Chapter 9
Small Islands, Vast Oceans and Shared Challenges: Linking Caribbean and Pacific SIDS through South–South and Triangular Cooperation

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ABSTRACT

One of the first projects to attempt to pilot inter-regional south–south cooperation was 'South–South Cooperation Between Pacific and Caribbean SIDS (Small Island Developing States) on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management'. This project engaged and linked regional agencies in both regions that held a mandate from government to address these risks, and the overall project was facilitated by the UNDP Pacific Centre. The project focused on common SIDS climate-risk and disaster-management issues, and the sharing of appropriate practices and methodologies for managing risk, which have worked well in a number of these island countries. In its three-year time frame, this project initiated significant institutional relationships between these regions and exposed both sides to the key players and their expertise, thus establishing the foundations for several ongoing sustainable partnerships. This initiative can be considered to have been quite successful and has provided insights about how best to enable south–south cooperation, as well as knowledge about the challenges faced; however, a follow-up phase is needed and has been unanimously signaled by all partners. The triangular dimensions of this cooperation provided timely and essential resources and long-term support, and helped to bridge cultural differences, all of which proved to be success factors.

1. About the Initiative

1.1 The context of the initiative

With the greatest concentration of small island states in the world, both the Pacific and the Caribbean regions face common threats based on

their similar geography, accelerating climate change and the increasing frequency and intensity of related disasters; tropical cyclones and seawater flooding in particular are annual occurrences, with consequent damage and setbacks to human development. Seismic risk is also a substantial concern in both regions, with an incidence of tsunamis as well as active above-ground and underwater volcanoes in several locations. Populations and key infrastructure concentrated heavily in coastal zones are exposed to recurrent flooding and sea level rise induced by climate change. The social and economic vulnerabilities common to SIDS are apparent in both the Caribbean and the Pacific as a result of their small scale and limited economic diversification, which hamper the resilience of such states and their populations for post-disaster recovery.

However, SIDS countries and local communities also have a range of capacities and practices for effective disaster prevention and management, as well as for coping with and adapting to climate change. Some of these techniques are based on traditional practices which have stood the test of time and proven remarkably resilient, whereas others involve the use of new technologies suited for developing countries with SIDS characteristics and limited resources. There is great potential for exchange of ideas, experiences and best practices between SIDS in the Pacific and the Caribbean, in order to find suitable solutions and replicate best practices to address the various threats posed by climate change and disasters. The way forward for SIDS countries also entails the harmonization of disaster risk management and climate change science, for a more integrated approach that grasps the critical linkages between these fields of work.

Previously, exchanges between Pacific and Caribbean SIDS to address common climate change adaptation and disaster management issues had been sporadic, with interest repeatedly expressed in various fora but insufficient follow-up to capitalize on opportunities to identify and share southern solutions. Under this initiative, as a neutral broker, UNDP, with its long-term presence on the ground in both regions and their member countries played a facilitation role in laying the groundwork for sustained south–south cooperation on these urgent development issues. Beyond these two key regions, issues and experiences from the Maldives and East Timor were also integrated as far as possible as being relevant to the SIDS risk panorama.

1.2 The parties involved and their roles

In view of the shared challenges faced by SIDS as outlined above, a project entitled 'South–South Cooperation Between Pacific and Caribbean SIDS on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management' was developed in a consultative manner and coordinated by the UNDP Pacific Centre, with extensive support from the regional UNDP programme Caribbean Risk Management Initiative (CRMI).

