109	73	0
New Caledonia	Dec 2004	272	236,900	114.8 (101.2 to 128.5)	101 (50)	200	69	3
Papua New Guinea	Sep 2004	10,184	5,695,300	178.8 (175.3 to 182.3)	1,843 (353)	5,025	4,746	413
Solomon Islands	Dec 2004	5	460,100	1.1 (0.4 to 2.5)	2 (2)	2	3	0
Vanuatu	Dec 2004	2	215,800	0.9 (0.1 to 3.3)	2 (0)	0	2	0
MICRONESIA	Dec 2004	284	536,100	53.0 (46.8 to 59.1)	149 (109)	211	69	4
Federated States of Micronesia	Dec 2004	25	112,700	22.2 (14.4 to 32.7)	15 (12)	14	11	0
Guam	Dec 2004	168	166,100	101.1 (85.9 to 116.4)	97 (67)	145	23	0
Kiribati	Dec 2004	46	93,100	49.4 (36.2 to 65.9)	28 (23)	30	16	0
Marshall Islands	Dec 2004	10	55,400	18.1 (8.7 to 33.2)	2 (2)	3	3	4
Nauru	Dec 2004	2	10,100	19.8 (2.4 to 71.5)	1 (1)	2	0	0
Northern Mariana Islands	Dec 2004	25	78,000	32.1 (20.7 to 47.3)	2 (1)	12	13	0
Palau	Dec 2004	8	20,700	38.6 (16.7 to 76.1)	4 (3)	5	3	0
POLYNESIA	Dec 2004	283	635,750	44.5 (39.3 to 49.7)	111 (77)	202	81	0
American Samoa	Dec 2004	3	62,600	4.8 (1.0 to 14.0)	1 (0)	2	1	0
Cook Islands	Dec 2004	2	14,000	14.3 (1.7 to 51.6)	0 (0)	1	1	0
French Polynesia	Dec 2004	243	250,500	97.0 (84.8 to 109.2)	90 (59)	175	68	0
Niue	Dec 2004	0	1,600	-	0 (0)	0	0	0
Pitcairn Islands	Dec 2004	0	50	-	0 (0)	0	0	0
Samoa	Dec 2004	12	182,700	6.6 (3.4 to 11.5)	8 (8)	8	4	0
Tokelau Islands	Dec 2004	0	1,500	-	0 (0)	0	0	0
Tonga	Dec 2004	13	98,300	13.2 (7.0 to 22.6)	9 (8)	7	6	0
Tuvalu	Dec 2004	9	9,600	93.8 (42.9 to 178.0)	2 (2)	8	1	0
Wallis and Futuna	Dec 2004	1	14,900	6.7 (0.2 to 37.4)	1 (0)	1	0	0
All PICTs	Dec 2004	11,212	8,615,950	130.1 (127.7 to 132.5)	2,216 (608)	5,749	5,043	420
All PICTs (excluding PNG)	Dec 2004	1,028	2,920,650	35.2 (33.0 to 37.3)	373 (255)	724	297	7
New Zealand	Dec 2004	1,975	3,993,817	49.5 (47.3 to 51.6)	845 (607)	1,657	300	18
Australia	Dec 2003	23,306	19,731,984	118.1 (116.6 to 119.6)	9,260 (4,521)	21,476	1,510	260

ANNEX III

PACIFIC HEALTH FUND – TAKING THE CONCEPT FURTHER

Note: This paper will be tabled at the meeting.

ANNEX IV

INFLUENZA PANDEMIC THREAT & INFLUENZA PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS PLANNING IN THE PICTS – OVERVIEW AND UPDATE

1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF INFLUENZA PANDEMICS: PACIFIC PERSPECTIVE

Influenza, commonly referred to as just “flu”, may be the oldest and/or the most common illness known to the human race. Hippocrates first described an influenza-like illness in 412 BC, and Hirsch recorded the first influenza-like outbreaks in 1173 AD. Since the first well-described influenza pandemic in 1580, about 31 pandemic-like outbreaks have been recorded. In the twentieth century, there have been three substantial global pandemics: the “Spanish flu” (1918) by A(H1N1), “Asian flu” (1957) by A(H2N2), and “Hong Kong flu” (1968) by A(H3N2) and a benign pandemic of “Russian flu” (1977) by A(H1N1).

