



SPREP 2000

Review of the South
Pacific Regional
Environment Programme
Summary Report

Quality Assurance Series
No. 22 August 2000



The Australian Government's
Overseas Aid Program

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INTRODUCTION

The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, SPREP, is an inter-governmental organisation established to serve the states and territories of the South Pacific region by protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development. SPREP's members are the twenty-two Pacific island countries (PICs) and Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States of America.

In early 2000, the Australian overseas aid agency, AusAID, organised an independent review of SPREP. Its aim was to provide up-to-date knowledge of SPREP's programs and procedures and to improve understanding of the contributions they make to the Pacific islands region.

The review process included interviews by the two-person Review Team in Samoa, Fiji and Australia, with the SPREP Secretariat and staff from a selection of national government offices, regional organisations, donor agencies and non-government organisations that work with SPREP. Staff at Australian overseas missions in other Pacific island countries conducted additional interviews and surveys with national and state government officers. A total of 136 individuals representing 62 organisations in 12 countries contributed information and comments. This included 20 staff from the SPREP Secretariat. Over 100 documents were examined, including reports on SPREP's 1998 and 1999 programs, individual project records held by SPREP or donor agency offices, and materials prepared for the review of the 1997-2001 SPREP Action Plan.

The review process provided a broad perspective on the regional environment organisation and program in the first half of 2000. The scope of the exercise constrained the length of time spent on any one aspect and limited the depth of the review. The review mentions, but does not discuss in detail, the 2001-2004 Action Plan which was being developed during the time of the review.

The review report describes the institution of SPREP, its governance, management, resources, programs and activities at the time of review, with particular attention to the relevance of SPREP to its members, the region and Australia; the efficiency of its governance, structure, systems and operations; and the effectiveness of its program and activities. The report includes recommendations for the Secretariat, AusAID, other SPREP members and partner organisations, with the aim of strengthening SPREP's work of coordinating environmental protection and natural resource management in the South Pacific.

THE RELEVANCE OF SPREP

The Relevance of SPREP to Its Members

SPREP's principal role is to promote cooperation and assist its members with issues of environmental management and conservation. The underlying importance of SPREP's business is that a healthy environment is critical to the Pacific island countries (PICs) because of their small size and vulnerable ecologies and because islanders' livelihoods are largely dependent on these limited and fragile natural resources.

The needs of member countries for assistance from SPREP are expressed through national planning mechanisms and conveyed to regional planning fora including the formal SPREP Meeting. SPREP's response is conveyed in SPREP Action Plans and in the program that is subsequently delivered and reported upon.

The independent island states have been the main recipients of assistance from SPREP. The 1998 SPREP Annual Report indicated that some states received more than twice as many acts of assistance as others. The island dependencies did not receive any direct assistance, participating only in some regional initiatives, and the metropolitan country members were involved only in governing and supporting SPREP. The Review Team concluded that it would be valuable for all members to contribute more actively to the planning and development of the program rather than merely waiting for SPREP to deliver assistance. Members could draw benefit from, and contribute to, SPREP by linking national strategic and development plans to the region's coordinating mechanism for environmental protection and management.

The first substantial effort made by many independent PICs to identify their national priorities for environmental management and protection was the development of National Environment Management Strategies (NEMS) in the early 1990s. The review used a selection of PICs' NEMS to determine members' expressed needs. The analysis of 7 NEMS revealed 201 priority proposals in 5 main categories. Eighty-six per cent (173) of the proposals were for preparatory and supportive activities rather than for actual implementation of resource management action. The NEMS expressed strong demands for capacity building, information, education, training assistance and institutional strengthening. Nearly half (49%) of the proposals were in these areas.

SPREP's most recent Annual Report, for 1998, was analysed to compare what was delivered with the needs identified in members' NEMS. The analysis confirmed that the regional organisation has done a lot of work that meets the demand, as part of specific climate change, coastal management or conservation area projects. Most of SPREP's activities with members have included components aimed at building local capacity and environmental awareness. SPREP's two largest projects have allocated 16-20% and 43% of their respective funds to education, information and training-related activities.

However, the NEMS analysis highlights the improvement required in the region's planning and monitoring mechanisms. The NEMS were a major investment of effort that is not easily repeated. Unfortunately, in many countries there was insufficient follow-up, proposals were dismissed as wish lists and few resources materialised for implementation.