It is worth considering the way in which this project was initially conceived and formulated, as this also highlights the decisive role often played by the triangular cooperation actor – in this case UNDP. The idea first arose when a UNDP staff member who had been managing a regional project on disaster risk management in the Caribbean was transferred to the Pacific region, to work on similar topics and also from a regional perspective. On the eve of her transfer, regional Caribbean partners—the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and the CARICOM Climate Change Centre (CCCCC)—expressed their interest in establishing cooperation with Pacific colleagues on risk issues of common concern, and requested her to explore this possibility. When she arrived in the Pacific, the key regional organizations the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) and the Pacific Islands Applied Geo-Science Commission (SOPAC) also confirmed their enthusiasm to establish such cooperation. Accordingly, the UNDP staff member drafted a project proposal to kick-start discussions. Given the modest funds, it was not possible to convene a large formal consultation, so the UNDP staff member met in Fiji with the Pacific regional organizations based there, and liaised with other colleagues by e-mail. Any opportunities to piggyback on existing regional meetings of the relevant stakeholders were taken; during the Pacific Platform and Comprehensive Disaster Management meetings, for example, given that the national stakeholders for this new south–south cooperation were in attendance already, a side meeting was scheduled to discuss and refine the project proposal. Various partners began to rewrite and draft sections of the project proposal. After a series of such impromptu consultations, supplemented by e-mail exchanges, the document had gone through 14 drafts, and finally all parties were satisfied with its formulation. This process took about eight months, and at that point it was submitted to funders for consideration.

It should be noted that this was a lengthy process, but the deliberate and

repeated involvement of the key partners ultimately led to their solid commitment to and identification with the project. The triangular partner, UNDP, was critical in pulling all this together by structuring and facilitating discussion between partners in two distant regions who did not previously have systematic contact.

One of the success factors in the project formulation process was the fact that the UNDP staff member who facilitated this process – who later went on to become the project manager – is a 'networker' who knows many people working in this field at all levels, and actively expands this network. This is similar to the profile that UNDP had adopted for its Solutions Exchange systems, in which the project manager is required to demonstrate a 'networker' profile. It should also be noted that substantial support was provided by another networker in UNDP on the Caribbean side, who was the project manager of CRMI. The UN's neutrality and credibility, combined with individuals with networking skills, allowed this person to overcome any petty rivalries or personality conflicts, and when UNDP convened meetings to work on the project formulation, its convening power was respected and effective.

Key regional partners mandated by government to lead the sub-regional strategies in these areas were designated in the project's governance structure and led the implementation of various activities – these included CDEMA, CCCCC and the University of the West Indies from the Caribbean region. Key partners from the Pacific region included the Pacific Islands Applied Geo-Science Commission (SOPAC), the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the University of the South Pacific. Depending on the activities, a range of actors from various levels were involved. For example, as speakers at regional meetings, high-level figures such as ministers or deputy ministers participated. However, in other activities, such as meteorological training, the participants were technical practitioners.

1.3 Triangular cooperation component

The largest portion of the funding for the project was kindly provided by the UNDP–Japan Partnership Fund. This funding contribution was allocated as a result of Japan's sensitivity to SIDS risk issues, based in part on its own experience as a country comprised of several islands, and at times hit by devastating disasters such as the recent tsunami and

earthquake.

Japanese colleagues and JICA in particular also provided support to the project by periodically engaging in discussions and sharing expertise on relevant topics. Several meetings to exchange information and compare development strategies were held with JICA staff and consultants and with Japanese embassy officials. The discussions focused on JICA's technical support projects for flood-warning systems in Fiji and the Solomon Islands (including a site visit to Ba, Fiji), as well as a briefing on a forthcoming south–south and triangular project supported by Japan to facilitate Fijian technical expertise in less developed Pacific countries.

At the field level, a local Japanese embassy representative made an informative speech during the Pacific exchange visit to Cuba, at the UNDP office in Havana. A Japanese expert was invited to join a field visit to Kiribati along with Caribbean experts, but he was not available. However, he gave a presentation to the group during the pre-departure briefing in Suva, Fiji (May 2010), on the innovative foraminifer project under way in Tuvalu to regenerate sand for fragile coastal areas affected by erosion and rising sea levels.

UNDP's role in the project as triangular actor was as convener, facilitator, networker, resource mobilizer and translator (across cultural differences). Arguably this triangular support is what ultimately enabled the project to get off the ground, catalyzing the interest and goodwill that had long existed but that was insufficient to lead to actual collaboration. UNDP, and in particular the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, also played an invaluable role by securing funding for this project, once it had been formulated collectively. UNDP had the credibility and familiarity with the partners to play this facilitation role, given its extensive network of country offices, as well as regional centers, which have programs in numerous SIDS countries for decades. Also, UNDP enabled the partners to develop a shared vision of this project, given the UN's well-known neutrality; UNDP was not advocating any specific focus for the project, but rather was willing to support what the partners determined as their priorities.

