

Capacity Development Strategy for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific

**A Strategy developed in consultation with the Pacific Invasives Partnership
and Pacific Invasives Learning Network**

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Introduction

The purpose of the *Capacity Development Strategy for Invasive Species Management (ISM)* in the Pacific is to “guide investment efforts by governments and relevant agencies working on strengthening the capacity of Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) to manage invasive species for the benefit of the Pacific islands biodiversity, ecosystems and people”.

There is a need for a strategic approach in the design and delivery of capacity development (CD) support for invasive species management in the Pacific because the supply of resources available to develop capacity is unlikely to meet the increasing demand to manage invasive species threats and impacts in the foreseeable future.

The strategy builds on past and current capacity development efforts that contribute towards the achievement of the *Guidelines for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific* (SPREP 2009). In particular, the strategy identifies regional priority capacity needs of Pacific invasive species practitioners, and some of the major gaps relating to the Guidelines that are not being addressed.

Strategic Recommendations

There have been a large number of activities to build invasive species management capacity in the Pacific in recent years, and capacity has increased considerably in many countries in the region. However, there is a need for countries to take greater ownership of the capacity development process to ensure that capacity delivery is better aligned with national strategies and priorities.

Strategic approaches need to be considered in the context of the “Results Formula” which states that organisational results are only achieved when the “learning experience” and the “work environment” are in harmony with each other. Strategic recommendations are therefore classified into three groups, first with regard to CD provider organisations (especially members of the Pacific Invasives Partnership or PIP), who focus most on the “learning experience”, secondly with regard to the CD recipient organisations who have the greatest influence over the “work environment” of the staff who receive CD support, and finally recommendations that apply to both the CD provider and CD recipient organisations together.

Recommendations applying to Capacity Development Provider Organisations

1. *Improve the understanding of the institutional context within which Capacity Development will be applied*

Capacity development must be appropriate to the institutional context within which it is to be applied and this requires greater collaboration, coordination and dialogue between the CD provider and CD recipient organisation, and improved consideration of the realities of the working environment in which CD will be applied.

2. *Sustain Capacity Development learning through long term mentoring and technical advisory services to recipients*

Capacity development must be considered a long term process to be effective and sustainable. Thus the provision of on-going mentoring, technical advice and support to CD recipients is critical. CD providers need to consider and plan how best to maintain long term support to CD recipients and adequate budgeting provided for it in CD project design.

3. *Improve the coordination of Capacity Development effort amongst CD providers*

There needs to be improved coordination amongst CD providers especially in terms of sharing training material and CD calendars, developing a directory of CD material and expertise available, and also in terms of standardising training forms and processes and agreeing on clear and consistent messaging for CD recipients. Collectively these efforts will minimise duplication of effort and maximise synergies and sharing of knowledge.

4. *Ensure that Capacity Development providers are trained to teach*

In some cases CD providers (such as technical experts and subject matter experts) have excellent technical skills but are not very effective communicators or teachers in a classroom setting. While not underplaying the importance of technical skills and knowledge, CD design and delivery would be improved if CD providers also developed skills in communication and adult learning methods.

5. *Encourage the use of resource kits and other modular training tools*

Resource kits and other modular training tools that document a series of steps and processes in ISM management in a user-friendly form are considered useful and popular amongst ISM practitioners. There is an opportunity for the greater use of the resource kit approach in CD activities in the region than currently.

Recommendations applying to Capacity Development recipient organisations

6. *Increase ownership by Capacity Development recipients over the CD process*

Capacity development recipient organisations should take greater ownership of the CD process to ensure that it is based on meeting their organisational needs and is designed and delivered appropriately. This might start with a self-analysis of business needs and clarification of organisational goals and operational processes. Training Needs Assessments (TNA) should be conducted that match training needs of staff with organisational or national goals.

Training plans should be developed based on the TNA that identify the long term process of building required skills for staff and are linked to job descriptions.

7. *Ensure that people selected for capacity development have the necessary background and experience to enable them to apply their knowledge and skills and pass these to others*

Criteria need to be developed and applied for the selection of the appropriate staff for specific CD activities, and should also include the obligations of the trainee after receiving the training, e.g. in reporting back to the host organisation on what was learnt and in how the training is being applied.

Recommendations applying to both capacity development provider and recipient organisations

8. *Develop clear commitments for both the CD provider and the CD recipient with regard to the CD process*

Capacity development is a two-way process between the providers and the recipients and it involves commitments from both parties for it to be successful. For example, the CD provider should commit to design the most relevant and appropriate CD activity around the actual needs of the recipient organisation and to conduct appropriate follow-up after the CD event is completed. The CD recipient or client organisation should commit to ensuring that the participants in the CD are enabled to apply the CD received (skills or knowledge) in their work and are obligated to do so. Ideally, commitments and expectations would be discussed between both parties and recorded before CD commences.

9. *Improve the monitoring and evaluation of capacity development effort*

The difficulty in getting consistent and complete information on CD events since 2006 during the preparation of the Strategy highlights the need to improve how we monitor CD effort and its impact. In particular there is a need to track the subject of training events, their linkage with national or institutional strategies, who has been trained, in what subject and whether training has been applied or not. Tracking this information will help assess progress towards achieving organisational or national goals and strategies and also to more clearly identify gaps and priority areas for future CD.

10. *Fill geographic gaps in effort*

The geographic gaps where few CD events were reported by respondents include: Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands in Melanesia; the Marshall Islands and Nauru in Micronesia and the Cook Islands, Niue and Tonga in Polynesia. However, given the relatively poor feedback from CD recipient organisations, this can only be considered a very preliminary list of geographic gaps and needs to be revised when more information is available.

11. *Fill priority skills gaps*

A number of thematic skills gaps in CD effort in the Pacific have been identified including: communicating IS impacts effectively to the public and decision makers, project planning and design skills, fund-raising for sustainable project implementation and leadership skills. These skills gaps need to be further assessed and should ideally be led by countries. Skills lists should be refined and customised for specific tasks or themes, such as the specific skills needed for biosecurity staff, or for staff doing invasive species distribution surveys, or control operations. There is also a need to identify which skills are more efficiently obtained from outside the country rather than built in-country.

12. *Increase the coverage of invasive species management in academic courses on offer in the region*

Despite the fact that ISM is one of the biggest threats to the economy and the environment in the region it is given a relatively low profile in courses provided by academic institutions in the region. As noted there is no formal qualification available in invasive species management at university level in island states in the region and ISM is only covered in a few undergraduate and postgraduate modules. The profile of ISM should be raised to match its actual impact and importance in the region so that graduating students are already well aware and knowledgeable about ISM issues when they commence their professional careers.

13. *Increase fundraising efforts to sustain capacity development effort*

Increased effort needs to be placed on securing new donor funds to continue and consolidate the considerable gains in capacity that have been achieved in ISM in recent years in the Pacific. Fundraising effort should promote the benefits of a programmatic long-term approach to CD in the region and, in particular, the need for adequate funding for technical support and mentoring to be provided.

References:

Atherton, J. 2013. Pacific Invasives Capacity Development Review. 62 p. Consultancy Report – prepared for SPREP and Pacific Invasives Initiative. SPREP, Apia, Samoa.

SPREP 2009. *Guidelines for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific. A Pacific strategy for managing pests, weeds and other invasive species.* Compiled by Alan Tye. SPC, SPREP. Apia, Samoa.