Chapter 5
A Strategy for Management and Adaptation

The analysis in the forgoing chapters highlighted the challenges and opportunities brought by urbanization, the use of the oceans, and climate change to the people of the Pacific. Suggestions were made concerning the most efficient strategies to manage and adapt to these changes.

This chapter takes the discussion one step further in recognizing that success in adapting to change will depend critically on the effective mobilization of the human and social resources available to Pacific Island countries. This is a question of institutional organization and cooperation, and it requires that there be maximum coordination among major stakeholders, from the local to the national and regional levels.

Throughout this report we have discussed the management of towns, the ocean and climate change. What has gone unstated is that this implies there are *managers* and that the managers are somehow organized for effective action. It is the nature of this organization which is the most critical element in the success or failure of Pacific Island countries in meeting the challenges discussed in this report.

At base is the question of how Pacific Island institutions are structured and how they behave and interact. There are two elements to institutional structure. The first is institutional organization – the "teams" into which people organize themselves to achieve goals. The second is the norms and standards of behavior – the "rules of the game" by which the teams operate to achieve their goals. The Pacific is currently characterized by a great variety of teams which are poorly coordinated, often operate in isolation from one another, frequently overlap in responsibilities and sometimes leave large gaps where critical issues─such as urbanization─remain unaddressed by any organized group.

Much the same is true when we examine the rules by which the different institutions operate. Local level institutions play by traditional rules, informed by traditional values and guides of behavior. These often come into conflict with higher level groups which operate by a different set of rules predicated on corporate or public service norms and values owing more to western cultures than to their own. The result is that the two systems of rules may conflict or, as wastefully, fail to interact at all.

Improving coordination and communication among this variety of Pacific Island institutions – and between those institutions and outside organizations which impact on them – should be a first priority if the region is to successfully adapt to the challenges it faces. At the local level this calls for recognition of the deep store of social capital and legitimacy represented by traditional institutions and values, while at the same time recognizing that many traditional systems themselves may exclude certain groups or allow the elite to capture most benefits. It also means that relations of governance – how and by what rules the two systems interact, particularly between the local community and the lower levels of formal government - need to be better understood and made more transparent and accountable.

At the national level a common weakness is the tendency for planning, budgeting and policy formulation to be "sectoralized". The institutional divisions between various sectors need to be bridged, and effective and consistent communication channels need to be opened to the local level.

At the regional level new approaches are now being developed for cooperation which make better use of scarce resources and reduce overlap

among regional institutions. These approaches need to be strengthened and deepened.

Governance and Inclusion: Involving the People

As discussed in chapter 1, the patterns of governance and organization throughout the Pacific are changing. Traditional forms of authority and organization are being modified by a variety of largely imported substitutes and by the globalization of trade, investment and economic governance.

The extent to which traditional and formal institutions have developed effective working relationships varies considerably across the region. In some places traditional governance systems have been mostly ignored by the formal, introduced government structures. Planning remains top down with little opportunity provided for input by communities. The result is poor targeting of development initiatives, a lack of ownership—and therefore sustainability—and a continuing deterioration of traditional institutions, legitimacy and values with few effective structures or organizations to take their place.

In other countries, such as Samoa and Kiribati, traditional structures remain strong and vital and are playing an effective and complementary role in governance and development alongside formal governmental structures. Indeed, in these cases traditional institutions and values have been major forces in changing the ways in which formal structures operate and, as importantly, in altering the underlying structure of values which inform their operation. Even in these cases, however, there is room for improving governance and for making traditional structures more inclusive and participatory than they may have been historically.

Despite the great range in the ways in which traditional and imported institutions interact in the Pacific, there are some general principles which emerge as guidelines to improving governance and making most efficient use of the human and social resources these institutions have to offer.

With regards to the challenge of urbanization:

- There is a need to develop a broad-based vision to maximize the economic potential of towns in the Pacific. This should be an open and participatory process that involves all levels of society. National urban summits, which brought together representatives of traditional institutions, civil society, the private sector and government, would provide an effective way of building a shared vision. Such summits should be preceded by local meetings where stakeholders have a chance to express their views. The summit itself should be conducted as much as possible according to traditional rules of discussion, debate and consensus building.

- The decision making process that guides the management of towns needs to be opened to those affected by the decisions, if risks of social and economic disruption are to be minimized. This should include in particular the poor, most of whom are landless and marginalized in these societies but who suffer the adverse impacts of deteriorating conditions most severely.

- While the formal and informal mechanisms that could be used to achieve this will vary, the role of government agencies must change from one of top down decision making to one of helping local communities to make well-informed choices. Municipality and town councils could provide useful forums for local communities to voice their views on management of local affairs. Most importantly, clearly defined and widely agreed accountabilities need to be established for public service providers.

In the case of the oceans, the most critical concern at the community level is the management of coastal areas. The following strategies are recommended:

- Management of coastal areas should be based on a co-management partnership between coastal communities, governments and NGOs which builds on the relative strengths of each partner. In general,

communities should have primary responsibility for the actual management of coastal resources, while government agencies should play primarily an advisory role and provide legal and enforcement support.

- Communities need a single, well defined forum for communication with government agencies and other external partners, where requests for assistance can be quickly conveyed, concerns voiced, and information received. This can take the form of local committees, island councils or other forums appropriate to the local conditions.

In terms of adapting to climate change:

- In towns, adaptation in the planning process and in the management of infrastructure and utility services will not only lead to better "governance" by improving the quality and cost-effectiveness of public services, but is also necessary for mitigating the possible impacts of natural disasters and, therefore, the vulnerability of coastal communities.