1.4 Outlines of the initiative

The project's overall objective was to strengthen the safety and resilience of Pacific and Caribbean SIDS communities to a range of

natural hazards by facilitating and supporting the strengthening of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction capacity in SIDS, based on the transfer of appropriate 'southern' expertise and technologies. The initiative was designed to catalyze the great potential for exchange of ideas, experiences and best practices between SIDS in the Pacific and the Caribbean, in order to find suitable solutions and replicate best practices for addressing the various threats posed by climate change and disasters.

The project's approach encompassed three broad aspects:

1) Identification, documentation and dissemination of best practices on integrated climate change adaptation and disaster management specific to the SIDS context.
2) Transfer and exchange of technologies currently being used by SIDS for effective, equitable and appropriate disaster risk management and climate change adaptation, between the Pacific and the Caribbean regions.
3) Disaster risk management and climate change adaptation within the broader development agenda through support for national action planning, mainstreaming and advocacy work in the Pacific and Caribbean regions and countries.

1.5 Knowledge shared and transferred

Overall, the exchange of experiences, best practices and suitable solutions was to a large extent achieved. These outputs are seen by all partners as assets, and will also enable scaling up and further replication of best practices in the project's next phase. Based on the success of the activities carried out under the project, partners such as SOPAC, CDEMA and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) have already mobilized extra funding from other donors, including the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States–European Union (ACP-EU) and the Canadian International Development Agency to build on the partnerships and pilot activities established in this project.

Feedback from partners through training evaluations and through the external project evaluations showed that the new knowledge gained from other SIDS contexts was largely in five areas: 1) establishment of agro-meteorology systems; 2) quality control for climate observations; 3) mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and climate change concerns in development planning across sectors; 4) gender mainstreaming in

disaster risk management in SIDS; and 5) methodologies for post-disaster needs assessment.

Throughout the life of the project, the requirements and the gaps to be addressed were discussed and agreed in consultation with the key partners and stakeholders, in a similar way to the periodic engagement that occurred during the project formulation process. For specific activities, the partner most specialized in those activities determined the knowledge that should be transferred and the best way to do this. For example, the need for training of mid-level meteorology technicians, or climate observers, was first raised in the biannual meeting of the meteorology directors from the Pacific. In discussions with Caribbean partners, it was noted that the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) would be the best source of this training, and SPREP as the Pacific regional partner in charge of climate risk assessment determined that the best modality for Pacific islanders to acquire these skills was to send national meteorology staff members to study in Barbados for eight months to learn these skills and obtain certification. This would be followed by a two-month detail assignment in a Caribbean island country to see how such skills are applied on a day-to-day basis in a small island meteorology office.

For post-disaster needs assessment, the Pacific organizations felt that this methodology needed to be simplified and adapted to the realities of a SIDS country. Therefore, they requested that the trainer should be from the Caribbean, as her experience would be most relevant and she would be familiar with SIDS circumstances and limitations.

One constant feature of the knowledge transfer was the need for face-to-face interaction, as people from small islands value personal relationships above all. In addition, the Pacific is very much an oral culture, with little reliance on written or electronic communication, and people learn best in informal environments. Barriers such as language and cultural differences were overcome by attention to these potential concerns. They were addressed in briefings prior to activities, debriefings afterwards, and by UNDP's role as intermediary to clarify any issues and offer support during the activities.

2. Outputs, Outcomes and Impact

2.1 Selected outputs

Some highlights of the outputs achieved under the project's three main areas are detailed here.

Output 1 Identification, documentation and dissemination of best practices on integrated climate change adaptation and disaster management specific to the SIDS context.

This output consists mainly of the following: 1) knowledge products, 2) knowledge sharing and dissemination and 3) cross-regional exchange opportunities.

Knowledge products

Key knowledge products prepared and disseminated under the project include a checklist on how to mainstream gender into disaster risk management in SIDS. This publication was launched at the regional Pacific Platform meeting in September 2012, which was held in New Caledonia. Demand has been high so far and feedback very positive, with numerous requests for copies from disaster managers, regional agencies, UN agencies and donors. The checklist has been used as a key resource in training activities in Belize, Vanuatu and other countries. A detailed distribution list has been kept and updated, so that in-depth follow-up can be done later on how it was used, and to obtain feedback on its perceived usefulness.

