

Twenty Eighth SPREP Meeting of Officials

Apia, Samoa
19 – 21st September 2017

Agenda Item 6.1: Strengthening Regional Linkages Update

Purpose

1. The purpose of the paper is to update Members on the progress of SPREP strengthening regional linkages as agreed to by Members in the SPREP Meeting of 2010 and 2012 respectively.

Background

2. The 2010 SPREP Meeting endorsed the concept of establishing a sub-regional presence for SPREP in the Pacific region. After a commissioned consultancy with KVAConsult the 2012 SPREP Meeting recommended the placement of SPREP contracted Desk Officers in the Northern Pacific of the Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands on a trial basis and subject to funding. The meeting also directed that the sub-regional presence should be implemented by the Secretariat in a cost effective manner, with funding from the core budget and other sources.
3. In 2014 the Secretariat assessed its modality for implementing in-country projects that require appointment of long-term project staff. The more cost effective and efficient approach for greater impact was to base project managers and technical staff in the countries where projects are being implemented, rather than at the SPREP Headquarters. This modality has ensured projects have sustained support particularly at the sub-national and community levels as demonstrated through the Choiseul Project in the Solomon Islands which was concluded in 2015 and the Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change (PEBACC) project which is based in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.
4. In 2016 the 27th SPREP Meeting:
 - a) noted the signing of the host country agreement with the Government of Fiji and official launch of the SPREP Fiji Office in 2016;
 - b) noted the signing of the host agreement with the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia;
 - c) noted that SPREP is finding innovative ways to reduce the costs of sub-regional offices including aligning to project activities and budgets, and co-location with other organisations; and

- d) directed the Secretariat to provide an in-house report on the roles, achievements, and costs of the Desk Officers and report back to the SPREP Meeting in 2017, and to provide advice on the need for, cost and proposed timing of undertaking a cost-benefit analysis of the Desk Officers arrangement.

Status Report on Strengthening Regional Linkages

5. SPREP has used two modalities of strengthening regional linkages. The first as recommended by the 2012 SPREP Meeting of trialling desk officers in the sub-region of most strategic need identified as the Northern Pacific; and the latter through the placement of technical staff and managers for projects in country. In 2017 these include:
 - a) Core-funded nationally recruited staff positions in FSM and RMI co-located with the Pacific Community in FSM and Office of Environment Planning & Policy Coordination, (OEPPC) in RMI.
 - b) Project-funded technical staff and offices through the PEBACC project in Fiji, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands which have informally been providing wider SPREP liaison functions in-country.

Staff responsibilities:

6. Responsibilities for each approach include:
 - a) The FSM and RMI positions are formally tasked to undertake two core functions which include SPREP liaison and technical experts. The FSM position is Solid Waste Management Expert and the RMI position is Technical Expert (Water Sector) and Liaison Officer. The FSM Desk Officer has SPREP liaison as a KRI in their reporting process but not their TOR as with the recent appointee to the position in RMI.¹ Both positions for FSM and RMI are funded from the SPREP Core Budget and they have both worked to an exceptionally high level despite the limited operating budget available from SPREP to support their national work.
 - b) The PEBACC-funded technical staff and offices core function is to perform project deliverables with country partners. By virtue of being SPREP staff located in country they perform wider functions outside of their terms of reference, project deliverables and budget and informally serve as liaisons between country partners and SPREP Headquarters.

¹ This is the second person recruited into the position since 2014. The predecessor left the position for a senior position as head of the EPA in RMI.

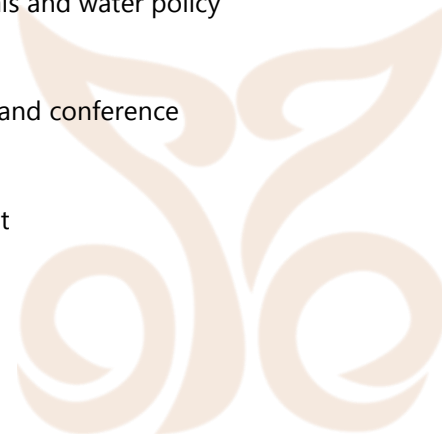


Impacts:

7. Feedback was sought from counterparts in partner Governments via Desk Officers, and from HQ SPREP staff via a survey monkey. Results indicate that the impact of the sub-regional presence has been very positive:
 - a) HQ staff who have worked without-posted staff value the connections able to be made by them, especially with higher levels of government and departments/organisations other than their immediate project contacts, and for integrating their project focus into wider partner country development processes.
 - b) Out-posted staff report SPREP/country partnerships in good health and continuing to develop strongly.