Interviews with government and partner agency representatives in 12 of SPREP's member countries produced numerous comments on SPREP's current relevance to its members. Members value SPREP's assistance in information sharing, training, public media work, publications, reproduction of materials and international conventions. Respondents regarded provision of technical advice as a key role for the Secretariat, but also one that needs greater resources and attention to satisfying members' particular information needs.

Members were concerned that the region has neglected the Apia and SPREP Conventions. The Review Team concluded that SPREP should develop a systematic approach to working on international agreements, with an appropriate strategy and adequate core resources to assist members with a selection of key conventions.

Concern was expressed that SPREP, largely because of its funding mechanism, has been preoccupied with implementing projects and that these have often not met the basic needs of its members. SPREP is perceived as a project implementation agency, although the Secretariat has recognised the problem and, in many instances, has moved away from a direct project implementation role.

SPREP has built its own capacity over the past decade by executing aid-funded regional projects. While some donors argued that smaller island countries do not have the capacity to implement complex projects by themselves, several PIC government agencies criticised SPREP's role in project management and considered that SPREP would be more relevant and useful to them as a facilitator, advisor and coordinator. The strong feeling was that projects are more effective if implemented nationally or locally, and that SPREP should work "further upstream", providing technical and policy advice and assistance to members and partners.

The Review Team considered that the SPREP program should not be dominated to such an extent by projects, and that instead the Secretariat and Members should deliberately strengthen the program's technical advice, training and institution-building functions. SPREP should further develop "information sharing" as its principal mode of service to members and partners.

The Relevance of SPREP to Donors

SPREP is important to overseas aid donors as a regional, inter-governmental, technical coordination agency. Donors rely on SPREP to understand the region's environment and biodiversity issues and to organise projects in locally appropriate ways. There has been a trend towards larger aid projects that are "regional", "integrated" and complex. The rationale for this is that it should be possible to apply to these projects a high standard of management and administration and achieve economies of scale. There is also recognition of the drawbacks with this system, including loss of local ownership and local capacity building from inappropriate "regional" projects.

A number of donors were critical of SPREP's lack of attention to serving their needs for advice and guidance. On the other hand, some donors appeared to have little genuine interest in SPREP's long-term concerns or knowledge of its program or plans. Some donor offices attached low relevance to a regional program focussed narrowly on the environment, and preferred to deal with natural resource issues as a component of a sectoral development project.

Aid donors have contributed to SPREP's program being excessively "projectised". Whereas projects should be useful supplementary activities, they form virtually the entire SPREP program. The advantages of projects for direction and administrative control can be outweighed by bringing an inflexible, narrow and piecemeal approach.

The Review Team concluded that SPREP should work more with donors and with regional and national agencies with a view to addressing environmental concerns within the "mainstream" of Pacific island societies. In these partnerships SPREP should ensure that environmental factors are taken into account in all programs and projects that affect the region's natural resources, including regional programs, aid and national initiatives in forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, mining, infrastructure construction, urban planning and education.

The Relevance of SPREP to Australia

The review assessed the relevance of SPREP to Australia in particular, as the member that had initiated the review, with a close neighbour's direct interest in the environmental outcomes of the organisation's activities. The Review Team concluded that the priorities identified in SPREP's current plans and programs matched reasonably well with AusAID's strategy for the Pacific island countries. In addition, SPREP's program has contributed directly or indirectly to four of AusAID's Key Results Areas, and appears to have taken principles of gender equity and environmental sustainability into account.

AusAID is interested in natural resource utilisation and environmental management as a component of mainstream development, whereas SPREP's program has had a more conventional focus on protection of the natural environment and biodiversity. The review recorded that, while Australia relies on SPREP to extend the concept of environmental protection across the Pacific islands region, SPREP's assistance is not distributed evenly among countries.

The Review Team also noted that there has been relatively little interaction between SPREP and Australian Government and non-government agencies in mutually beneficial joint programming and cooperation in regional environment protection and management.

THE EFFICIENCY OF SPREP'S STRUCTURE AND SYSTEMS

The review examined the efficiency of SPREP's systems for governance, programming and planning, institutional development, management and administration.

