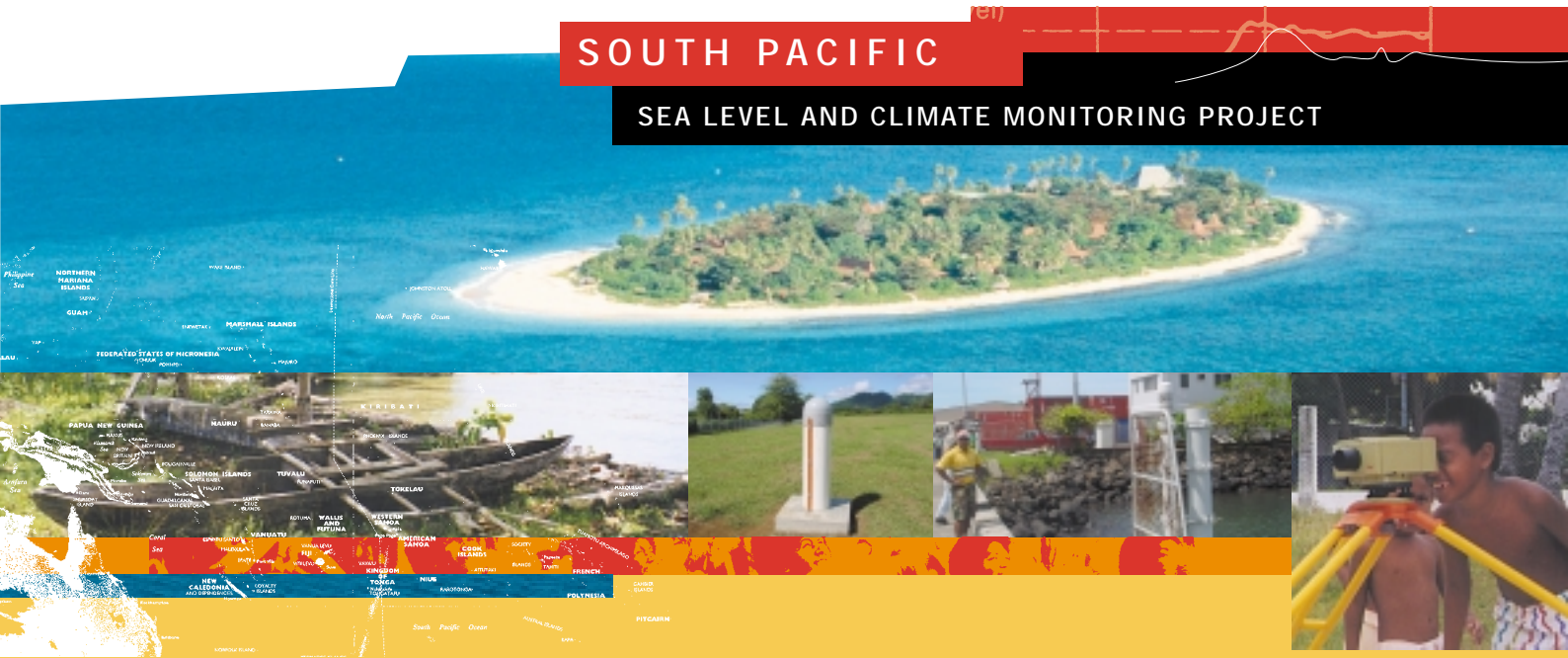


A DECADE AND BEYOND

SOUTH PACIFIC

SEA LEVEL AND CLIMATE MONITORING PROJECT



The South Pacific Sea Level and Climate Monitoring Project is an Australian-funded project that will enable 14 participating Pacific Island countries (PICs) to better manage their own environments and contribute to achieving sustainable development.

The project aims to help PICs and their governments understand the long-term potential scale and implications of changing sea levels and climate variability induced by global warming.

Island countries of the South Pacific Forum first voiced concerns about global warming and sea level rise at the 1988 Forum meeting in Tonga.

Australia responded to these concerns and this project, which began in 1991, has now entered its third phase (2001–2005).



THE GOAL

The project's long term goal is:

"To provide an accurate long-term record of sea levels in the South Pacific for partner countries and the international scientific community, that enables them to respond to and manage any impacts."

In this, the third phase of the project, attention will be focused on the delivery of information products and required capacity building needed to enable partner countries to move towards increased self-reliance in information provision for policy development and strategic planning.

