

CLIMATE CHANGE MATTERS

Issue 21 — March 2014

King tide impact. North Coast, Upolu, Samoa, March 2014 (photo: Carlo Iacovino)

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Director's Note



Dr Netatua Pelesikoti

Climate Change Division Director

SPREP

Dear Readers,

The tropical depression recently, saw a lot of flooding in Fiji, while Tonga and Samoa were on edge watching Cyclone Kofi's pathway. One of the impacts of natural disasters that we often overlook is the impact on health.

Fiji and Samoa respectively, have experienced dengue outbreaks which is exacerbated by the excessive rainfall we had recently.

National Meteorological Services play a very important role in building our resilience. Timely dissemination of forecasting information allows us to act early to ensure our safety by securing properties and preparing for the impacts of severe weather.

We need to constantly do things around the clock to be ready including collecting clean water, boiling water or simply cleaning areas that could become mosquito breeding grounds.

I take this opportunity to also note how pleasing it is, to see that the Niue Meteorological Services and Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-hazards Department have put regulatory and action policies in place to enforce their long term services, functions and to build their capacities. Congratulations to Niue and Vanuatu!

Finally, this note is also a kind invitation to our readers, we would be happy to publish your climate change related stories in our monthly CCM Newsletter.

Stay safe and please do contact us with those stories!

Until then,
Netatua

About Us

SPREP's Climate Change Division (CCD) is made up of three programmes:

1. Adaptation;
2. Mitigation;
3. Policy and Science.

The work of the CCD is directed by the SPREP Strategic Plan 2011-2015 based on the climate change priorities of SPREP Members and consistent with the *Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change 2006-2015 (PIFACC)* and other relevant and approved policy drivers such as the Pacific Plan and the Framework for Action on Disaster Risk Management.

SPREP's three (broad) climate change strategic priorities for 2011-2015 are:

1. Implementing adaptation measures;
2. Improving members' capacity, knowledge and understanding of climate change, and risk reduction;
3. Contributing to global greenhouse gas reduction.

Please visit our website at:

www.sprep.org/Climate-Change/climate-change-about-us

King tides in Kiribati

Saturday 1 March saw Spring tides occurring across the central Pacific including the Gilberts archipelago in western Kiribati. High tides were around 0.3 to 0.4 metres higher than usual as the new moon's influence pushed tides higher than normal. In addition to the Spring tides, a strong westerly wind burst is currently active in the region also – such surges in the westerly monsoon winds are known to occur in the period from February to April.

This is pushing mean sea level higher than usual around Kiribati, which, when superimposed on a spring tide event often causes seas to breach the fringing reefs of the low lying atolls in the region causing significant sea flooding.

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South Tarawa, March 2014
Photo: Stephen Hazelman

VMGD launches its next 10-year Strategic Development Plan

The Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-hazards Department (VMGD) under the Ministry of Climate Change and Natural Disasters launched its Strategic Development Plan for 2014 to 2023 on 7 February.

The overall goal of the development plan is to provide timely scientific and technical information to enable Vanuatu to build a sustainable environment and help build Vanuatu's economy.

For the full article: [Click here](#)



Clouds beyond Siviri village, Vanuatu

Niue Government Endorses Meteorological Services Act

Niue now has a legislation making comprehensive provisions in relation to the provision of meteorological and climate related services.



"This is a milestone for the department and for government. It is indeed appropriate to have such a document in place to protect and give legal status for the operationalisation of climate and weather services, including disaster warnings for Niue".

Mr Sionetasi Pulehetoa
Director of the Niue Meteorological Service

For the full article: [Click here](#)



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Papua New Guinea storming ahead on climate change



Office of Climate Change and Development , PNG (Photo: Dean Salofa/SPC)

Details of the extensive and impressive climate change programme being developed in Papua New Guinea were revealed at a Mid Term Evaluation workshop for PNG's Strategic Programme on Climate Resilience (SPCR).

Funded by ADB through the Climate Investment Funds, the SPCR will be injecting USD30 million into making PNG's development activities more climate resilient.

The SPCR will focus on 5 provinces and 40 selected communities that exhibit a variety of climate change vulnerabilities. These are mostly in the more isolated outer islands of PNG. PNG has a national development portfolio and budget of USD 2.5 billion, which is very different from other Pacific island countries.

The Office of Climate Change and Development has been revamped and will soon have a staff of 70, housed at its new building in Port Moresby (see photo above).

Mr Espen Ronneberg provided an overview of where the PNG SPCR could cooperate with other projects and thus benefit from cost-savings.

The PNG SPCR will be linked closely to the regional SPCR implemented by SPREP and SPC.

"PNG is making great strides in improving their national level delivery of climate change services, and this bodes well for enhancing resilience in PNG communities."

Mr Espen Ronneberg
SPREP Climate Change Adviser

Programme Manager for the Regional SPCR at SPREP, Mr Andrea Volentras, saw the meeting as "a great opportunity to explore synergies between the regional and national tracks, and also to suggest other possibilities for cooperation with ongoing or planned climate change".



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Global Precipitation Measurement Core Observatory Launched Into Orbit



Photo:
Bill Ingalls/NASA

NASA—A Japanese H-IIA rocket carrying the NASA-Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency Global Precipitation Measurement (GPM) Core Observatory was launched on Thursday, Feb. 27, 2014.

The GPM spacecraft will collect information that unifies data from an international network of existing and future satellites to map global rainfall and snowfall every three hours.

The GPM Core Observatory satellite carries advanced instruments that will set a new standard for precipitation measurements from space. . The GPM mission will help advance our understanding of Earth's water and energy cycles, improve the forecasting of extreme events that cause natural disasters, and extend current capabilities of using satellite precipitation information to directly benefit society.

