

# Chapter 7

## Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

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The following conclusions can be derived from the analysis:

- ❑ The Pacific Islands are already experiencing severe impacts from climate events. This is evidenced by cyclone damage of more than US\$1 billion during the 1990s and by the impact of recent droughts in Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, and Palau (SPREP 2000).
- ❑ The islands' vulnerability to climate events is growing, independently of climate change. Current trends point to a continuing rise in vulnerability in the future which will be exacerbated by climate change.
- ❑ Climate change is likely to impose major incremental social and economic costs on Pacific Island countries. In disaster years the impact could be particularly high, causing significant economic and social problems.
- ❑ Climate change may affect all Pacific Islanders, particularly the poor and most vulnerable. Climate change may also exacerbate poverty by reducing coastal settlement areas and affecting the crops and fisheries on which many communities depend.
- ❑ Failure to adapt now could not only lead to major damages, but also result in a loss of opportunities to act in the future. Some coral reef areas, for example, may no longer be able to recover in the future if degradation continues at the present rates.
- ❑ By acting now to reduce their present-day vulnerability to extreme weather events, Pacific Island countries could go a long way toward diminishing the effects of climate change in the future.

Based on these conclusions, a number of key recommendations can be derived.

### Pacific Island Governments

- *Adopt a 'No Regrets' Adaptation Policy.* Pacific Island governments should put in place an urgent policy of 'no regrets' adaptation, aimed at increasing the natural resilience of the islands and reducing their vulnerability to present-day weather events. 'No regrets' measures could include, for example, the management of critical coastal ecosystems (such as coral reefs), control of urban pollution, water conservation, culture of weather-resistant crops and disease vector control. Under such a policy, Pacific Island governments would take adaptation goals into account in future expenditure and development planning. Insofar as these measures helped reduce existing vulnerability (independently of climate change), Pacific Island governments would be justified in using reallocations of public expenditures and development aid to fund these activities.
- *Develop a Broad Consultative Process for Implementing Adaptation.* Pacific Island governments should start a process of consultation with community representatives, the private sector, and other civil society institutions (such as churches and NGOs), on a national strategy for adaptation. The strategies should build upon the National Communications developed by the PICCAP country teams. The objective would be mainstream adaptation into national policies and development plans, to gain consensus on priority adaptation measures, and to build partnerships for their implementation.

- *Require Adaptation Screening for Major Development Projects.* To help defray future costs, Pacific Island governments should require all major infrastructure projects to undergo adaptation screening as part of an expanded environmental impact assessment.
- *Strengthen Socio-Economic Analysis of Adaptation Options.* Further work on the specific socio-economic impacts of climate change and adaptation—such as done under this study—could help strengthen the Pacific Island countries’ position in international discussions on adaptation financing. A better understanding of the physical and economic impacts would also help mainstream climate change into broader development planning.

### Donors

- *Support ‘No Regrets’ Adaptation.* Donors have an important role to play in discussing with Pacific Island countries how to best orient development assistance in support of national adaptation strategies. This could be done either through stand alone interventions or as part of natural resources and environmental management programs.
- *Support Adaptation Screening.* To the extent possible, donors should adopt adaptation screening as part of their policy requirements on environmental impact assessments.

### International Community

- *Operationalize Adaptation Financing.* Given the importance of taking early action on adaptation, the international community needs to urgently agree on the mechanism and size of adaptation financing—be it in the form of the Global Environmental Facility, a tax on the Clean Development Mechanism as currently discussed, or others. The findings from this study support the argument that Pacific Island countries will likely experience significant incremental costs from climate change, and will need access to global adaptation funding.
- *Remove Incentives against Immediate Action on ‘No Regrets’ Adaptation.* Countries that have taken early action on adaptation using their own public expenditures or development aid should not be penalized with a lower allocation of global adaptation funds, once these become available. Similarly, the justification for international financing of ‘no regrets’ adaptation needs to be recognized and promoted in its own right. Failure to do so could tilt the balance towards a ‘wait and see’ attitude, in favor of more expensive, but clearly incremental, structural solutions (such as seawalls).

Although many uncertainties remain, it now seems clear that climate change will affect many facets of Pacific Island people’s lives and economies in ways that are just now beginning to be understood. Climate change therefore must be considered one of the most important challenges of the twenty-first century and a priority for immediate action.