REGIONAL BENEFITS

The project's ultimate goal is to provide environmental information to the PICs and regional partners that can be applied to managing coastal environments and responding to extreme weather conditions. Development issues will be addressed by enabling these countries to make more informed decisions about managing their coastal environments and resources.

The project's major beneficiaries include decision makers and managers in government, regional organisations and non-government organisations

with responsibilities for planning, environmental monitoring and management, coastal and marine matters, education, hazard mitigation and national development.

The community generally will also benefit from an improved understanding of the impacts of climate change and how best to address them.

KEY AUSTRALIAN PLAYERS

The Australia government is administering and funding the project through AusAID, the Australian Agency for International Development. The Australian managing contractor in Phase III is AMSAT (Australian Marine Science and Technology Ltd). AMSAT will draw on the expertise of its consortium partners at the National Tidal Facility Australia (NTFA) in Adelaide; the National Mapping Division of Geoscience Australia (NMDGA) in Canberra and CSIRO Divisions of Marine Research in Hobart and Atmospheric Research in Melbourne.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

AMSAT has engaged Dr Chalapan Kaluwin as the project's full-time regional coordinator. Dr Kaluwin is based at the South Pacific Forum Secretariat (FORSEC) in Suva, Fiji. He has been involved in the

AUSTRALIA AND REGIONAL PARTNERS



project since its inception and will be the liaison point for regional partners and provide a link to AMSAT and its technical specialists.

The 14 participating Pacific Island countries are Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Samoa.

These countries face different and challenging environmental issues, some of which this project's outputs and activities can help them to manage. But the region's ability to do so is constrained by access to funds, equipment and trained staff, limited institutional capacity and management systems and the size and remoteness of the region.

Regional partners will be involved to the fullest extent possible in Phase III to help build capacity and develop human resources.

The project's key counterpart organisations include:

- the Forum Secretariat in Suva, which initiated the project and helps develop economic and political responses for the region and its people
- the South Pacific Applied Geosciences Commission (SOPAC) in Suva, which carries out research into coastal processes and oceanography, freshwater-resource management, hazard and vulnerability assessment, database and information management
- the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in Apia, which helps develop environmental-management strategies in response to global environmental change and variability

The project will work closely with these groups, the University of the South Pacific and other regional organisations to deliver outputs, particularly in training, information distribution and related activities.

Key partners within PICs will include:

- National Meteorological Services
- Lands and Survey Organisations
- Environmental Planning and Management Agencies
- Ports and Harbour Authorities
- Fisheries and Agricultural Departments
- Educational Institutions.

ESTABLISHMENT, Phase I: July 1991 to June 1995:

11 Seaframe (Sea Level Fine Resolution Acoustic Measuring Equipment) monitoring stations were established in the South Pacific at Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Samoa. All are located on wharves. A system for transmitting the data via satellites and telephone links was set up, and computer databases were established at the National Tidal Facility Australia (NTFA) at Flinders University in Adelaide, for processing, analysing, archiving and making the data available to the international community.

MONITORING, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND DEVELOPING THE RECORD, Phase II: July 1995 to December 2000:

The NTFA provided tidal charts and sea level data to regional partners. This was consistently praised by partner countries and used in navigation, planning for coastal development and forecasting of weather hazards. Between eight and nine years of data at various sites was collected.

PRECISION RECORDING AND CAPACITY BUILDING, Phase III: January 2001 to December 2005:

Seaframe stations will continue recordings. An additional station has been added at Pohnpei, in the Federated States of Micronesia, and feasibility studies into two more possible stations are planned.

The major new initiative in this phase is a Continuous Global Positioning System (CGPS) network linked to Seaframe sites. The network will lower the uncertainty of Seaframe readings and help determine absolute sea level.

The development of a comprehensive range of information products that will keep all stakeholders informed about the project's short and long-term outputs is another project priority.

A drive for project sustainability demands that all these components incorporate an increasing level of PIC involvement from groups such as national meteorological services and lands and survey organisations.

Regional ownership of the project is important if the study is to be sustained and its results used to better inform environmental and economic managers. Staff from counterpart organisations will receive increased training and be called on by the Australian project partners to help with observations, project management and maintenance. The cornerstone of such technical training will be fieldwork. In addition, four post-graduate scholarships will be offered in this phase and regional workshops will be run regularly. A greater level of regional maintenance and management of networks, data and analysis will be achieved by training technical, environmental-management and scientific staff.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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