When the Spanish flu hit the globe in 1918, no one knew what organisms caused it. The human influenza virus was first isolated and identified in 1933, around the same time as the swine virus was isolated. The 1918 flu pandemic is the worst recorded, claiming more than 50 million people worldwide within 12 months. In mortality it is second only to that recorded for the Black Death Bubonic Plague from 1347–1351.

The origin of the Spanish flu has been debated, but it was not Spain. However, when it reached Spain, it recorded the highest number of deaths within the shortest period of time (in May 1918), and the “early affliction and large mortalities allegedly killed 8 million people.” Despite China being referred to as the “hypothetical epicentre” for influenza pandemics, Spanish flu claimed its first victims at Camp Funston, Kansas, USA, in March 1918.

The pandemic occurred in three waves: the first was from May to July 1918 and was less virulent than the second wave. The second wave claimed most lives globally during September to December 1918. The third wave was February to April 1919, with not many deaths recorded compared to the previous waves. Spanish flu spread around the world in a space of few months “carried with great rapidity along ocean shipping lanes, by railways, rivers and road systems.” It left trails of sickness and deaths, more than ever recorded before, but “nowhere were its ravages more devastating than the South Pacific.”

The deadly voyage of SS Talune

On 12 October 1918, the SS Niagara, a Canadian-Australian Royal Mail liner, anchored in Auckland from Vancouver. This was two weeks before the departure of the SS Talune, a regular steamship to the South Pacific from Auckland. SS Niagara had on board a large number of sick passengers and crew, and others had died from influenza only days after leaving Vancouver. The “25 very serious ones” were admitted to Auckland Hospital, while “forty eight were left on board and isolated...”. Influenza was not a notifiable disease in 1918, and the ship could not be quarantined. This should not have been an excuse to ignore the Spanish flu, however, as it had already been affecting Europe, parts of Asia and the USA since May 1918, some four to five months earlier.

On 30 October 1918, the SS Talune was passed to sail with a clean bill. The evidence showing that it was to leave “deaths and destruction in its wake” was “powerful.” The ship called at ports in Samoa, Fiji Islands, and later on Tonga and Nauru, carrying goods as well as influenza stricken people already on board. On 7 November 1918, the vessel anchored in Apia, and “... within a matter of days influenza was rampant. Morbidity rates were generally estimated at over 90 percent. As a result social and economic life collapsed completely.” In less than two months, there were more than 7,542 deaths, about 25% of Samoa’s total population. This included 30% of adult men, 22% of adult women and 10% of all children in Samoa. This included 45% of matai and 20% of faipule. The Sydney Daily Telegraph reported, “Troopers (relief efforts) with their motor-trucks are doing wonderful service day after day gathering up the dead, who are simply lifted out of their houses as they lie on their sleeping-mats. The mats are wrapped around them, and they are deposited in one great pit at Vaimea.” This scenario was an appalling one for the Pacific, and we must determine never to allow it to be repeated.

Except in Tahiti, the death tolls in the other island countries and territories were not as high as that of Samoa, with 5% (9,000) of Fiji Islands’ total population, 16% of Tonga’s, and 6% of Nauru’s. The military transport ship Logan arrived in Guam from Manila late in October 1918, carrying influenza-affected passengers. Between 7 November and 9 December 1918, about 5% of Guam’s total population died of influenza. When Tahiti was hit by an influenza epidemic in 1943, claimed to have been brought in by steamer from USA, the Pacific Island Monthly (September 1943) referred to the Spanish flu of “1918 in Tahiti as the memorable and devastating influenza epidemic which took away one-fourth of the population.” The Tahitians argued that the Spanish flu was “under a false name” — it should have been called the “pneumonic plague” because of the seriousness of pneumonia complications that killed people by “drowning them in their own sputum.” But because it was called influenza, it was not a notifiable disease and therefore did not require the boats or ships to be quarantined.

Around the world, the major subgroup affected by the Spanish flu was generally the healthy young adult population of 20–50-year-olds. In the United States, the mortality rates for “15–34-year olds at the time was more than 20 percent.” This was an unusual group pattern for influenza morbidity and mortality as this group generally has normal immune systems, in comparison to the commonly affected age-groups for influenza illness, young children and elderly people.

The escape from the “Spanish lady”

American Samoa was spared the ravages of the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic due to “...the commendable foresight, inspired guesswork and individual initiative” of its governor, Navy Commander John Poyer. After reading the Press Wireless, Poyer instituted a strict maritime quarantine policy which the natives supported by “mounting shore patrol to repulse fugitives from stricken islands nearby.”