This checklist was conceived and coordinated by the CRMI project manager and the south–south project manager, both of whom were UNDP staff members, given the UN mandate to promote gender equality as essential for human development. These coordinators agreed to hire a Caribbean researcher and a Pacific researcher to jointly prepare the checklist. Accordingly, an expert from Trinidad and one from Samoa were hired, and they worked together to bring the SIDS perspective from both regions into one single guidance document, which was then peer reviewed by experts in the area.

In addition to a specialized manual and models, the internationally renowned experts in agro-meteorology brought over from Cuba to lead the agro-meteorology training prepared a detailed guidance note in

A visit to a demonstration farm in Fiji during agro-meteorology training

response to students' inquiries. This guidance note focuses on 'logical steps for assessment of climate change impacts on agriculture'. The Pacific technical staff members who undertook this training were from the agricultural department and the meteorology department of each country, as it was decided by SPREP and the Fiji Meteorology Service in its regional training role that this would be the best way to motivate these two departments to work together under the new field of agro-meteorology. Much of the climate impact analysis in the Pacific had been done by Australia or New Zealand, with limited emphasis on building capacity in Pacific island colleagues. Therefore, the Cuban trainers noted that even basic skills such as setting up a database for tracking data on climate variables were sometimes lacking. The trainees were enthusiastic about what they had learned in terms of monitoring climate impacts on specific staple crops which were important to their national diet, such as cassava, taro and breadfruit, so as to select varieties which would be better suited to future climate conditions. However, they also noted that this field was still new to them and they would greatly benefit from some subsequent in-country assistance from the trainers.

An Issue Brief[1] on lessons learned about the mainstreaming of disaster risk management (DRM) in SIDS was developed through a series of meetings with SPREP and SOPAC, and consultation with the regional thematic working group. Noting that the mainstreaming of DRM had been under way in the Pacific for five years, it was considered timely to pinpoint the lessons learned which could prove useful to other SIDS countries in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean who were just starting to embark on this process.

Knowledge sharing and dissemination

A project space on UNDP's Teamworks intranet was set up as a platform for sharing the project outputs and results and discussing and engaging

1. An Issue Brief, in UNDP terminology, is written for national and international development partners, as well as UN practitioners. It is designed to bring practitioners up to date on key issues and development practices in specific areas, drawing on research and international best practice.

with interested parties. As of March 2013, this project space had showcased the following content and traffic: 43 members, 19 discussion topics (with 158 views), 15 blog postings (with 93 views), 51 files, 40 pictures (with 47 views), and 14 articles (with 46 views). This is considered an active and successful site.

Contributions were made to electronic networks. There were two contributions made to the Pacific Solution Exchange online discussion on 'climate change and gender': 1) to announce the launch of the gender checklist for SIDS and 2) to present a synopsis of the main findings (as yet unpublished) from case studies on gendered approaches to climate change adaptation in SIDS.

Cross-regional exchange opportunities

Presentations were given at international fora: the project manager gave a presentation at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Climate Change Adaptation (Bangkok, March 2012) to share lessons learned from the project on how to undertake south–south cooperation among SIDS for climate change adaptation. The national disaster manager from the Solomon Islands participated in a high-level forum on aid effectiveness in Busan (Korea, November 2011) to highlight how the south–south cooperation project had enabled policy and practice discussions between the Pacific and the Caribbean regions on common SIDS issues.

There was also cross-regional participation in meetings: Pacific experts and high-level political representatives were invited to participate in the Comprehensive Disaster Management annual Caribbean-wide meeting of disaster managers and stakeholders for three consecutive years during the project. The Pacific experts spoke on the following topics by request of the meeting organizers and in keeping with the meeting themes: traditional food preservation techniques in preparation for cyclone season; how to read the natural signs of incoming cyclones; initiative in the Cook Islands to establish a trust fund for disaster recovery; systems for tracking national investment in DRM and for developing DRM investment profiles; and the mobilization of youth for DRM.

