

## **SUMMARY REPORT**

# **Proceedings of the Pacific Regional Consultation on Water in Small Island Countries**

**29 July to 3 August 2002**

**PART I**

**SUMMARY  
REPORT OF  
THE  
CONSULTATION**

# SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) joined forces to organise a high-level regional consultation for the Pacific water sector in preparation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum that will take place from 16 to 23 March 2003 in Kyoto, Japan.

The consultation aimed to help small island country practitioners and regional and international organizations strengthen their policies, institutional arrangements and projects through:

- enhancing public awareness of the need for better water and wastewater management;
- exchanging views and experiences; and
- developing a shared understanding about policies, institutional frameworks and approaches to sustainable sector development.

## PLANNING MEETING

A planning meeting for the Pacific preparation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum was held from 31 January to 1 February 2002 in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The planning meeting was convened jointly by ADB and SOPAC to establish the framework of the regional consultation process. It decided that the regional consultation would be high level and participatory. It also identified six thematic areas based on earlier needs assessments in the region, to provide a structure for the consultation. The six themes were: Water Resources Management; Island Vulnerability; Awareness; Technology; Institutional Arrangements and Finance.

## NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS AND COUNTRY BRIEFING PAPERS

Countries were encouraged to initiate a national consultation process involving a wide range of water sector specialists in order to develop a clear brief for the representatives of each country.

The national consultations have involved stakeholders drawn from governments, nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and the private sector including organizations and agencies concerned with water resources management, water authorities, service providers, rural development departments, health and environment agencies and regulators. Various countries already had mechanisms in place, such as a national water committee or national water council, that facilitated this multi-stakeholder national consultation.

Facilitated by the World Wide Fund for Nature South Pacific, NGOs in the region were encouraged to take part in the national consultations and contributed to the regional consultation meeting.

## PACIFIC REGIONAL CONSULTATION MEETING

A regional consultation meeting was organised in Sigatoka, Fiji from 29 July to 3 August 2002. The meeting was attended by over 150 representatives of agencies concerned with water resources management, water authorities, service providers, rural development departments, health and environment agencies, regulators and NGOs involved in the water sector, the private sector, regional organizations and international development agencies.

Country actions prepared by the national delegations were presented on Day 1. Thematic overview papers prepared by theme resource persons were presented, supported by selected case studies from small island countries in the region, on Days 2, 3 and 4. They showed specific actions that were proven to contribute to sustainable water management and were the starting point for plenary discussions on the Regional Action Plan.

For each theme a working group was established that drafted the Action Plan for that thematic area which were subsequently discussed on Day 5. A drafting committee was set up that ensured all issues and actions were included in the Communiqué and Ministerial Declaration that were both adopted on Day 6 (3 August 2002).

The regional consultation concluded with the adoption of a Regional Action Plan, a Communiqué and Ministerial Declaration, and the commitment from a wide range of stakeholders to form a partnership under the so-called Type II Initiative on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene that was submitted by the Pacific Island Countries to the Commission for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg during the World Summit for Sustainable Development in August 2002.

In adopting the action plan, the ministers and heads of country delegations from 16 Pacific Island Countries and representatives of civil society groups stressed the participatory nature of their deliberations and reinforced their commitment to sharing knowledge to address common water problems and solutions.

They noted the unique geographic and physical characteristics, as well as the fragile nature of water resources in small island countries, which impact the health and wellbeing of their peoples, environment and economic development. They also recognized the im-

portant linkages between water resources, water services, and wastewater management, including sanitation and hygiene.

## OUTCOMES OF THE CONSULTATION

The outcomes of the consultation, including the Regional Action Plan and a Ministerial Declaration, were taken to the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Conference and Caribbean Dialogue on Water and Climate in October 2002. Both documents as well as the Communiqué and the Type II initiative, prepared after the consultation, are provided in Parts III and VII of this report (see CD-Rom).

A joint contribution from the Caribbean and the Pacific will be provided to the "Water in Small Island Countries" session at the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum in Kyoto.

### Regional Action Plan

The Regional Action Plan is structured around the six thematic areas: Water Resources Management; Island Vulnerability; Awareness; Technology; Institutional Arrangements and Finance. Each theme section consists of key messages to stakeholders with supporting statements drawn from the discussions in the respective working groups. Under each key message the required Actions are listed including the parties that will be responsible for their implementation.

### Communiqué and Ministerial Declaration

The Communiqué recognised the unique geographic and physical characteristics, as well as the fragile nature of water resources in small and vulnerable island countries which impact on the health and wellbeing of their peoples, environment and the development of their island economies.

An appeal was made to share knowledge particularly within and across the small island country regions, and agree to an action plan for sustainable water management in the Pacific islands and commitment was made to sustainable water management components of Agenda 21 agreed to ten years ago in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the Global Action Plan for Small Island Developing States agreed to in Barbados 1994.

The international community was urged to pursue the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals that target the vital role of sustainable water management contributing to reducing poverty, improving health and livelihoods for all people.

The Ministerial Declaration refers explicitly to the Communiqué which has been signed by 14 Ministers and Secretaries of State as of 21<sup>st</sup> February 2003.