Australia was minimally affected at the initial stages of the 1918 Spanish flu because of strict maritime quarantine measures. The epidemic of Spanish flu claimed 11,500 lives by the end of 1919 with 60% between 20–45 years of age, probably by transmission from New Zealand. Because Australia’s maritime quarantine policy extended equally to outgoing ships, and its steamships were exclusively servicing the islands of the Gilbert and Ellice groups (now Kiribati and Tuvalu), New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), Norfolk and the Solomon Islands, these island countries were spared, too.

American Samoa’s naval government’s strict maritime quarantine policy was criticized as draconian when permission was refused to offload mailbags from a Western Samoa ship. It is salutary that “sacrifice of individual liberty for the societal good” might be the answer for such times, during a substantial pandemic.

2. THE CURRENT THREAT

Since December 2003 as to the 20th of October 2005, the epidemic of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) A/H5N1 has been spreading in South-East Asia among bird populations, has affected at least 115 humans of which 50% have died, and expands now outside this region with migratory birds.

The danger of this situation is not the current morbidity and mortality among humans, quite minimal per se at this stage, but the increasing probability, with the geographical spread of the HPAI, of the virus becoming adapted to inter-human transmission: either by mixing its genetic material with another influenza A virus already circulating in the human population, or through successive passages of the virus in people, allowing for adaptive mutations. As this will be a new virus, nobody will be immune against it, and starting a world-wide epidemic (“pandemic”) will start. We can’t foresee how virulent this virus will be in reality but we can have an idea with what happened during the previous pandemics, and use mathematical modeling to give us some figures. There will be millions of deaths worldwide (around 4,500 for the PI region itself) if the mortality rate is comparable to the one during the last two pandemics. But a mortality rate similar to the one of the Spanish flu could give more than 200,000 deaths in the PI region itself.

Influenza spread very easily (much easier than SARS). Our public health resources to fight an influenza pandemic can be summarized as follows:

- The pharmaceutical public health interventions, with vaccination being the best one, but it will take around 6 months for developing and producing vaccines. Antivirals, still to be considered for targeted interventions during the pandemic, are also expensive and of limited availability. Their usefulness may be limited too because of some possible resistance of the virus.
- The non-pharmaceutical public health interventions (e.g. limitation of travels and gatherings, masks for symptomatic people, frequent hand washing) which might delay the spread of the pandemic and allow countries to more easily face the spread by flattening the pandemic curve.

3. THE PACIFIC RESPONSE

Non-specific to influenza pandemic preparedness

The Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN) was created in 1996, with, as priorities, epidemic communicable diseases of international public health importance. Subsequently it developed and organized services for early warning and communication (PacNet), laboratory confirmation (LabNet) and response including investigation (EpiNet): see PPHSN website at <http://www.spc.int/phs/PPHSN/>.

Nowadays, all PICTs have a national/territorial multidisciplinary EpiNet team established. One PICT has EpiNet teams at sub-national level (state level in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSMic)). Some countries have a Communicable Disease Committee or Task Force, usually bigger than (and including) the EpiNet team (but heavier in operational terms).

Specifically regarding Influenza Pandemic Preparedness

In 2002, after a sub-regional meeting of the PPHSN, the creation of an Influenza Specialist Group (ISG) was recommended, with the priority objective of producing a pandemic action plan that each country could use as an example to develop their own plan.

In 2003, the SARS epidemic marked the world. After the epidemic, there was a fear that SARS would re-emerge during the northern hemisphere influenza season (winter), or even the concomitant emergence of an influenza pandemic. Given the similarity of symptoms for both diseases (fever and cough), this would make the situation confused and difficult to address. In September, during the regional EpiNet workshop “Building on the SARS experience – preparing PPHSN for emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases”, the ISG was created, with clear Terms of Reference and membership¹⁵. The ADB accepted to support the PPHSN in the SARS “RETA”¹⁶ context.

In 2004, as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 spread in Asia, with cases in humans and other mammals, the fear of a pandemic virus emergence grows. In June, SPC and WHO organized a regional EpiNet workshop “PPHSN Preparedness for Influenza and other Potential Threats like Dengue and SARS” with, as a result, the planning of PPHSN guidelines and in-country support activities. Thanks to ADB support to the PPHSN, the ADB consultant to the PPHSN in collaboration with the ISG, developed the PPHSN Guidelines for Influenza control (epidemic and pandemic) and undertook seven visits to PICTs for the purpose of awareness raising and preparedness planning.