Disaster managers from Barbados and Palau met and discussed cyclone preparedness.

In a reciprocal exchange, Caribbean experts and high-level political representatives were also invited to participate in the Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management annual Pacific-wide meeting of disaster managers and stakeholders for three years during the project. The Caribbean experts spoke on the following topics by request of the meeting organizers and in keeping with the meeting themes: the Caribbean experience with pooled catastrophe risk insurance; how to engage rural communities for more effective disaster preparedness; natural vs. engineered coastal protection measures; and structures and institutions in the Caribbean which coordinate climate change adaptation actions.

Output 2 Transfer and exchange of technologies currently being used by SIDS for effective, equitable and appropriate disaster risk management and climate change adaptation, between the Pacific and the Caribbean regions.

This output consists mainly of the following: 1) training programs and 2) exchange and field visits.

Training programs

A group of 29 technical staff members from meteorology services and agricultural departments from all the Pacific islands as well as the Maldives and East Timor were trained in agro-meteorology for the first time (Nadi, Fiji, May 2011), as a step towards building the capacity of the islands to independently assess climate change impacts on the agricultural sector. In the workshop evaluation, participants indicated that the most useful information that they had acquired related to crop models and climate models, and how to apply these to staple crops exposed to climate change in their respective countries. Trainees found this particularly useful in terms of setting up systems under which they could gather data in their own country – rather than relying on external sources – and update this to ensure that they planted the right varieties of the food crops which were essential to their national diet in the face of a changing climate.

Training on gender mainstreaming in DRM was provided by a senior Caribbean expert to all 14 Pacific disaster managers (Suva, Fiji, August 2010) as a part of their annual professional development closed session,

resulting in evidence of their better grasp of this issue. The disaster managers learned the importance of ensuring gender balance in all decision-making regarding disaster risk, and ways to surmount obstacles common in SIDS countries which tended to exclude and undermine women. They also learned how to take into account women's traditional knowledge for disaster preparedness, and to acknowledge the value of unpaid work done mainly by women and girl child during disaster recovery.

A senior Caribbean expert was identified to collaborate with SOPAC, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to design and conduct regional training on post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) for Pacific stakeholders (Vanuatu, September 2010), integrating best practice from both regions using macro- and micro-level assessment methodologies. Subsequently, the same Caribbean expert was brought by the World Bank to lead the first ever PDNA to be conducted in Fiji (and only the second in the Pacific region), following Cyclone Evan. Among other aspects, the Caribbean expert explained how to overcome the lack of data common to small countries, and provided a methodology for conducting post-disaster social impact surveys in the context of remote and tiny island groups.

Four Pacific island students from Samoa, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea completed an eight-month mid-level meteorology technician training course at CIMH in Barbados (September 2011 to May 2012), the first time ever that Pacific students had studied at this high-level institute. The course was planned to improve the capacity of Pacific island countries, especially remote locations, in order to provide quality data inputs for weather forecasting and climate projections, and to provide WMO certification enabling countries to meet quality management standards for the aviation industry. The students are planning to replicate this training nationally and regionally in the Pacific.

In addition, a provincial disaster manager from the Solomon Islands travelled to Cuba to facilitate climate risk management training for Caribbean practitioners (Havana, Cuba, June 2010), emphasizing traditional coping practices used in Pacific outer islands.

Exchange and field visits

Looking at calibration equipment at CIMH during an exchange visit.

A Pacific delegation of national and regional representatives undertook an exchange visit (July 2010) to four Caribbean countries which were leading in effective DRM practices: Barbados, Cuba, Jamaica and St Lucia. A film documenting this Caribbean-Pacific exchange visit, with initial reflections on the relevance and reliability of best practice, was produced and launched in both regions to generate discussion. Beyond this discussion, a Caribbean delegation undertook a field trip to the Yasawas islands in Fiji (August 2010) to see how a remote island community implemented community-based disaster preparedness in the Pacific with minimal resources.