### Type II Initiative

The main objective of the Type II Initiative is to achieve sustainable water and wastewater management in Pacific island countries through:

- the establishment of a regional water network of persons and organizations, inclusive of country governments, development agencies, professional associations and donors, that work in the different fields of water resources management and service delivery in the region, to improve regional coordination and collaboration;
- the implementation of Strategies for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene that aim to build and increase the capacity in Pacific Island Countries to deliver sustainable management of water and wastewater as a means to contributing to poverty alleviation. Sustainability has to be achieved in the technical, institutional, financial, environmental and social-cultural areas. SOPAC Member Countries endorsed these strategies during the 30<sup>th</sup> SOPAC Annual Session (Majuro, October 2001), which are complementary with the efforts towards the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum;
- implementation of the "Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Water Management", as agreed upon by Ministers, Heads of Delegation and representatives of civil society groups with responsibilities for water affairs from 16 island countries in the Pacific, as well as East Timor and the Maldives; as part of the Pacific regional consultation and preparation for the "Water in Small Island Countries" and "Dialogue on Water & Climate" themes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum. The consultation process included the identification of national priority actions as determined by the participating countries on the basis of their national water strategies, national assessments and stakeholder consultations undertaken for WSSD and the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum, and the development of agreed regional actions through the regional consultation meeting process of plenary discussion, working group review and delegation approval.

### Highlights of the Regional Meeting

The regional meeting saw a wide range of presentations from specialists from Pacific Island Countries

showing many examples of successful interventions for many island-specific issues. The case studies and country briefing papers that are provided in the appendix of this report provide a wealth of information on innovative ways towards sustainable water management.

A summary of the key messages resulting from the consultations on issues raised under each theme are as follows:

### *Theme 1, Water Resource Management*

- 1 Strengthen the capacity of small island countries to conduct water resources assessment and monitoring as a key component of sustainable water resources management.
- 2 Implement strategies to utilize appropriate methods and technologies for water supply and sanitation systems and approaches for rural and peri-urban communities in small islands.
- 3 Implement strategies to improve the management of water resources, and surface and groundwater catchments (watersheds) for the benefit of all sectors including local communities, development interests, and the environment.

### *Theme 2, Island Vulnerability*

- 1 There is a need for capacity development to enhance the application of climate information to cope with climate variability and change.
- 2 Change the paradigm for dealing with Island Vulnerability from disaster response to hazard assessment and risk management, particularly in Integrated Water Resources Management.

### *Theme 3, Awareness*

- 1 A high quality participatory framework should be adopted at the national level to allow for open participation of communities in sustainable water and wastewater management.
- 2 Access to, and availability of information on sustainable water and wastewater management should be provided to all levels of society.
- 3 Water and sanitation education should be mainstreamed into the formal education system.
- 4 Improve communication and coordination of all stakeholders in sustainable water and wastewater management including government, civil society, and the private sector.

### *Theme 4, Technology*

- 1 Appropriate institutions, infrastructure, and information will support sustainable water and wastewater management.

- 2 Utility collaboration and regional partnership to reduce unaccounted-for water will significantly improve the sustainability of utilities and reduce the need for developing new water resources.
- 3 Island specific regional training programmes should be developed, resulting in sustainable levels of skilled and knowledgeable people and communities within the water and wastewater sector.

### *Theme 5, Institutional Arrangements*

- 1 Work together through a comprehensive consultative process, encompassing good governance, to develop a shared national vision for managing water resources in a sustainable manner.
- 2 Develop national instruments including national visions, policies, plans, and legislation appropriate to each island country taking into account the particular social, economic, environmental, and cultural needs of the citizens of each country.
- 3 Promote and establish appropriate institutional arrangements resourced sufficiently to enable effective management of water resources and the provision of appropriate water services.
- 4 Recognize and share the water resources management knowledge and skills of all stakeholders at a national and regional level in the process of developing and implementing the national vision.
- 5 National and regional leadership in water resources management should be recognized and encouraged.

### *Theme 6, Finance*

- 1 Create a better and sustainable environment for investment by both the public and private sector, by developing and implementing national, sector, and strategic plans that identify the economic, environmental, and social costs of different services and develop pricing policies, which ensure the proper allocation of resources for the water sector.
- 2 Establish financially-viable enterprises for water and sanitation that result in improved performance by developing appropriate financial and cost-recovery policies, tariffs, billing and collection systems, and financial and operating systems.
- 3 Reduce costs through improved operational efficiency, using benchmarking, development of water-loss reduction programmes, and improved work practices.
- 4 Ensure access for the poor to water and sanitation services by developing pro-poor policies that include tariffs with lifeline blocks and transparent and targeted subsidies.

- 5 Achieve sustainable rural water and sanitation services at the community level through developing strategies that incorporate mechanisms for appropriate financing and capacity building.

The concerns and issues aired during the plenary discussion have also been incorporated into actions under these key messages in the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management which can be found in Part III of this volume (see the accompanying CD-Rom). The full record of the discussion during plenary sessions are also on the CD-Rom as Part IV of this Paper and Proceedings volume.

### **Inter-regional Collaboration and Joint Programme of Action**

The Pacific consultation identified "Island Vulnerability" as a major theme that should receive particular attention in Kyoto and this provided the basis for a joint Programme of Action for Small Island Countries that will be presented during the World Water Forum.

Inter-regional collaboration was made possible through the small island countries Dialogue on Water and Climate which saw a large group of Caribbean specialists presenting case studies related to this issue.

Despite the different approaches both regions adopted

in its consultations and dialogues it is obvious that there are many commonalities between the Pacific and Caribbean in addressing problems related to water and climate and collaboration between the small island countries will contribute to a successful implementation of concrete actions in the future.

The following recommendations can be made to enhance this collaboration:

- Use should be made of the solid base provided by the combined capacity of institutions like CEHI, OAS and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) in the Caribbean and SOPAC, SPREP, PEAC and IGCI in the Pacific.
- The idea of an Island States Water Partnership should be fully explored, possibly within the framework of the Global Water Partnership (GWP).
- Initiatives in both regions on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) can be exchanged and a joint Programme of Action can be developed and endorsed during the small island countries session at Kyoto.
- The programme of action can be submitted to AOSIS and tabled at the follow-up Conference on the UN Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States (UNGCSIDS or Barbados +10).