In 2005, more H5N1 human cases are reported and HPAI increases its geographical spread. In March, the WHO/SPC meeting of the Ministers of Health in Samoa recommended in the Samoa Commitment “Achieving Healthy Islands” that:

“PPHSN, including WHO, SPC and other partners, should continue to provide technical support to assist countries and territories to develop and implement national pandemic preparedness plans. At national level a multisectoral task force including civil society should be established to develop a national pandemic preparedness plan. Where possible there should be involvement of the national disease preparedness group and linkage with the national disaster preparedness plan. Community participation and mobilization should be ensured. The development of the pandemic preparedness plan should be multisectoral, be led or coordinated by the Ministry of Health and should be developed based on existing plans and mechanisms.”

Still in 2005, WHO published the Global Influenza Preparedness Plan, with a new pandemic phase classification.

¹⁵ Fiji (incl. Fiji Mataika House), New Caledonia Pasteur Institute, WHO Influenza Collaborating Centre in Melbourne, WHO (WPRO & Suva office), Samoa, SPC and Tonga

¹⁶ Regional Emergency Technical Assistance

The PPHSN activities started in 2003/2004 continue with:

1. Support/technical advice to PICTs from
 - CDC (project for strengthening influenza surveillance and beginning of PEHI¹⁷ participation to influenza preparedness planning)
 - SPC
 - WHO
2. The search for funds for Technical Assistance to help accelerating the preparedness process
3. ADB support: continuation of infection control strengthening started under SARS.

Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Planning – Current situation

As on mid-October 2005, the following PICTs are known to have at least initiated the planning process: CMNI, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, FSMic, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Palau, Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu, and five draft pandemic plans have been reported.

Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Planning – Next steps

Although the planning process has progressed in the above PICTs, there is a need to clearly and effectively involve other sectors in the process, finalise the planning process, and have the plan officially endorsed by the government and tested. The provision of expert advice to achieve a stronger preparedness level is important and requested by many PICTs. A national/territorial testing exercise to evaluate the plan is also crucial, and would need to be supported. PICTs other than those mentioned above will benefit from a much more proactive approach from the regional agencies to initiate their planning.

As well, some public health response options need to be discussed and strategically addressed at the regional level of the PPHSN (e.g. travel limitation, access to antivirals and vaccines).

More broadly, an influenza pandemic is caused an emerging virus, and is clearly a public health emergency of international concern, therefore has to be seen in the context of the new Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and the new International Health Regulations. The PPHSN has a key role to play with regards to these developments and their implementation, especially with regards to national and regional capacity building.

¹⁷ CDC's Pacific Emergency Health Initiative

ANNEX V

**SPC POLICY BRIEF ON THE STATUS OF REGIONAL TUNA FISHERIES
AND THEIR IMPACTS**

Note: This paper will be tabled at the meeting.

This Brief is also available on the SPC website at
www.spc.int/mrd/brief/1-tunastock.pdf

ANNEX VI

DEEP-SEA TRAWLING, SEAMOUNTS AND MANAGEMENT OF THE HIGH SEAS

(Briefing prepared by SPC and FFA)