Following a field visit by Caribbean water sector experts to Kiribati, two spin-off projects for on-the-ground south–south technical cooperation in Kiribati were formulated and submitted to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme as 'strategic projects' seeking triple funding. Areas of collaboration were non-invasive mapping of groundwater resources and eco-friendly agriculture techniques for soil conservation. As a result of the field visit by the Caribbean experts, they identified opportunities to apply an approach used successfully in the Caribbean, which had not been tested in atoll conditions but could prove very effective. The Caribbean experts saw this as a learning opportunity and an experiment, while the Kiribati government viewed it as a way to address an urgent water shortage.

Based on contacts established under the project, proposals have been submitted to GEF for the transfer of Cuban practices in ecological farming, with regard to land degradation and SIDS-appropriate climate change adaptation. The project assisted in formulating the proposals, which had been submitted by Fiji, Kiribati, Niue and the Solomon Islands and would probably be initiated in late 2013. The Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community, POETCom had heard of the innovative Cuban experiences in ecological farming – such as urban agriculture and biological pest control – but did not have any direct contacts or details on these practices. There was a gap to be filled, as the Ministers of

Lands for all Pacific islands had noted in their triennial meeting in 2012, inasmuch as the Pacific wished to advance in organic agriculture but required much technical assistance. POETCom was given the mandate to lead on this, in affiliation with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. Given UNDP's profile in promoting south–south linkages as a result of this project, POETCom approached the project manager at UNDP, who was able to provide the missing details and contacts, enabling this project to be formulated. Again, it was the triangular role of UNDP that transformed general interest and good intentions into actual collaboration. The GEF Small Grants Programme immediately saw the validity of this proposal and promptly approved it for funding.

Output 3 Disaster risk management and climate change adaptation included in the broader development agenda through support for national action planning, mainstreaming and advocacy work in the Pacific and Caribbean regions and countries.

Apart from the 'lessons learned' issue brief developed to guide the process for mainstreaming DRM into development planning across sectors based on the experiences from the Pacific, it must be noted that limited progress has been made on this output, compared to the others.

2.2 Emerging impacts

Systematic exchange at regional meetings established institutional relationships and dialogue between regional bodies with similar mandates in the Pacific and the Caribbean – such as CDEMA and SOPAC, SPREP and CIMH, and others – which did not exist prior to the project. This enabled the participating agencies to become more familiar with each other's mandates and realms of action, as well as their key technical staff members and representatives. As a result, the SIDS position at international forums became more unified and more clearly articulated, which outside observers saw as a positive development. Also, this allowed the regional partners to leverage funding from ACP–EU to continue this cross-regional participation at regional meetings, as it was considered essential for networking and knowledge sharing. It has now become a routine practice for the regional agencies involved. Acknowledgement of the importance of south–south exchange on common SIDS concerns has also been included in the official declarations from these sub-regional meetings.

Another indication of the project's impact is the interest of regional and global partners who were not initially involved in joining the project and delivering activities; these partners have expressed their keen interest in being key partners for the second phase. New partners include CIMH, the Coastal Zone Management Unit of Barbados, and the Fiji Meteorology Service, a sub-regional service provider. Flexibility in the project design allowed incorporation of these new partners during the ongoing implementation. As this was such a ground-breaking project, constituting perhaps the first time that south–south cooperation had been attempted between two regions (rather than between two countries), the project manager insisted on maintaining an iterative, flexible approach which encouraged at all times the leadership of the regional organizations, and allowed priorities to emerge through discussion. Collaboration between these two regions was unfamiliar territory and had to be explored step by step.

The project has generally advanced support for south–south cooperation as a valid development approach and has been a reference point for greater awareness of south–south cooperation regionally and even globally. Additional spin-off projects may be anticipated in the near future, depending on resource mobilization.

There are several signs of the sustainability of the project's achievements, such as continued participation in cross-regional meetings and take-up of PDNA based on Caribbean expertise, as well as spin-off projects which have been formulated and submitted to GEF. South–south cooperation between these two regions on such activities will continue and will probably flourish on these foundations, eventually without UNDP's facilitation. At the same time, follow-up on project activities are ongoing, such as a survey currently being conducted to follow up on the application of agro-meteorology training with the participating countries, and the distribution and use of the gender checklist, so further progress is expected in the next few years.