8. The sub-regional presence of SPREP has supported improved two-way communication; frequent face-to-face contact which has built personal networks that have produced more confident partner dialogue with SPREP, and better linking of SPREP project work to national priorities and implementation.

9. Some examples of specific country impacts to date include:
 - a) *The Pacific Ecosystem-based Adaptation to Climate Change - Solomon Islands Country Manager* has provided SPREP inputs to:
 - the INDC
 - review of the National Waste Management and Pollution Control Strategy 2017-2026
 - review of the REDD+ Readiness Roadmap
 - review of SINBSAP
 - formulation of the Honiara Urban resilience and climate adaptation plan
 - Solomon Island GEF 6 project design and execution
 - Development of a Solomon Islands component of the Green Climate Fund proposal for a Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Resilience Programme.
 - b) *The Solid Waste Management Expert in FSM* has assisted integration of Cleaner Pacific goals into the sustainable development plans of individual FSM States.
 - c) *The Suva PEBACC office* provides a one stop for environment/climate change information, meeting high demand and expectations, and linking enquirers with appropriate SPREP areas of work eg: the Green Climate Fund.
 - d) *The Technical Expert (Water Sector) & Liaison Officer in RMI*:
 - Supported the recent RMI National Oceans Symposium
 - Secured outstanding funds from RMI to SPREP (5th National Report Contract)
 - Assisted the implementation of PACWASTE ULABs pilot project
 - Coordinated PACWASTE Healthcare Waste training
 - Is assisting development of RMI NDA readiness proposal
 - Is participating in developing water related project proposals and water policy reviews
 - Is advising on the proposed RMI NBSAP review
 - Assisted preparations for the RMI-SPREP UNOC side event and conference participation
 - Supporting planning for national conservation efforts
 - Is collaborating in the sustainable sea transport pilot project

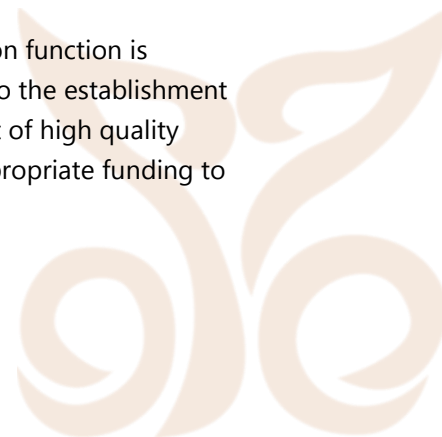


- Assisted with preparations and coordinated activities for the MARPOL regional meeting held in Majuro from the 17th – 21st of July, 2017.

e) Annex 1 to this report collates more specific feedback from core-funded Desk Officers.

Issues arising/lessons learnt

10. The two different approaches have identified a number of both unique and common issues including:
 - a) Having out-posted staff dedicated to SPREP has improved country partnerships considerably at a working level:
 - In RMI this has reinvigorated the relationship of SPREP and is engaging SPREP in areas other than core Water and Sanitation focus;
 - Both staff in RMI and FSM have brought valuable personal, local and regional networks to their liaison work and strengthened relations and visibility of SPREP in the Northern Pacific;
 - In the Solomon Islands, SPREP being present within the Ministry Environment has given SPREP special access to key stakeholders, strengthening the relationship, and when sought, enabling direct engagement on national policies and programmes.
11. The sub-regional presence of SPREP has been instrumental in bringing greater coherence to SPREP project implementation in-country and giving effect to SPREP's strategic programmatic approach by managing integrated delivery of different SPREP programmes and projects into country planning and implementation. This is recognised by partner countries, eg:
 - a) Solomon Islands Government has sought SPREP assistance developing its SOE report and in building climate change into national EIA guidelines.
 - b) Suva PEBACC office serves both national/bilateral and regional/representational SPREP functions: the regional/representational role would benefit from better definition and strategy.
12. Where out-posted staff are funded through specific project budgets, SPREP liaison activities are additional to, and may conflict with, project responsibilities – there is a need to better specify, and ideally core fund, the wider SPREP liaison function, especially in Suva where SPREP liaison is regional. PEBACC technical staff consider that they spend up to 30% of their time working on non-PEBACC matters. Analysis of appropriate resourcing to support this additional tasking will be undertaken by the Secretariat but core budget support to this component outside of project work will be limited.
13. Country acceptance of the SPREP sub-regional presence and the liaison function is achieved when there are immediate and tangible impacts factored into the establishment of the office/positions particularly noting the need for the recruitment of high quality technical staff, with extensive national and regional networks with appropriate funding to resource their respective roles and work.