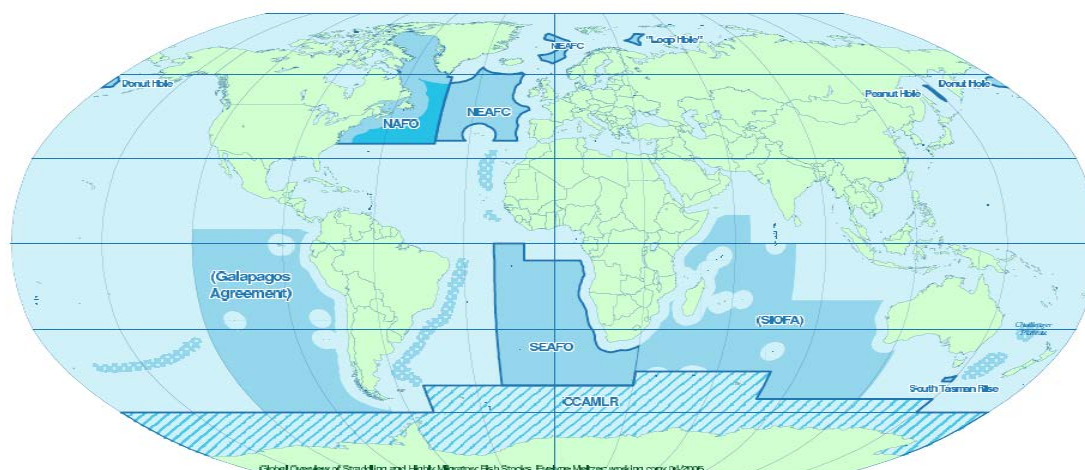
PURPOSE OF PAPER

1. At the recent pre-Forum Officials Committee meeting it was requested that the Forum Fisheries Agency and Secretariat of the Pacific Community's Marine Resource Division collaborate to provide a technical briefing to Forum, to supplement a presentation to be made to the Forum by the President of Palau regarding trawling.
2. This is a short summary briefing, and does not attempt to provide all of the background information, nor does it firmly recommend a particular course of action, but presents several alternatives for consideration by Forum.

THE ISSUE

3. For several years now, a head of steam has been building up within the international community for action to be taken on a suite of related fisheries issues:-

- To alleviate or mitigate **effects on the seabed from bottom-trawling**;
- To **protect seamount ecosystems**, which recent research shows are comparatively rich in endemic species - species which are only found in small areas of the world - and which are vulnerable to bottom-fishing particularly in unregulated high seas areas beyond the jurisdiction of national exclusive economic zones;
- To fill **gaps in jurisdiction over fisheries on the high seas**. The UN Convention on Law of the Sea and subsidiary agreements provides for the possibility of managing high seas fisheries, but these powers have to be activated through specific regional agreements between coastal states and any fishing states. Although most of the world ocean, including high seas, is now covered by agreements for the management and control of regional fisheries for highly migratory fish stocks (particularly tuna), there remain notable gaps in the management regime for straddling stocks, including most species bottom-trawled on the high seas (see map).



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

4. These issues have been raised at the last few sessions of the annual UN Informal Consultation on Oceans and Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS), and in November 2004 were also considered by the UN General Assembly as part of its resolution on Fisheries, which, amongst other things, "*Calls upon States urgently to cooperate in the establishment of new regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements, where necessary and appropriate, with the competence to regulate bottom fisheries and the impacts of fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems in areas where no such relevant organization or arrangement exists*".

5. Australia and New Zealand in June 2005 at UNICPOLOS announced their intention to convene an international process that would result in an agreement to manage straddling stocks (and thus effectively provide the legal basis for managing high seas trawling) in the Southern Pacific Ocean, and this was subsequently supported by several other countries. The first conference is expected to take place early in 2006. This process is expected to result in a new Regional Fisheries Management Organisation, operating in conformity with the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, to conserve and manage straddling stocks of fish in the southern ocean, south of the Tropic of Capricorn and north of the northern boundary of the Council for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). It will primarily regulate deepsea trawling. There is already some fishing in this area and, without limits or guidelines being agreed, this has the potential to be damaging to the southern ocean fisheries ecosystem. Most countries can effectively control vessels flying their flag when they are operating on the high seas in areas where regional fisheries conventions operate, but in this area there is no agreed regime covering straddling stocks subject to bottom-trawling.

6. This Southern arrangement will not cover the tropical Pacific. Indeed, the tropical Pacific raises a very different set of questions in relation to bottom-trawling and straddling stocks and is best considered separately.

EXTENT OF TRAWLING IN THE TROPICAL PACIFIC REGION

7. Based on the informal regional oversight of both FFA and SPC, stretching back for 50 years, there does not yet appear to be any commercial trawling on high seas of the Western Tropical Pacific region. Several commercial and government trials have been made over the years with uniformly discouraging results. So far, the cost of operations exceeds the value of any catch that might be brought up in the tropical Pacific, and bottom trawling on the deep sea bed requires both a high capital outlay and high degree of skill and experience. The main commercial species that is targeted on the deep ocean bed to the immediate south of the tropical region is Orange Roughy, and this species has been prospected regularly in the tropical Pacific without success. Species related to Orange Roughy are present in the tropics, but these are not currently of high enough commercial value to outweigh the cost of fishing the deep ocean.