Project partners noted that, for better sustainability, further resource support and continued UNDP facilitation to scale up south–south cooperation among Caribbean and Pacific SIDS was still indispensable. During the project's external evaluation, all parties interviewed expressed unanimous support for a second phase of this project with insightful feedback.

3. Success Factors and Lessons Learned

3.1 Success factors

Some success factors of this project were identified by an external evaluation at the project's conclusion. Additional success factors and lessons learned were observed during an online discussion forum hosted by the project coordinator on the Pacific Solutions Exchange, which engaged many participants in various project activities, as well as other key players in the Caribbean and Pacific regions.

The following success factors have been noted:

a) The project had a clear focus as a result of the extensive consultation process during its formulation, which gradually sharpened the focus;
b) The project concept was beneficial in terms of the networking opportunities for technical exchange and technology transfer between two geographical areas.
c) Implementation of the project was efficient, given the wide range of activities implemented with a modest budget;
d) Budget analyses indicated that long–term (i.e. several months') training courses were cost-effective in comparison to regional workshops. More detailed reflection and follow-up planning was also evident from those trained on the long-term course;
e) The project contributed to the development of stronger relationships, awareness and understanding between the regional organizations involved upon which future cooperation could build;
f) There were significant demand and a reasonable level of support for the project from the relevant regional organizations, thus minimizing the 'transaction costs' of negotiating with partners. The high level of ownership and enthusiasm from the regional partners smoothed the transactions; and
g) There was strong commitment and vision from the project manager, who played a convening and networking role.

3.2 Lessons learned

While the project's success has been acknowledged, at the same time the high number of outputs and activities made the project difficult to manage and led to disproportionate efforts going into implementation of the numerous activities, at the expense of time that could have been

dedicated to more follow-up and evaluation of activities. A second phase of the project should focus in more depth on a limited number of SIDS issues and address each selected issue at the policy, national and local levels for better impact.

In addition, due to limited project resources, staff time for project monitoring and follow-up was not adequate. One consideration from a human resources viewpoint is that it would be advantageous to assign full-time volunteers to form part of the staff team. In addition to ensuring sufficient staff members, this would enhance visibility for any government supporting through bilateral funding, facilitate ongoing communications between partners and help to integrate contributions more systematically.

In addition, instead of exploring more new technologies and practices, a second phase of the project should go further in ensuring transfer of the practices already identified as addressing gaps under the previous outcomes, such as agro-meteorology applications and support for climate change impact analysis. At the same time, modest co-funding should be sought from regional and national partners to foster greater commitment and ownership. To expand inclusion and influence, social media and electronic platforms should be better utilized, including consideration of establishing an informal online chat function to enable discussion among SIDS colleagues.

Some lessons learned from experience about how to undertake effective south–south cooperation more generally have been offered by colleagues in an online forum:

Logic of commonality – for south–south cooperation to have foundation, there must be common issues, concerns or characteristics shared by the southern partners. In the project mentioned, the climate risk concerns affected SIDS in different regions. It was noted for example that 'Barbados and Jamaica share the same weather patterns' (Williams Worworkon, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013). Some social development issues were also found to be comparable among SIDS, as one researcher working in both the Caribbean and Pacific regions noted that the inter-regional research conducted under the project 'was a very useful exercise highlighting similarities in organization of communities, societal perceptions and approaches to development,

people's worldview, barriers and challenges, general gender perceptions and traditional norms' (Aliti Vunisea, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013).

Personal contacts and trust – an expert from St Lucia elaborated on this point. 'Many of the region's achievements are based on interpersonal interactions… when I go to a country to assist I am not seen as a stranger walking in but a friend known for years; such a bond is priceless and cannot be measured' (Dawn French, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013).

Specific and appropriate southern approaches or methodologies – one commentator noted there had to be 'something to share' (Taito Nakalevu, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013).

Long time frame – for a south–south partnership to flourish, a certain amount of time is required to institutionalize the partnership and anchor it. South–south cooperation is not a quick fix. A Fijian participant explained, 'the relationships established via the south–south project are still relatively new, and will require time to mature' (Paula Holland, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013). St Lucia mentioned a specific instance: it borrowed the Mass Crowd Events guidelines from Barbados, which were adapted 'over the course of six years and with many consultations' (Dawn French, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013). This long-term commitment is facilitated by triangular partners such as UNDP, which have a permanent in-country presence and can therefore provide support over the long term.