Governance

SPREP is governed through the SPREP Meeting of member government officials and Ministers for the Environment. The current schedule is a Ministerial meeting every four years, a plenary officials meeting every two years and a sub-committee of officials meeting to approve the work program and budget in the intervening years.

The SPREP Meeting appears to be a transparent mechanism serviced diligently by the Secretariat. Concerns raised by members included the inadequate frequency of the meetings and the inconsistency of representation.

The Review Team concluded that the SPREP Meeting should be re-formed into a smaller, annual, technical working meeting, focussed primarily on setting broad directions for SPREP through the Action Plan and annual work program. To strengthen the region's political agenda for the environment, the links between SPREP Meetings and the meetings of the Forum Officials Committee and the Forum leaders should be developed further by the two Secretariats.

Planning & Programming Systems

Selection and Prioritisation of Activities: The Pacific's broad range of local, national and regional interests makes it essential for members to have efficient planning and programming systems. The NEMS were planned as a major tool for countries, but produced few useful outcomes and need to be reviewed and reformulated. The SPREP Action Plan was intended to be the main tool by which the SPREP program was planned, broad priorities proposed and agreed, activities determined and results monitored. Unfortunately, the Action Plan appears to have been found inadequate and has received little attention or use. The Review Team considered that the 1997 – 2000 Plan was of poor quality as a strategic management tool. The SPREP program has grown in complexity and there is a need for more coordination and coherence under the common planning framework provided by the Action Plan. The Secretariat has taken steps to rectify shortcomings in the new Action Plan for 2001 – 2004.

Planning processes in member countries need to better integrate and "mainstream" environment issues. Environment departments appear marginalised, without adequate capacity, political support or cooperation between Ministries. The system of SPREP National Focal Points has been unreliable as it does not promote engagement with other agencies and processes in member countries. Knowledge in countries of SPREP's current strategies, plans and activities has been poor. A national development framework, that integrated the concerns of all resource sector managers for environmental sustainability, would be more effective than the prevailing approach of trying to "manage the environment" as a separate sector.

Planning and Design of Activities and Allocating Resources: The standard of planning and design of SPREP activities has varied widely. Some donor-funded projects have required a formal plan, logical framework and risk management, but numerous activities seem to have been managed informally, with little quality control. SPREP should aim for a consistently high standard of design for its smaller projects and activities, with attention paid to rigorous design, preparation and management support.

SPREP's program has been determined to a large extent by funding that has been available from overseas aid donors. The Secretariat has formulated projects that match both donors' interests and gaps in the Action Plan. However, donor agencies have their own priorities and strategies, and may not be willing or able to be flexible. The Review Team concluded that a useful mechanism would be for donors to base their strategies and financing activities on the SPREP Action Plan.

Although the review found that SPREP's two largest projects had been managed carefully with regard to local implementation and ownership, member countries were generally critical of the trend towards large, multi-faceted projects that are applied to several small island states for economies of scale. Too often such projects have not adequately addressed national and local priorities and have not been 'owned' by national or local stakeholders. By not being directly responsible for the concept, design, implementation, monitoring or drawing their own lessons, local partners have ended up gaining less than the regional organisation, and project sustainability has suffered.

The Review Team concludes that it would be valuable for the next phase of SPREP's development to focus on planning and delivering a set of core service functions and to deliberately limit engagement in projects. Project implementation should be devolved fully to national and local organisations. The Secretariat should organise or facilitate only small, simple pilot exercises, for the purpose of exploring effective solutions to specific problems.

As part of moving "beyond projects" towards this next phase, careful attention should be given to the rigorous design and development of the core functions SPREP will implement. The primary core function of SPREP should be to provide members and partners (including international and other regional organisations) with advice on technical issues and policy development concerning the environment and ecologically sustainable development. SPREP should also develop the related function of monitoring the state of the environment and alerting members and partners to the need for action.

Monitoring, Reporting, Evaluation & Learning

SPREP's monitoring and reporting at program level has been through annual work programs, budgets and reports provided to members through the annual Sub-Committee and biennial SPREP Meetings, as well as a formal Annual Report for a wider audience. Monitoring and reporting standards for SPREP activities have varied widely. Formally managed "donor projects" have tended to be monitored and managed under efficient contractual arrangements which the donor and Secretariat have followed carefully. Typically they have required regular progress reports to the donor's set format. By contrast, many SPREP activities and smaller projects have not been designed to strict plans. They may not have had objectives set or outputs planned, and monitoring may have been limited to recording activity, costs or time expended.