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Strengthened collaboration between SPREP and the Asia Pacific Adaptation Network (APAN) to support Pacific Countries



APAN planning meeting participants (Photo APAN Regional Hub)

SPREP's Diane McFadzien recently attended the annual APAN planning meeting, which was used to identify adaptation activities that APAN will support in the various regions in 2014.

SPREP has worked with the Asia Pacific Adaptation Network (APAN) since 2011, when it successfully became recognised as an APAN sub-regional node, for the Pacific.

Under this partnership agreement, SPREP and APAN have collaborated on a number of activities, mainly focusing on building the capacity of Pacific member countries to undertake adaptation work in the region.

These have included training workshops, the development of a climate change donor directory, and the development of targeted policy briefs.

Most recently, SPREP in partnership with APAN held a workshop on monitoring and evaluation under the Pacific Island Framework for Action on Climate Change (PIFACC), for Pacific Island climate change focal points.

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Mangrove crabs helping Palau adapt to climate change



PACC Palau team with members of the Palau Aquaculture Farmers Association during a recent crablet handover

A new climate change adaptation strategy is taking off in Palau – community rearing of mangrove crabs.

Farmers are being supplied with young crablets under the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change (PACC) project, which is working to improve food security in the small island nation, and in particular to tackle the over-reliance on imported foods.

A distribution of crablets in early February took the total to several thousand crabs that have been handed over to farmers over the last three years.

For the full article: [Click here](#)

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The PACC Project consists of 14 member countries; it is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). It is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Australian Agency for International Development with support from United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Climate Change Capacity Development (C3D+) Programme.



Agriculture attachment to SPC brings new techniques to Tuvaluan farmers



Mr Epu Falenga (photo: SPC)

Mr Epu Falenga, a Tuvaluan national, has recently completed a one-month agroforestry attachment with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and with the Live and Learn Farm in Kiribati.

Given Tuvalu's poor soil conditions, Mr Falenga found the attachment very relevant to Tuvalu.

"I learnt useful planting techniques that are not part of our everyday life in Tuvalu. For example, I was taught methods of reviving struggling plants in Kiribati and how to propagate and handle delicate crops at SPC's Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT)."

Mr Epu Falenga

Mr Falenga plans to share these and other lessons with Tuvaluan farmers through the agroforestry awareness materials he is developing as part of the European Union-funded Global Climate Change Alliance: Pacific Small Island States (GCCA: PSIS) project, which is implemented by SPC with technical support from SPC's Land Resources Division.

His attachment was designed under a larger agroforestry initiative of the Government of Tuvalu. The EU is contributing € 0.5 million (approximately AUD 680,000) to this initiative for an on-the-ground climate change adaptation project entitled 'Improving agro-forestry systems to enhance food security and build resilience to climate change in Tuvalu'

Implementation began in December 2013, with four project focus areas:

- (i) enhancing understanding of agro-forestry through training and awareness raising;
- (ii) improving agroforestry systems through demonstration sites;
- (iii) evaluating the marketing potential of crops and trees; and
- (iv) enhancing the coordination and capacity of the Department of Agriculture.

This funding is delivered by SPC through the GCCA: PSIS project, an €11.4 million regional project supporting nationally-led climate change adaptation initiatives in nine Pacific countries.

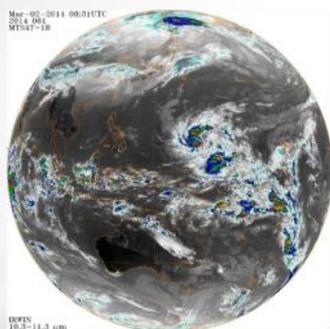


Funafuti, Tuvalu. Photo: Seema Deo

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El Niño Developing?



At the top clouds over the western Pacific Ocean are evident in this image taken in March 2014. The clouds across the equatorial region on the right side of the image coincide with the strong westerly wind burst evident at this time. At the northwest extremity is the circulation associated with Tropical Storm Faxai over the north Pacific near Guam, while the circulation associated with Tropical Cyclone Kofi is evident on the southeast end of the cloud band.



Compare this with the image below taken in April 1997 when a strong westerly wind burst between 2 active tropical cyclones (Isa and Ian) occurred preceding the last major El Niño event in 1997/1998.

This current westerly wind burst in the Pacific is particularly strong, one of the strongest seen in recent years. Strong westerly surges are often a precursor of the onset of El Niño conditions, so climate scientists are watching closely to see how the ocean and atmosphere will evolve in coming weeks and months. It is too early to tell at this stage if a significant El Niño will occur later this year but some climate models have indicated such an outcome is likely.



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Events in March 2014

Event	Location	Date
FINPAC Component 2 Partners Meeting	SPREP, Samoa	3 – 4 March
PPCR Mainstreaming Workshop	FSM	3 – 21 March
Government Partnerships for Development (GPDF) – Initiation Meeting	SPREP, Samoa	5 – 7 March
UNFCCC ADP Meeting	Germany	10 – 14 March
PCCP Advisory and Technical Subcommittee Meeting	Fiji	11 - 13 March
PEAG UNIDO Validation Workshop for Pac Energy Centre	Fiji	12 – 14 March
WACC Meeting	Fiji	17 or 20 March
In Country Assistance: PACC Management Support	Nauru	13 – 20 March
In Country Assistance: PACC Gender Training for Tuvalu	Tuvalu	13 – 20 March
In Country Assistance: Implementation of USAID Kiribati Project in Abaiang	Kiribati	13 – 24 March
Energy Officials and Ministerial Meeting	Fiji	31 March – 04 April
Regional Consultation on Climate Services for the Pacific Small Islands Developing States (SIDS)	Cook Islands	31 March – 04 April