14. The core funded out-posted staff in FSM and RMI have dual roles in that they are focused on Member government priority sectors as well as performing wider SPREP liaison functions including in other countries in the Northern Pacific. In these circumstances, the SPREP Liaison role needs to be explicit in job descriptions and in the country agreements establishing the role. The FSM position needs to engage with all four States of FSM and this should be factored into the operational budget. The Secretariat will work with the respective Northern Pacific Governments to address this noting funding is a critical challenge.

Funding Implications

15. The sub-regional presence of SPREP while beneficial for harnessing the relationship and engagement of SPREP with in-country partners, funding remains the critical challenge. Costs of the sub-regional presence as guided by the 2012 Cost Benefit Analysis have assisted SPREP to minimise financial impacts:
 - a) Funding for Desk Officers piggy-backing on specific projects (eg PEBACC in Suva, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu)
 - b) Co-location with counterpart government (Solomon Islands, RMI, Vanuatu initially), or CROP agencies/other regional organisations (Pacific Community in FSM and MSG in Vanuatu)
 - c) Shared direction and management of out-posted staff with counterpart government agencies (RMI)
16. However a proportion of SPREP liaison work for project staff has been provided as a free good to SPREP which may not be sustainable in the longer term due to risks associated with project deliverables and project budget/costs. This is perhaps not unique to SPREP but one that must be factored in further considerations.
17. Annex 2 shows the costs of the core-funded Desk Officers for 2015 to 2017. While direct costs to SPREP have been minimal, as noted, some free services have been provided by project-funded out-posted staff.

Request of Palau and Joint Request of the 17th Micronesian Presidents' Summit

18. In 2017 SPREP has received a request from the President of Palau for a national Desk Officer, having observed the benefits from the work of Northern Pacific out-posted SPREP staff. Furthermore the 17th Micronesian Presidents' Summit Joint Communique of May 3rd 2017 signed by the Presidents of FSM, Palau, and RMI have requested the establishment of a North Pacific SPREP sub-regional office to be hosted in RMI, which is a follow-up to an earlier request to SPREP in 2012.²

² The 12th Micronesian President's Summit MATA Communiqué of 5 July 2012 noted that the Presidents of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau supported the bid by the Republic of the Marshall Islands to host the SPREP sub-regional office for the North Pacific.



19. The critical challenge as demonstrated in the paper is the need for additional financial resourcing to SPREP to support the requests from Palau for a national position and separately the North Pacific sub-regional office for Micronesia in RMI as requested by the 17th Micronesian Presidents' Summit in 2017.

Recommendations

20. The Meeting is invited to:

- **note** the Secretariat's report;
- **consider** the indicative analysis of the SPREP sub-regional presence;
- **agree** that the sub-regional presence has brought valuable benefits to both Member actions to address country priorities, improve partnerships, and enable greater harmonisation of SPREP project implementation in-country;
- **note** the need for Member feedback to inform the development of a SPREP strategy for regional linkages; and
- **advise** the Secretariat on the future of the out-posted staff in the Northern Pacific to enable a response to Palau for a national desk officer similar to FSM and RMI and the Micronesian Leaders' decision for a Sub-Regional Office to be located in RMI.

15 August, 2017