High-level commitment – commentators are adamant that 'political will must be asserted' by governments to maintain south–south cooperation (Roger Rivero, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013) and this must be secured 'by both host country officials and recipient country' (Jacinda Fairholm, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013). In the exchange visits, ministers and deputy ministers participated to share policy directions at the highest national and regional levels, showing their political will to advance SIDS risk issues. These high-level representatives would then meet at international meetings in Brussels or Geneva, and prepare joint negotiating positions based on their previous exchange and familiarity, which had been facilitated by the project.

Mutual respect among partners – engagement between southern partners must be respectful, horizontal and reciprocal. 'It should be a

given that all counterparts have the effective capacity to understand and to play an active, creative role, contributing to the success of collaboration among equals' (Roger Rivero, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013).

Role of facilitator or triangular partner – the facilitating partner should be familiar with the models, methodologies and primary actors on both sides, 'particularly in the case of working across diverse language, political and economic structures' (Jacinda Fairholm, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013). The triangular partner can then better explain the context and history of these models or methodologies, and assess whether they can be recommended for another SIDS region.

3.3 Challenges for south–south cooperation

Interlocutors also noted some recurring challenges that south–south cooperation had to overcome:

Intermittent funding – this is signaled by many as an 'undeniable challenge, but also the greatest opportunity for exploring triangular partnerships' (Litia Mawi, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013). 'Resources are needed to nurture these relationships over the years, until such a time that they become natural and are fully embedded in the development activities of the country' (Paula Holland, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013). In the project profiled in this article, many of those who consulted mentioned the need to secure resources for follow-up activities and in-country support.

Keeping activities going – as with teamwork in general, 'if there are no common activities, the partnership will recede' (Taito Nakalevu, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013). SPREP and CCCCC keep up the momentum of their partnership by regularly holding joint side events at COPs.

Cultural and language differences – even with common ground agreed on, cultural differences are formidable and routinely impede understanding and communication. These cultural differences have many facets including 'cultural heritage' and 'community calendars' (Dawn French, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013). Language differences require translation and are taxing, and even differences in dialects and accents cause stress and miscommunication, in addition to grappling with time zone differences and long-haul flights. Here the role of triangular actors is very valuable in acting as facilitators in all of these aspects. One participant even stated the need for 'cultural orientation for foreigners'

(Sakiusa Tubuna, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013) to ensure that collaborators were 'respectful to other cultures'.

Thinking beyond vulnerability – south–south cooperation can go farthest by focusing on strengths rather than by sharing commiseration on vulnerabilities. One colleague advocated 'the need to shift Pacific SIDS mindset away from a focus on vulnerability into more positive and alternative visions for development… which would ensure inclusiveness and self-sufficiency' (Litia Mawi, in Vakalalabure et al. 2013).

4. Conclusion

Ultimately, this project was found to be highly relevant to UNDP and to the entire UN system, as the recent Human Development Report 2012 emphasizes the 'rise of the south' and the related increasing importance of south–south cooperation as a development approach. This was the first inter-regional SIDS south–south cooperation project, and in that regard was quite ambitious and gained high visibility, with comments and suggestions even from the UNDP Administrator. Partners in the region have been unanimous in their enthusiasm for the project, even while proposing adjustments and improvements to the project design for its next phase.

In the recent online survey canvassing experiences in south–south cooperation which was conducted on the Pacific Solutions Exchange, many contributors noted that south–south cooperation needed the participation of northern development partners to secure meaningful partnership opportunities and collaboration. This confirms the enduring value of the triangular dimension of south–south cooperation, in which the UN system and key bilateral donors such as Japan can help to frame southern exchanges and facilitate network building, dialogue and partnerships with the view to overarching development issues.

As the balance of power shifts globally, we are witnessing the 'rise of the south' and the reconfiguration of partnerships for development and these partnerships are just beginning to explore what triangular cooperation can offer.

References

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