

AGENDA ITEM 12.4.3:

**Implementation of the Inform Project: strengthening data management
to support planning and decision making**

Purpose of Paper

1. To update Members on significant outputs and results achieved to date; and
2. Endorse the proposed sustainability options for the Pacific Environment Portal and reporting tool.

Background

3. The Inform Project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented through UN Environment. SPREP is the executing agency responsible for implementing the project in 14 Pacific island countries. The Inform Project officially started implementation in November 2017 with the completion of the Inception Meeting. The project aims at establishing Pacific Island Country (PIC) network of national and regional databases for monitoring, evaluating, and analysing environmental information to support environmental planning, forecasting, and reporting requirements at all levels.

Current status of implementation

4. The Inform Project has established a Pacific Island Country (PIC) network of 14 national data portals linked to the Pacific Environment Portal (PEP) which hosts all public data for SPREP Pacific Island Members. The PEP serves as the regional's premier environmental data repository. This data is collated for monitoring, evaluating, and analysing environmental conditions which is crucial for environmental planning, forecasting, reporting and decision making at all levels. The portal has been effectively used to support the State of Environment reporting process. Furthermore, the project has also developed an on-line indicator reporting tool to support the standardized reporting at national, regional and International levels. Given the strong national and regional demand for these tools, it is important to consider possible strategies and potential opportunities to sustain these monitoring and reporting tools beyond the life of the Inform Project.

5. Specific outputs and results achieved to date include the following:

a. Inform Database

The 14 national data portals and regional PEP hold a collective 3000+ datasets available for open use. Over 100 national officers have been trained and engaged from SPREP member countries. While demand is increased, greater awareness and use is needed to ensure the portal is effectively used to support planning, monitoring, reporting and decision making not only within Environment ministries but also within key sectors of government including national planning offices.

b. Reporting Tool

The Inform project has developed an improved, intuitive National Indicator Reporting Tool. This tool is intended to reduce the reporting burden on PICs, by standardising indicator definitions for use in multiple reporting requirements at the national, regional and international levels, including SDG's and MEA's. The reporting tool is being rolled out across the project participating countries.

c. Core set of Environment Indicators

The Inform project has coordinated a SPREP wide effort to develop a core set of standardised environmental indicators which can be used in national, regional and international reporting and have been mapped to various national and international reporting requirements.

d. Data sharing policy for SPREP

The Inform project developed a data policy that has been adopted as SPREP's official Data Sharing Policy. The policy is based on the principles of secure storage, open by default and accessibility. The SPREP Data policy will guide and assist SPREP in managing environmental datasets and its appropriate use to support planning, monitoring, reporting and decision making. It also reassures Members that national data entrusted to SPREP will be managed appropriately in accordance with the policy which also respects any restrictions the country may place on the datasets.

e. Partnerships

SPREP is partnering with SPC to create an ecosystem of data for the Pacific which includes the Pacific Environment Portal, the Pacific Data Hub and the 14 country data portals. The collaboration with SPC was initiated as an activity of the Inform Project to make data more readily available to countries through the national portals, reduce the proliferation of portals and maximize limited resources by providing a regional data structure for projects and partners to work with. See details in Attachment 1.

Sustainability

6. SPREP through the Inform Project is exploring options to ensure the tools developed under the project are sustained beyond the life of the project. The proposed options are:
 - i. National Environment teams and the Inform project team at SPREP are building systems including data validation workflows, reporting tools and a network of national portals and demonstrating effectiveness concurrently, however shifting from offline data systems as well as building the link to reporting is a long-term initiative. Shifting from offline, unconsolidated and unstructured data management to a unified online system represents more than a technical challenge. The shift in business practises and behaviour is already taking place but will take years and many demonstrations of improved effectiveness to become standard practise across the region.
 - ii. A 3-pronged approach is being developed to sustain the portal and reporting tool:
 - a) Country support for national and regional data portals and reporting tool by way of increased adoption and demonstrating effective use which could leverage additional funding to maintain and sustain the tools;
 - b) New and future pipeline projects particularly those managed and executed by SPREP to integrate specific data management components with adequate budgetary resources to support the operational costs and further enhancements required to meet project specific data needs; and
 - c) Proposed for a second phase of the Inform Project to expand and scale up the results and outcomes of the Inform Project to include any gaps and specific needs

which are not addressed in the current project. To address this, the Environment Monitoring and Governance Programme together with the Inform Project Team have developed multiple project concepts for an expanded 2nd Phase of the project targeting funding opportunities through AFD and GCF. There may other funding opportunities that will be explored as part of the sustainability plan which will be further developed under the Inform Project.

Recommendation

7. The Meeting is invited to:
 1. **note** progress achieved under the Inform Project; and
 2. **endorse** the proposed 3-pronged approach to sustain the outcomes of the Inform Project beyond the life of the current project.

26 July, 2019