8. In shallower coastal waters, trawling has never been a fishing method of choice in most of the Forum Island membership because of the nature of the seabed. Tropical lagoons and reef slopes contain a lot of hard coral, and coral rips nets. The only places where shallower-water trawling has proved possible are in areas subject to a high sediment load, particularly opposite large river mouths, and on large continental shelves.

9. Another potential fishery where trawling has been attempted is deepwater snapper. These valuable tropical reef slope and seamount species are found between 50 and 350 metres depth in limited quantities, and are fished mainly by hook and line methods, producing a high quality product for export as fresh, chilled fish. Because the fishery, like most deeper seabed fisheries, is fragile, overfishing has been known to occur. One Pacific Island country, with the agreement of the fishing community, has even gone to the extent of proposing prohibiting fishing for these species by any sort of gear apart from hook and line on hand-operated reels - a method that keeps this high-quality export fishery from being overfished with a minimum of government expense, and with considerable spread of financial benefits across the small-scale fisheries sector. However, these shallower-water (in ocean-bed trawling terms) species are high enough in value to make it worthwhile to occasionally run a trawl over the top of a seamount within national EEZs, despite the damage to nets.

10. We will not attempt to evaluate the intrinsic “validity” of trawling as a fishing method in this briefing, but would simply note that all bottom-trawling has some effect on the seabed - although its impacts will differ depending on the type of seabed. Trawling is also less selective than most other fishing gears - it tends to generate more bycatch - although this, again, will depend on the fishery and be less of a worry in temperate waters where bottomfish move in large schools, than in tropical waters. Bottom-trawling the deep ocean floor, like realizing the value of seafloor polymetallic nodules, is expensive compared to the possible value of the product, and likely to be out of reach of industry, particularly Pacific Island domestic industry, for some considerable time.

11. Because bottom-trawling does not yet pose a particular problem to the oceanic Pacific Islands region - a region which has several other weighty fisheries problems already on its plate - it is likely that Forum members have not felt any pressing need for action on a issue which is of current concern to the international community for its impacts in temperate and continental shelf waters.

12. There are however particular risks associated with trawling, even one-off prospecting trawling, on the tops of seamounts, both the risk of damaging sustainable small-scale hook and line fisheries, and the risk of endangering species which may occur in only one place in the world. In that respect, seamounts are very much like Pacific Islands themselves - environmentally vulnerable.

POTENTIAL RESPONSES

13. SPC has maintained a watch on this issue for several years, including briefings to the 2004 SPC Heads of Fisheries and SPC governing council meetings. Also, the Government of New Zealand briefed the Ministerial Forum Fisheries Committee in 2005 on their intention to co-convene a process to develop a management regime for straddling stocks in the Southern Pacific Ocean.

14. As mentioned in the introduction, the issue is building a head of steam at the international level, and it would be beneficial from several points of view if the Pacific Islands region were to take definite action, under international law, to set in place an agreement to conserve and manage straddling stocks in the western tropical Pacific region, and thus plug one of the remaining gaps in the governance of global high seas.

15 The development of international agreements is not cheap. The process that led to setting up the office of the Secretariat of the Western and Central Pacific Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks¹⁸ in Pohnpei took over 10 years, with at least one Multilateral High Level Consultation per year followed by Preparatory Conferences at least annually.

16. However it should be noted that this laborious process was for a tuna fishery where there was a 30-year history of differing interpretation and dispute between coastal states and fishing nations. According to information currently to hand there is no commercial distant-water trawling in the tropical Pacific region and thus there are effectively no fishing nations. It is likely to be possible to rapidly come to agreement between Coastal States of the tropical Pacific region on a framework Convention for the Conservation and Management of Straddling Stocks in the region, based on the templates provided by the South-East Atlantic Fisheries Convention (SEAFO) and the Western and Central Pacific (Highly Migratory) Fisheries Convention (WCPFC).

17. The first act of members to the new WTP Straddling Stocks Convention could be to declare a moratorium on certain types of commercial fishing affecting straddling stocks in the Convention area. This would then provide effective authority under international law to selectively close high seas seamounts or other areas to bottom-trawling.

18. The resultant regime would be primarily a framework, and extra capacity would only be required in for monitoring available information, compiling reports from member countries, and for any research needed. It could be supported jointly by FFA and SPC in the same manner as the support for the FFA Convention and various PNA agreements, or by one or the other alone, rather than requiring a completely new secretariat to be set up. The administration of the Wellington Convention (see Paragraph 19) provides another example of the likely scale of the secretariat required - minimal. If the requirements of the Convention became more onerous, a separate secretariat could be considered at a future date.