The four-year Action Plan was formulated with planned outputs and performance indicators, so that progress with implementation would be readily monitored and evaluated. However, the Review Team concluded that the Action Plan has not been used adequately for monitoring program activity and results. Part of the problem has been the poor formulation of the performance indicators.

In 1998-99, the Secretariat introduced Performance and Output Budgeting (POB) that is being used to monitor the production of planned outputs. The work program framework was based on the Action Plan. The new system was still being developed at the time of the review and the Secretariat was addressing some problems. However, the system appeared to be over-

complicated with low-level detail and to be poorly understood by some Secretariat staff. An apparent problem for monitoring was that the Key Outputs and performance indicators of the new POB framework were not the same as those of the Action Plan Outputs. A further concern of the Review Team was that formally planned and contracted projects register on the new work program framework only as a series of activities and the broad objectives of the project are lost sight of.

SPREP needs to strengthen its systems for learning from its experiences and sharing lessons with its members and partners. There have been few clues as to whether SPREP has made progress towards middle level objectives under its goal of environmental protection and management in the PICs. The Secretariat needs to pay greater attention to projects as integral parts of the overall program and at their conclusion. Effective development of the program will depend on the Secretariat and members systematically analysing events, and evaluating achievements and broader impacts over the long term. There is a need for baseline data and for measurable targets or indicators of success to be set for SPREP's Strategic Outputs.

Institutional Capacity – Resources

In the six years 1994-1999, total annual funds available to SPREP were US million dollars 5.8, 6.7, 8.1, 8.2, 7.6 and 9.6 respectively. Ninety per cent of these funds have been provided by donors for specific project activities. Funds raised for projects have increased steadily while a fixed US\$0.5 million a year has been available for running core functions. SPREP's core funds have derived from members' annual subscriptions and from project management fees. Core funds have paid for some staff salaries, coordination activities, servicing of SPREP meetings, general communications, liaison and information services to members. An inadequate core budget has been a perennial problem for SPREP, affecting many issues noted in this review. For example, SPREP has difficulty in responding to members' requests for assistance in areas not covered by its portfolio of projects. The problem has got worse; as SPREP has grown to a relatively large organisation the core budget has remained the same, ie. it has decreased in relative terms, despite the increasing costs of project management, supervision and support. An exacerbating factor has been that some members have not paid their subscriptions; in some cases for several years.

The Review Team considered the inadequacy of SPREP's core funding and the increasingly disproportionate project funding to be the most serious issue for SPREP's management. The review found support among government officials in Suva and Apia and within SPREP for member countries to pay contributions promptly and to settle outstanding contributions. Support was recorded also for increasing contributions substantially.

AusAID and NZ ODA have started to provide SPREP with additional 'extra-budgetary' funding which SPREP is able to use as a source of longer-term program funding. The Review Team considered this a most positive development for SPREP. It provides the Secretariat with a significant opportunity to move beyond many of the issues that arise when funds are tied to discrete, relatively narrow, inflexible and short-term projects.

Organisational Structure

The SPREP Secretariat has been based in Apia, Samoa since 1993. Four Division Heads have been responsible to the Director for six Program areas or strategies. There has been an executive management group of four, strengthened in late 1999 by the appointment of an Executive Officer. The total number of staff was 67 in March 2000, an increase of 30 per cent since 1995. At the time of review, thirty staff were funded from core budget, the rest by a range of donors.

The Review Team concluded that there were too few senior professional staff for the development, management and coordination of the SPREP program. At the time of review, two Division Heads covered five programs and 42 staff. The Divisional structure appears artificial and has engendered little feeling of coherence across the program. The structure has not promoted efficient and effective use of staff, nor encouraged coordination and consultation among professionals in different Divisions. Within each Division staff have been aligned to projects. Senior management staff appear to have had little time for policy, strategic planning and development tasks. The lack of a Deputy Director has left the Director to undertake the bulk of representative, policy, managerial and fund raising duties, necessitating considerable travel, and adding to the responsibilities of the Heads of Divisions.

The Secretariat have recognised the shortcomings of the structure. The Action Plan under development at the time of review, for the period 2001 – 2004, will have implications for the organisation of SPREP. Following the completion of the new Action Plan, the Secretariat intends to review its Corporate Plan prior to the SPREP Ministerial meeting in October 2000.

