

Session Report Cover Sheet

Session Report

SESSION CODE: CLIM - 03
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Name of Convenor: Jeffry Stubbs

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Introduction

The Session on "Water in Small Islands Countries" was introduced by Mr. Jeffrey Stubbs, Country Director, South Pacific Regional Mission, Asian Development Bank.

Delegates were welcomed to the Session noting that this was structured to build on the opening Plenary on Water and Climate and acknowledged the Session partners, namely the Asian Development Bank (ADB), South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), The Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), Organisation of American States (OAS) and The International Secretariat of the Dialogue on Water and Climate (DWC).

In introducing the Session, the importance accorded by the World Water Forum to water issues in Small Island Countries was highlighted and specific issues such as the need to broaden networks and to address the problems that are unique to Small Island Countries were noted.

The main objective of the Session on "Water In Small Island Countries" was primarily to identify and agree on future actions with the specific focus on:

- Recognising the unique constraints and solutions of Small Island Countries
- Increasing collaboration between island regions
- Increasing collaboration between service providers
- Promoting of action implementation mechanisms
 - The Pacific Regional Action Plan / Type II Partnership Initiative
 - The Caribbean-Pacific Joint Programme for Action on Water and Climate
- A Session Statement and Portfolio of Water Actions for Small Island Countries

The Session objective was addressed through panel discussions and participation from the delegates on three themes namely: Water Resources and Climate; Water Utilities; and Awareness, Advocacy, Political Will and Governance.

An Asian Development Bank video production screened during the Session illustrated the climatic extremes of cyclones, flooding and drought that plague the Small Island Countries of the Pacific. The video focused on Fiji and Kiribati and highlighted an innovative partnership between relevant stakeholders including NGO's, the private sector, University of the South Pacific (USP) and communities, and addressed the issues of coral reef degradation due to inappropriate wastewater and catchment management.

1. Issues

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Theme 1 – Water Resources and Climate

The Session recognised that Small Island Countries have uniquely fragile water resources due to their small size, isolation and limited natural resources, competing land use, vulnerability to natural and anthropogenic hazards, including drought and cyclones. In addition, the Session highlighted:

- The need for effective monitoring and control of pollution of water resources
- Stronger functional relations recognised among institutions responsible for climate and water resources management
- The lack and limited availability of base line and monitoring data for managing water resources and developing adaptation strategies
- The need for sustainable demand management programme, policies and strategies
- Public education and outreach is critical for adoption of strategies and action plans
- The need to adopt a mixture of appropriate water supply technologies
- The need for tools including models used in the global arena to be down-scaled so as to be applicable for use in Small Island Countries
- South-South cooperation should be used to share best practices amongst Small Island Countries
- Commitment to the Human Right of access to water
- Wastewater treatment and sanitation requires equal attention as freshwater management

Theme 2 – Water Utilities

The Session recognised that water service providers face constraints to sustaining water and wastewater management. These are due to the lack of resources including the availability of experienced personnel and investment. In addition, the Session highlighted:

- A lack of good governance and management
- The need for political will and support for utility operations
- The need to define areas of responsibility between governments and utilities
- The need to develop, adopt and implement appropriate legislation, policies and standards for water and sanitation, recognising the differences between urban and rural environments
- The need for an integrated approach to planning and development, recognising the need to engender good cooperation and public / private partnerships
- The need to improve water demand management and reduction of unaccounted-for-water due to leakage, illegal connections and unregistered consumption
- The requirement for human resource development and capacity building in operation and maintenance
- The need to ensure that appropriate tariff structures be set to achieve cost-recovery
- The requirement for utility operation to be based on measured performance, compliance with technical standards and good customer service
- The need for continued support on different financial options for capital expansion of systems for access by all people

Theme 3 – Awareness, Advocacy, Political Will and Governance

The Session recognised that Small Island Countries having considered and discussed the constraints, key issues and challenges for sustainable water resource management, noted that water governance in Small Island Countries is highly complex due to the specific socio-political and cultural factors relating to traditional community, tribal and inter-island practices, rights and interests. In addition, the Session highlighted:

- The need for the development, adoption and enforcement of legislation and policies

- The need for effective implementation and monitoring of standards
- The need for sensitisation of politicians, policy makers
- The need for rationalization and re-alignment of legislation and policies as these relate to water resource management
- The need to create awareness among donors, development partners and regional and international organisations, recognising small island requirements in order to achieve a high level advocacy for the water sector
- Development of guiding principles within the context of internationally set targets, goals and principles
- The challenge to get water as a priority issue on the international and national agenda
- The need for long-term vision, planning, technical support and training
- Priority being given to partnerships and the adoption of fully participatory approaches involving the public, private and civil society sectors, with special attention to NGOs, women, youth and communities
- The need for the development of human resource capacity with specific focus on appropriate skills training
- The need for a comprehensive approach to awareness, mainly including the involvement of media in awareness programmes
- The need to include integration water issues with other sectors in school curricula
- The need to create an appreciation of the economic value of water
- The need for awareness raising in relation to the introduction of new technologies and their appropriate application
- Identifying best practices in water resources management and disseminate lessons learned
- The need to develop multi-stakeholder partnerships in management structures, taking into account traditional community and local mechanisms