19. The above is one possibility out of a range of possible options. These include:-

- a) Take no specific action, in the absence of any specific current threat;
- b) Invite FFA and SPC¹⁹ to maintain a watching brief, and institute specific research on the occurrence of trawling in the region, and impacts of fishing on seamounts (a part of which is already included in a GEF project that SPC and FFA are just about to jointly implement), with a view to taking action ;
- c) Lobby the international community to institute a global moratorium on bottom-trawling - something on which the international community is highly divided and has been arguing about for several years now;

¹⁸ nowadays shortened to *WCP Fisheries Commission* or WCPFC

¹⁹ Note that SPC and FFA work together on many fisheries issues, with SPC providing scientific support and FFA providing negotiation and compliance support on fisheries management issues of regional scope.

20. As outlined above, take direct action to implement a regional agreement, in conformity with the UN Fish Stocks Agreement of 1995, on the conservation and management of currently unregulated straddling fish stocks within the Pacific Islands region.

21. The process that led up to the 1989 Wellington Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Driftnets in the South Pacific provides an excellent example of the type of rapid, affirmative action that can be taken by this region in response to concerns about unregulated fisheries on the high seas, and both the Forum (through the Tarawa declaration and FFA) and the Pacific Community (through the Guam Declaration and SPC's scientific support) played a primary role in moving this forward. The coming into force of the UN Law of the Sea Convention in 1992 and the implementation of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement²⁰ in 1995 has since provided more effective tools for addressing high seas fishery conservation and management concerns, as exemplified by the WCP Fisheries Commission covering highly migratory stocks and the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO) for straddling stocks.

22. We await the outcome of Forum's consideration of this matter, noting that an opportunity for further discussion, or for bringing non-Forum Pacific Community Island members into any agreement, will be provided by the 4th Pacific Community Conference in Palau on 14-18th November.

Some references

Tarawa Declaration by the Forum on Driftnet Fishing - [http://www.oceanlaw.net/documents/Tarawa Declaration on Driftnet Fishing.htm](http://www.oceanlaw.net/documents/Tarawa_Declaration_on_Driftnet_Fishing.htm)

Wellington Convention for the prohibition of fishing with long driftnets in the South Pacific - [http://www.oceanlaw.net/texts/Wellington Convention.htm](http://www.oceanlaw.net/texts/Wellington_Convention.htm)

Text of UN agreement to prohibit the use of long driftnets globally [http://www.washingtonwatchdog.org/documents/usc/ttl16/ch38/subchIII/driftnetsUS-Sec_1826 Large-scale driftnet fishing.htm](http://www.washingtonwatchdog.org/documents/usc/ttl16/ch38/subchIII/driftnetsUS-Sec_1826_Large-scale_driftnet_fishing.htm)

²⁰ UNFSA is about to undergo a 10-year review, and certain enhancements would be desirable from the regional point of view.

ANNEX VII

IMPROVING GOVERNANCE THROUGH BETTER ECONOMIC INDICATORS – AN SPC CONCEPT PAPER

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out a possible strategy for rapid improvement in the range of short-term indicators available to assist in formulating and monitoring economic policy.

BACKGROUND

2. It has long been recognised that many PICTs lack the short-term macroeconomic indicators necessary for good quality economic decision making eg, only one PICT produces and publishes timely measures of quarterly real Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As a result many key economic decisions in the region are being made without the benefit of timely macroeconomic indicators.
3. Given the importance of good quality information to support decision making, it must be asked why sufficient resources are not already being devoted to producing them. In this context it is worth noting that major resources have been directed in the past at producing better economic statistics, but almost all have failed. The contention here is that there have been two major factors involved, and that these need to be taken into account in any new strategy:
 - Strategies have been designed and put in place by external advisors but have proved unsustainable because they were based on the strategies and resources of national statistics offices (NSOs) in much larger and more developed economies; and
 - The fact that most NSOs have insufficient numbers of economically-qualified and competent staff to develop their own macroeconomic indicators.

The latter reason is the harder to address, and may never be resolvable for the smaller NSOs in the region. But this concept paper is based on the contention that the former can and should be addressed, and at relatively low cost.