Administrative and Financial Procedures

Financial administration of SPREP has been governed by the Financial Regulations adopted by the Fifth Meeting in 1992, and applicable to all SPREP financial activities irrespective of the source of funds. The Review Team found the budgetary processes to be transparent and reasonably efficient, but poorly understood by some staff and member country officials. SPREP accounts have been externally audited. Audit procedures were clear and had been complied with consistently. Future audits will be extended to project funding going from SPREP to members and partners.

With respect to procurement and contracting, procedures are in place but management is to review these to ensure more rigorous and open procedures and to enforce compliance by staff.

Regional Relationships

SPREP is the technical agency responsible for advising on environment and sustainability issues to its members, the region and internationally. It is one of eight inter-governmental organisations serving the South Pacific, unfortunately with overlapping mandates and functions. The heads of the eight organisations have formed the Council of the Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) to review the agencies' work programs, their combined efficacy, and common positions on specific issues.

Coordination between the Pacific regional organisations needs to be strengthened. They have tended to compete for significance and funding, show lack of understanding of their respective areas, and operate narrowly within the frameworks of their own data sources, networks, paradigms and training. A particular concern for the review was that, despite the need for a crosscutting approach to environment work, the regional organisations appear to not work well together on initiatives affecting the region's environment and natural resources.

A regional strategic framework had been developed to guide synchronisation of the regional organisations' programs, but had been found too complex and constraining. There was interest at the time of the review in integrating the regional technical organisations, with an exercise underway to assess possible integration of SPC and SOPAC. Arrangements have been made for joint programming discussions between SPREP and the SPC and between SPREP and SOPAC. SPREP and the Forum Secretariat have also improved mechanisms for introducing environmental issues onto the Forum's agenda.

In the longer term, it might be feasible to link the governing councils of the technical organisations, to integrate the organisations and to define distinct terms of reference for a small number of complementary technical programs within a single institution. In the interim, a valuable unifying mechanism would be for all the regional organisations to adopt the same goal with respect to the environment. This would reflect a shared concern and the programs' common purpose of ecologically sustainable, economic and social development. The Review Team also recommends an appraisal of the environmental components of the regional organisations' programs and plans, and drafting of a single framework. This would indicate a coherent, consistent and collaborative approach to regional development assistance under each of the resource economic sectors.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SPREP

The review considered the broad successes achieved by the Secretariat and regional environment program, and assessed the effectiveness of a sample of projects undertaken by SPREP.

SPREP has been developed into a significant organisation for the Pacific islands region. What started as a small field program of the South Pacific Commission has been transformed into an independent organisation with modern systems for management of staff, finances, information and communications. A professional administrative and technical team has been established with reasonable facilities and working conditions.

Over the past five years, SPREP has raised nearly US\$30 million in funds from external sources for new activities. This has required considerable skilled resources in planning, project design, documentation, communications and negotiation.

SPREP has developed satisfactory relations with a number of overseas development assistance agencies. It has built a track record of professional administration and execution of donor-

funded projects. In 2000, at least eight multilateral and bilateral donors were funding members of SPREP's professional staff.

SPREP has guided many stakeholders in environmental management and conservation across the complex region over the past decade. This has included coordinating developments with its 26 member countries and promoting cooperation among national agencies, regional institutions, donors and partner organisations. SPREP has effectively raised the profile of environmental issues in the PICs and in international fora.

Part of SPREP's mandate has been to promote integrated legal, planning and management mechanisms in the region. The SPREP Action Plans have been important contributions to this objective, and the PICs' National Environment Management Strategies were a further important achievement attributable largely to SPREP's efforts. Although the Review Team concluded that there is a need for further development, the quality of these iterative planning exercises has improved over the years.

The Secretariat has a substantial record of review, documentation and publication of information about the natural features, environment and resources of the Pacific islands region. These form a major accessible resource for planners, managers, decision-makers, educators, trainers and students. Members value the information, advice and training provided through SPREP to PIC organisations, including the large number of workshops and other meetings that contribute to local capacity building. SPREP has led the long-running South Pacific regional conservation conferences, held every 4 years, the proceedings of which are a valuable record of conservation progress across the region. SPREP was instrumental in formulating the 1999-2002 Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands Region, and coordinated development of two significant monitoring tools – an Activities Inventory and a Monitoring Matrix.

