

Background to the Study

Even without climate change, the smaller island countries in the Pacific are already severely affected by climate variability and extremes. They are also extremely vulnerable to future changes in global and regional climate.

Consequently, since the early 1990s, the Pacific Forum Leaders, through their annual Forum Communiqué, have identified climate change as a priority issue. Their high level of concern was made very apparent in October 2000, when they endorsed the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change, Climate Variability, and Sea-Level Rise. They clearly recognized the need to reduce their vulnerability to these increasing risks through adaptation processes, while also strengthening the human and institutional capacities needed to assess, plan, and respond to these challenges. While climate is acknowledged as a priority issue at the highest levels of government, active support has been lacking. Key ministries are concerned largely with matters of socioeconomic development, such as finance and planning; their priorities are based on the belief that climate is an environmental, not a developmental, issue. Mainstreaming adaptation is designed to overcome this inappropriate and counterproductive separation.

Tangible political support for climate-related initiatives is growing, however, mainly because of increasing recognition that the impacts of a changing climate are already being experienced through the increased occurrence of climate extremes such as unusually intense and/or unseasonal cyclones, flooding, droughts, and other natural phenomena. One way to address this challenge is to integrate disaster management into

a holistic risk reduction strategy that includes adaptation to climate change, all within the broader context of sustainable development policies and planning. In addition, improving the ability to cope with current variability not only provides short-term benefits through risk reduction and more sustainable development, but also increases the adaptive capacity with respect to the increased risks resulting from future global climate change. This linking of short-term and long-term responses to climate-related risks is critical to achieving an integrated, participatory, and holistic approach to a complicated issue. This holistic framework and methodology is formalized as Climate Change Adaptation through Integrated Risk Reduction (CCAIRR).

The studies described in this book are designed to assist Pacific Developing Member Countries (PDMCs) of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to adapt to climate variability and change, including extreme events. The CCAIRR framework and methodology have been used to demonstrate a risk-based approach to adaptation and the mainstreaming of adaptation. Two PDMCs, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Cook Islands, were selected to demonstrate how to mainstream this risk-based approach at three levels: national development planning, sector programs, and project activities.

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