DEVELOPMENTS TO DATE

4. This problem was discussed at the Regional Meeting of Heads of Planning and Statistics in Nouméa, April 2005, and a key outcome was a strong recommendation by national delegates that SPC establish at least one specialist position to assist members with improving their short-term macroeconomic indicators. This concept paper suggests how such a position might help members to achieve that aim.
5. SPC Management has discussed the general problem of poor macroeconomic indicators with other agencies, most notably the Asian Development Bank, and there is general agreement that action is required.

6. A concept of establishing a regional statistics office (RSO) was proposed for inclusion in the Pacific Plan, and aimed much more widely than just at improving economic statistics. SPC has expressed concerns about this proposal because it did not take into account existing systems and linkages, and did not look at ways to improve them through pooling of resources and aligning of policies which are the underpinning principles of the Pacific plan. The proposal also had a number of shortcomings as follows:
 - It targets all areas of official statistics, without recognising that some areas are already either quite good or are showing rapid improvement;
 - It could take many of the region's best statisticians out of their home offices and centralise them in a regional agency, thereby seriously weakening national skill bases, many of which are already quite weak;
 - It features a major reliance on external experts;
 - It is extremely expensive relative to more targeted strategies such as presented in this paper.

THE BROAD STRATEGY BEING CONSIDERED

7. The establishment at SPC initially of one specialist economic statistician position, with the specific aim of assisting NSOs throughout the region to develop reliable and timely macroeconomic indicators which can be produced on an on-going basis by NSOs with a minimum of external assistance. With the approval of members the indicators would be stored on PRISM and so provide an easily accessible guide to current economic trends in the region.
8. It is most likely that sustainable systems for short term macroeconomic indicators would be achieved by much wider use of administrative data such as can be derived from sub-annual taxation systems, foreign trade records, national provident funds and any collections undertaken by other national agencies such as Agriculture and Fisheries Ministries. A key priority for the economic statistics expert would be to assist NSOs in improving their linkages to these other agencies and their data systems, particularly in building local capacity to maintain those linkages for on-going data exchange. This is the basic strategy which has been adopted by the one PICT which produces estimates of quarterly real GDP and has been doing so successfully for some years with minimal external involvement. The economic statistician would also assist countries do better analysis of existing economic data - trade statistics in particular - as an integral part of developing short-term indicators.
9. It is recognised that there will almost certainly be some members for whom it is not possible to establish macroeconomic monitoring systems that can be sustained entirely by NSO staff, and it is proposed that this would be resolved in one of two ways:
 - Consideration be given to setting up systems outside the NSO, possibly in either the Treasury or the Central Bank, with the long-term aim of transferring the system back to the NSO at an appropriate stage; or

- Developing systems which explicitly recognize the need for ongoing external assistance, including the possibility of several countries sending their representative with the necessary data to regular sub-regional workshops at which the economic statistician, along with other resources as available, would provide the specialist assistance needed to update the national indicators.
10. SPC has agreed to establish the initial position and is currently looking at options for financing the position. Given that this is a priority highlighted as an early win in the Pacific Plan, and an important one for the region to work quickly on, SPC hopes that securing the resources for this initial position would not be difficult. The position would fully complement the existing activities of the newly-merged Statistics and Demography Programmes. It would also ensure that its operations were integrated as fully as possible with all other statistical developments undertaken by SPC in the region e.g. computer training would include skills necessary for extracting and analyzing data from sources that feed into the macroeconomic indicator system, survey design assistance would ensure the collection of additional data needed for the indicators. The position would also work in close consultation and co-operation with the Economic and Financial Statistics Advisor at PFTAC and the Forum Secretariat.
 11. In the longer term however, the question of a one-stop shop for statistical information needs to be addressed. Such a facility will be charged with the responsibility for making available on demand all types of statistics that are important for decision making at national or regional levels. The range of statistics would include population & economic statistics, trade statistics, social statistics including health, natural resources statistics etc. Currently SPC is already involved with population statistics, economic statistics, social statistics, fisheries statistics, and is developing capacity in statistics relating to other natural resources such as agriculture and forestry including trade statistics in relation to agriculture. It therefore already has some of the information links that would form what was suggested in the RSO concept. The Secretariat will examine the concept of a 'one-stop-shop' for statistical information service to the region, and progress this concept further in consultation with other stakeholders and partners, acknowledging the priority given to the concept under the Pacific Plan.
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