SPREP's professional staff have been dedicated and skilful in supporting island state members in the series of significant international negotiations and agreements that marked the 1990s.

The Secretariat has developed a substantial and diverse program of activities. The review recorded almost 150 acts of assistance to member countries in 1998 and 124 project accounts across the four Divisions in 1999.

The Effectiveness of Projects carried out by SPREP

The review assessed a sample of 16 projects, as a cross-section of SPREP's technical program of the past 3-4 years.

For each project, the project manager was interviewed briefly and available planning documents, financial statements, reports and other written materials were examined. In addition, information and comments specific to the project, that had been obtained from interviews with other organisations during the review, were taken into account.

Project management: The way in which the SPREP Secretariat and staff had planned, organised and managed the 16 projects was assessed. Three aspects of each project's management were examined – planning & design, participation & ownership, and implementation & management. A qualitative assessment was made and a simple rating (1 Weak – 5 Best Practice) was given for how each aspect had been handled for each project.

Three of the 16 projects were rated Good (4) or Best Practice (5) for each of the three aspects of management. The management of another 6 projects was considered to have been Satisfactory (3). The remaining 7 projects were rated Mediocre (2) in the ways they had been managed.

Project effectiveness: The 16 projects were assessed further to evaluate their effectiveness with regard to (a) production of planned results or outputs and (b) the likelihood that they had contributed, or would contribute, to a broader outcome in line with the objectives of the activity.

In terms of producing planned outputs, 11 of the projects (69%) were rated Good (4) or Best Practice (5) and 3 were Satisfactory (3). Only 2 were considered less than Satisfactory, both as Mediocre (2). With regard to contributing towards eventual outcomes, the majority of projects, 10 of the 16, were assessed as Mediocre. Three were rated Satisfactory and 3 as Good.

The results reflect reasonably accurately the way in which SPREP is structured and managed. They show a strong inwards focus onto individual projects and activities. The basic responsibility assigned to a project manager is to ensure production of the immediate planned products or outputs. The results indicate that SPREP's project managers and staff meet this responsibility well, the achievement of desired outcomes less so.

The challenge for a project-oriented organisation like SPREP is to turn the array of discrete projects into an integrated program, and to increase the focus on the broader influences and achievements that it is aiming for. The assessment findings may indicate that there is insufficient encouragement for individual project managers to focus outwards and upwards, towards broader and longer-term outcomes. This may be a reflection of the organisation's apparent preoccupation with projects, the lack of baseline data and monitoring of higher-level trends and strategic achievements, and the relatively weak management structure at the program level.

SPREP needs to strengthen both the way in which individual activities are managed within the organisation and the attention and resources given to management of the overall program.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A Common Regional Goal for Environment and Development

The SPREP Secretariat should extend its planning and negotiations with member country agencies, donors and the other regional organisations in order to “mainstream” environmental concerns, ensuring that ecological factors and biodiversity are taken adequately into account in all programs and projects that affect the Pacific island countries’ natural resources. This promotion and coordinating effort should extend in particular to national development initiatives in forestry, agriculture, fisheries, mining and tourism and to activities such as infrastructure construction, urban planning and education.

The SPREP Secretariat should develop its function of advising and assisting the other regional organisations to integrate environmental management and conservation with their sectoral development programs. This could involve SPREP assessing and commenting on other agencies’ plans and activities. As a unifying mechanism, SPREP members should propose a common framework of action and a common goal for the regional organisations, towards the long term conservation of the natural environment and resources across the Pacific islands region, and ensuring that economic and social development are pursued in ways that are ecologically sustainable.

2. Governance and Direction of SPREP

The SPREP Secretariat and members should reform the SPREP Meeting into a smaller, annual, technical working meeting, focussed primarily on setting broad directions for SPREP through the Action Plan and annual work program. Members should consider delegating their Heads of Environment or equivalent officials as SPREP Meeting representatives, or specifically naming individuals to serve for a specified term as a SPREP governing council¹. Members should improve processes within their countries to ensure representatives carry whole of government briefs. The SPREP Meeting should strengthen existing links with the South Pacific Forum Officials Committee and Forum Leaders’ Meetings.