2. Actions

The Session reaffirmed and supported the Joint Programme for Action for Small Island Countries, developed from consultations in the Pacific and Caribbean regions. The Session highlighted the following priority key actions under three thematic areas:

Theme 1 – Water Resources and Climate

- Improve the collection of, access to, and sharing quantitative and qualitative data on water resources
- National policies available to facilitate access to baseline and monitoring data
- Promote IWRM as a management concept and facilitate its implementation through inter-agency linkages
- Address adaptation through implementation of an appropriate hazard and risk management mechanisms
- Support appropriate water supply options and technologies with specific attention being given to rainwater harvesting
- Improve planning for sanitation and waste management to reduce water resource pollution
- Strengthen South-South cooperation

Theme 2 – Water Utilities

- Promote development of autonomous, well-governed water utilities operating within a well defined institutional framework
- Promote training and capacity building in water utilities

- Establish leak detection programmes
- Enhance cost recovery based upon improvements in service delivery and enhanced operational efficiency
- Improve operational efficiency of utilities through the adoption of benchmarking
- Develop reliable and flexible sources of capital funding, consistent with the cost recovery potential of each utility.

Theme 3 – Awareness, Advocacy, Political Will and Governance

- Sensitise politicians and policy makers of the need to integrate water resources management issues into the planning process
- Encourage the support of donor and development agencies for water resource management
- Establish and promote public awareness, education and training programmes
- Sensitise the public about the economic value of water
- Support institutional development through education and training
- Promote a multi stakeholder, participatory approach to water resources management, involving local and community groups, the private sector, women, youth and disadvantaged groups
- Support or develop information sharing networks e.g. a Pacific Water Network
- Implement “best practice” approaches and disseminate lessons learned
- Develop, implement, and enforce legislation as well as establish relevant standards
- Support inter-regional collaboration and cooperation in order to place the problems of Small Island Countries in the international development agendas

3. Commitments

The participants reaffirmed their commitment to the Session to sustainable water management components of Agenda 21, the Barbados Global Action Plan for Small Island Developing States, and the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) Action Plan.

This includes the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the WSSD target to halve the proportion of people unable to reach or afford safe drinking water and who do not have access to basic sanitation by 2015.

Participants agreed to submit the priority actions from the Joint Programme for Action for Small Island Countries developed from the Dialogue on Water and Climate to the Portfolio of Actions.

The Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management was acknowledged as a useful framework for sustainable water management in other regions.

Country representatives agreed to actively promote the priorities outlined in this Session with their country delegations attending (i) the Ministerial segment of the 3rd World Water Forum, and (ii) the UN Global Conference on Sustainable Development in Small Island Developing States in 2004 (UNGCSIDS/Barbados +10).

The WSSD Type II Partnership Initiatives on water, developed by the Pacific and other regions are recognised as a key mechanism for the implementation of the Joint Programme for Action and the individual Regional Action Plans. Donors and partners were urged to support these initiatives likewise.

4. Innovative Features:

- Emerging consensus amongst Small Island Countries about what needs to be done, at the national, regional and international levels
- Broadening networks amongst the Small Island Countries to facilitate exchange of information and provision of support
- Call for South-South collaboration and call for inclusion of non-country small islands
- Action planning before Kyoto now leading to action planning after Kyoto

5. Key Quotes:

- **“Altogether, our Small Island Countries contribute less than 1% of the greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming and climate change. However, because the adaptive capability of our human systems is generally low and vulnerability is high, our small countries are likely to be amongst the countries most impacted by global climate change...All available evidence confirms that intra-regional and inter-regional approaches will yield...more sustainable results (to improvement of climate adaptation and water management and climate adaptation in Small Island Countries)”. The Honourable Felix Finisterre, Minister for Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities, St. Lucia, 16 March 2003, Kyoto.**
- **“We are highly vulnerable to changes in the climate, because our islands have relatively little natural buffering to offset these changes and hence we feel their effects with almost instantaneous effect. Our lack of natural water storage means we are susceptible to drought, our lack of height means we are susceptible to storm surges and waves, our lack of land means that we are susceptible to flooding...I hope that with the launch of the Joint Caribbean-Pacific Programme for Action on Water and Climate, as well as the Pacific Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Water Management, plus the Portfolio of Water Actions being prepared here in Kyoto, we have ourselves created the catalysts we need to implement the priority actions that face Small Island Countries throughout the world..” The Honourable Fielekapa, Minister of Lands, Surveys and Natural Resources, Kingdom of Tonga, 16 March 2003, Tonga.**

6. Recommendations

Recognising the importance of the Dialogues on Water and Climate and, regional consultations on sustainable water management for Small Island Countries, the Session recommended the following:

- Strengthen national capacity using the model outlined in the Pacific and Caribbean Hydrological Cycle Observation System (HYCOS) proposals
- Strengthen inter-regional and intra-regional partnerships through the South-South Collaboration and the Type II partnership initiatives including collaboration on education, awareness and advocacy
- Develop water quality monitoring and capacity building programmes
- Establish water demand management programmes
- Implement programmes for improved governance

The Session called on the international community and donors to meet their commitments and act positively in support of the key activities and recommendations for the long-term sustainability of water resources management.