- A more inclusive approach to governance and management will be needed in identifying and carrying out adaptation measures since urban areas contain people who are not members of the original residential and kin groups, and who might otherwise be marginalized.

- Use of community based measures will make local communities full participants in adaptation and will maximize their impact by ensuring that they are compatible with local customs and practices.

Building Inter-Sectoral Linkages

At the national level the often rigid and independent sectoral mandates of many Pacific Island governance systems contrast sharply with the holistic ways in which small islands were traditionally governed.[1] There is a need for more effective communication and coordination across sectoral boundaries if more efficient use is to be made of human and financial resources. Common goals should be established early during this collaboration.

At the more general level there is a need for a central government nexus which can coordinate policy making and project formulation and execution, in close consultation with key stakeholders. Such a body─a Ministry or Office of National Planning, for example─ should serve as the channel through which policy papers, the expenditure budget and public sector investment programs are funneled. Input to such a body might be provided by an inter-ministerial committee to ensure consistency before submission to decision makers. Such a committee could have representatives of all the key stakeholding groups, including the private sector, civil society, traditional organizations and others depending on the particular policy issue or program under consideration.

This collaborative and participatory approach to problem solving could be applied to each of the major issues discussed in this report. In the management of towns this would entail:

- A broad vision keyed to quality of life and economic growth objectives that cuts across sectors and institutional boundaries and recognizes major urban-rural linkages.

- The centralization of overall responsibility for urban planning and implementation in a single institution with strong links to all other sectoral bodies sharing responsibility for urban activities.

In the management of coastal areas:

- Strengthened inter-sectoral planning and national level coordination among agencies responsible for the coast, perhaps through the establishment of national coordinating committees. Incentives for participation at these committees need to be addressed to guarantee their sustainability.

[1] The authors are grateful to Alfred Simpson for comments on this issue.

In regards to climate change:

- Adaptation measures should be explicitly identified in the policy and development plans of all major institutions, including departments of health, environment, agriculture, public works and fisheries.

More generally, there is a need to recognize that adaptation to the three challenges discussed here should be a central and informing principle of development planning. Those with overall responsibility for national planning need to be trained to evaluate planning within a strategic framework which sees effective adaptation as a central goal.

Wherever possible, examples of ingenious solutions to inter-sectoral planning should be identified and further disseminated at the regional level

New Approaches to Regional Partnerships and Collaboration

At the regional level there is a need to rethink the ways in which institutions operate to make efficient use of the resources available. Recent changes have been made which promise to make regional coordination work more efficiently and effectively than in the past. For example, as a result of a recent structural review of the Forum Secretariat, its technical service delivery functions have been transferred to other regional technical organizations, allowing the Forum to focus on the core business of political and international relations, trade, investments and economic development. The establishment of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific, which brings together all the key regional organizations in an effort to ensure that they pursue their collective aim of sustainable development in the Pacific is a major step towards increasing cooperation and coordination at the regional level.

These trends show that increased regional and sub-regional cooperation is both possible and desirable, but progress will be gradual and must be seen in the context of differences in domestic political agendas and constraints posed by existing bilateral and other relationships.

Regional coordination and cooperation needs to be brought to bear on the key challenges facing the countries of the region. For example, in the management of towns;

- Sharing knowledge and lessons learned needs to be further encouraged across and within the region. This could be supported through the establishment of a regional knowledge bank.

In managing the use of the ocean:

- In the management of coastal areas, there is a need to link extension workers with regional and international experts in order to assist coastal communities in accessing technical advice they may require to mange their coastal resources.

- Strengthened regional collaboration among Pacific Island countries will be essential to maximize the benefits they derive from the new regional tuna management regime. Regional collaboration will also be needed in the development of a regulatory framework for seabed mining.

For adaptation to climate change:

- Pacific Island countries should continue to collaborate closely in international negotiations to access adaptation financing.

The Way Forward

Reconnecting the formal and informal institutions in a way that makes them more open, inclusive and accountable; building inter-sectoral linkages and improving policy coordination; and strengthening regional partnerships are all important processes in their own right. Taken together, however, they support a broader strategy of adaptation to change.

The important factor to recognize is that the most effective strategy need not entail large incremental expenditures. Rather, it may involve using available resources—including human resources—more efficiently, and building

further partnerships with communities and the private sector to distribute the financial burden. Improving the efficiency and consistency with which institutions at all levels interact and cooperate will be critical to the success of this strategy.

However, mainstreaming such an approach will have resource implications. It may involve both the reallocation of existing resources and a changed approach to the allocation of future resources. Governments should set the example by requiring their own investments to undergo adaptation screening and by removing or reducing negative incentives such as tendency to follow structural or sectoral solutions. This may require a conscious change in the focus and structure of public financing.

The resources that can be mobilized by the region's development partners will also need to be factored in. Development partners bring a range of motivations and interests to the region which Pacific Island countries should help funnel in support of a shared adaptation vision.

Perhaps the most important resource that needs to be mobilized, however, is the Pacific people themselves. Their resilience, courage, and the strength of their communities and institutions have stood them in good stead so far. An active policy which works to improve links between traditional and formal institutions will allow Pacific Island countries to tap a deep reservoir of ingenuity, resourcefulness, and social capital which is the single greatest asset they possess. That resourcefulness needs to be mobilized by any country which hopes to benefit from the challenges and opportunities it faces at the beginning of the twenty-first century.