

Pacific experiences with capacity building for climate change

The Pacific SIDS are parties to numerous MEAs but they often lack the capacity – technical, financial, legal and human resources – to effectively deal with MEAs obligations. Effective compliance falls under two main categories: participation in negotiations (preparations of positions that reflect the country's interests and preparations of negotiation strategies for eliciting desired outcomes during negotiations) and implementation of the agreement provisions. This is also the case for climate change negotiations and work on capacity building for climate change implementation.

There are two main issues at play with climate change implementation: one, is about the process of developing plans and strategies and monitoring & evaluation (e.g. NatComm, NAPA, etc); and the other, is support on substantive technical issues for implementation. The latter issue could range from a lack of project management skills (e.g. capacity to identify, prepare and write project proposals) to other technical and legal capacities such as in drafting legislation or undertaking certain technical basic research or problem-analysis. The lack of financial resources available to the Pacific SIDS to implement their obligations under the FCCC has further aggravated this problem.

The issue facing PICs is not whether to participate in the FCCC but how. PICs need, therefore, to ensure that capacity is built in negotiation skills. Poor outcomes in FCCC negotiations could result in severe negative impact on SIDS natural resources, further increasing vulnerability, as the trend has been over the last couple of decades. PICs must be able to analyse contemporary issues in international environmental affairs, have knowledge of the institutional design of the system of global environmental negotiation, and within that the politics of the atmosphere. PICs must be able to understand the institutional context in which environmental diplomacy and negotiation takes place, in order to find the appropriate ways and means of applying international technical and financial support to the national and local needs and requirements. What this means in practical terms is that the PICs need to be enabled to appropriately translate their local needs and priorities into a format conducive to being presented to the FCCC governing bodies and receive sufficient international support for technical and financial assistance to be applied to addressing those local needs and problems.

PICs participating in past Pacific and SIDS meetings have identified many common points regarding their capacity lacunae and constraints in participating in the FCCC negotiations. Selection of participants is based on knowledge, experience, negotiating skills and seniority. However, it is unsure if there is convergence of all of these criteria i.e. whether all of these attributes can be found in one or a few individuals. Training and knowledge in negotiation skills and diplomacy were identified as major constraints in effective participation at the negotiations. Participation at these meetings has been mainly at the technical level, but while there is competence and confidence in knowledge of the technical issues, the requisite skills to negotiate these issues have been identified as a constraint.

The lack of adequate human capacity, funding and too many simultaneous meetings for small delegations has also been flagged as constraints to effective participation at the negotiations. While most countries indicated that they participate actively, all countries identified funding, personnel issues at the country level and negotiating skills as constraints to effective participation. Most participants cited training in negotiations skills and diplomacy as a priority towards more effective participation in addition to a national coordination mechanism for arriving at country positions. It was also suggested that a regional preparatory process should be initiated and

preparatory meetings held prior to the negotiating sessions to aid in arriving at regional positions, which would then be fed from country positions.

The bottom line for PICs is that understanding the relationship between science and policy and for example international climate change negotiations is critical if PIC policy makers and negotiators are to adequately represent and negotiate for national priorities. Consequently, building PIC' technical and scientific capacities that enable and facilitate responsive strategies and policy stances is crucial. This project will aim to facilitate a process to get the PICs better enabled in this regard.

SPREP is currently involved in developing an umbrella program designed to increase the capacities of the Pacific ACP in MEAS including FCCC. This will entail the provision of technical assistance, training, policy and advisory support services in all of those areas to enhance the capacities of the countries in implementing their obligations under the MEAs, and will build on previous experiences such as the PICCAP programme in the 1990's. The program will improve the means and report on environmental performance and socio-economic pressures on the environment, as well as improve the understanding and strengthen the capacity of Pacific SIDS to respond to climate change, climate variability and sea level rise. Assisting and enhancing the countries' capabilities to manage and respond to marine pollution, hazardous waste, solid waste, sewerage and other land-based sources of pollution will be essential components of this program. Continued development, support and implementation of integrated regional strategies for environmental management and sustainable development will also feature in improving regional coordination.

Experience in the Pacific also shows that environmental concerns are insufficiently mainstreamed into National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) as well as into national and regional sector policies, strategies and action plans. Furthermore, specific action plans to address the main MEAs issues are frequently lacking or are inappropriate at the national level. In addition, it is often difficult at the national level to ensure appropriate coordination between national and international efforts as well as to have a clear picture of what is actually implemented and how different actions and programs fit into global strategies.

The target group for this program is the Pacific island countries and their peoples, for which there are 14 countries and about 6 million in total population. The target beneficiaries will primarily be Government officials in the 14 PICs, in particular those working in Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Environment, Planning, Customs and Excise, Energy and Public Works, but also officials in local government and authorities, national stakeholders such as civil society organizations and private sector companies. Overall numbers in each PIC is difficult to estimate accurately but at least dozens will be targeted in each PIC.

The Pacific hub for this program – the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) – is an intergovernmental organization comprising of those 14 Pacific ACP member countries plus 7 other Pacific island states and territories and 4 metropolitan countries. SPREP has a mandate to promote regional cooperation on

environmental management and conservation in the Pacific, including supporting the member countries on the implementation of MEAs.

Specific issues of monitoring and evaluation will be considered as the tasks for SPREP as an environmental lead agency for the region. Stand-alone or one-off exercises have not worked sufficiently well in the past and a new modality of continuous capacity development support is therefore needed. This will also ensure that capacity building is complementary to the efforts underway in the implementation of the Action Plan for the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change (2006-2015). Each section of this Action Plan requires some degree of capacity building. Monitoring and evaluation will also be covered through the process of a regional roundtable on climate change, involving all stakeholders and interested parties such as bilateral donors and academia.

In conclusion, the need for monitoring and evaluation is well recognized within the Pacific region. However, past experiences with ad-hoc approaches to capacity development have not lent themselves to adequate monitoring and evaluation. Lessons learned have often been identified too late for corrective action to be taken. Therefore SPREP intends to use the currently proposed MEA capacity building project as an avenue for securing a more sustainable approach to capacity building and to have appropriate mechanisms for oversight, monitoring and evaluation.