3. National and Regional Coordination

All SPREP members, including island dependencies and the metropolitan countries, should contribute more to planning, development and subsequently drawing benefit from the SPREP program, enhancing its use as a coordinating mechanism for environmental protection and management in the region. This initiative should include reviewing and up-dating the NEMS or equivalent national planning mechanisms. The system of National Focal Points should be

¹ AusAID’s view is that while the technical capacity of some delegations need strengthening, the purpose of meetings, composition of delegations and the future of the Ministers of the Environment meetings need further deliberation.

revised, to ensure better facilitation of local definition of needs, participatory planning and design, cross-sectoral collaboration and local implementation.

4. Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

The SPREP Secretariat and Meeting should continue to develop and use the Action Plan as the principal management tool for the regional program. The Plan should be strengthened and promoted as a shared expression of actions and co-responsibilities, supported by adequate consultative mechanisms, joint planning and regular monitoring and evaluation. It should be developed as the framework for ensuring sustainability and minimal environmental disruption in natural resource sector development and management – fisheries, mining, agriculture, etc.

The framework should identify significant middle level objectives, in order to improve the program's development, management and ability to assess achievements. It should also encompass the increasing series of "regional action strategies" that deal with particular fields of concern (invasive species, wetlands, environmental education, etc).

The SPREP Secretariat and Meeting should ensure that the annual work programs are formulated as annual components of the 4-year Action Plan, using the same logical hierarchical structure and terminology, in order to enable the Action Plan to be used efficiently for medium-term monitoring and reporting purposes. The Secretariat should procure baseline data and set measurable targets or indicators of success for SPREP's Strategic Outputs or objectives. Simple tools to conduct standard evaluations at the conclusion of each activity should be introduced. The Secretariat should place greater emphasis on the completion, evaluation and documentation of activities and should aim to move progressively towards a culture of learning, sharing lessons and helping to extend successful initiatives.

5. Limitations of Projects

The SPREP Secretariat should deliberately limit its own direct involvement in implementing projects, restricting its role to facilitating project execution in countries by other organisations and undertaking itself only small pilot exercises for experimental and demonstration purposes. Building on the experience from the SPBCP and PICCAP projects, large "regional" projects should be formulated as packages of smaller, linked country-specific exercises that maximise local value. SPREP member agencies should organise themselves to take on, learn from and build upon externally assisted projects. SPREP should build greater rigour into managing its own activities to strengthen participatory planning, design and development, use projects to focus outwards and upwards towards broader and longer-term outcomes, and emphasise activities that can become self-sustaining and demonstrate effective solutions.

6. SPREP Core Functions & Funding

The SPREP Secretariat and Meeting should re-form the SPREP work program to have a greater proportion of core functions and services that are not projects or dependent on projects for resources. SPREP's primary core function should be to provide or help members to access technical and policy advice and information concerning the environment and ecologically sustainable development in the Pacific islands region. The Secretariat should make "information sharing" its principal mode of delivery, with a strengthened information service at the forefront of interactions with member country agencies and partners. This should include advising on selective ratification and implementation of multi-lateral agreements. SPREP should also develop the related function of monitoring the state of the environment and alerting members and partners to the need for action.

Members should consider a revised funding mechanism for the program, as part of the SPREP Action Planning and Corporate Planning processes during 2000. The revised mechanism should determine an actual figure for a core budget, based on a specified organisational structure and size, and the facilities and services that would be delivered to each member for this budget. The mechanism should specify the financial contribution that will be required from each member country annually for the next four years (aligned with the Action Plan).

7. Donor Funding

The SPREP Secretariat should foster improved liaison and collaboration with donors, including alignment of donor agencies' plans with the SPREP Action Plan, and facilitating donor support for in-country activities by other organisations. The Secretariat should use the extra-budgetary funds from Australia and New Zealand as enhanced core funding, enabling SPREP to operate "further upstream" by strengthening its core advisory and coordinating services for its members in each area of the program. The Secretariat should negotiate with other donors to provide part of their financing as general contributions to the SPREP program rather than in the form of individual project funds.

Quality Assurance Series No. 22

SPREP 2000

In early 2000 AusAID organised an independent review of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). Its aim was to provide up-to-date knowledge of SPREP's programs and procedures and to improve understanding of the contributions they make to the Pacific islands region.

This is the summary of the report of the Review Team.