



4 September 2014, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Apia, Samoa - Small island developing states of the Pacific face a set of difficult and complex challenges in securing safe drinking water and sanitation facilities for their citizens – challenges not easily addressed by single communities, organisations or sectors working in isolation. To make progress in the area of safe water and sanitation, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) is convinced that a multi-sector, partnership approach is the key, and SPC is promoting the use of partnerships to tackle the region's most difficult water and sanitation challenges head on.

Dr Colin Tukuitonga, SPC's Director-General, feels that effective partnerships are the way forward in harnessing the energy and expertise needed to overcome the challenges of securing safe and sustainable drinking water and sanitation facilities. 'At SPC we already work closely with our member countries and territories to help bring the various sectors together and demonstrate the benefits of sustainable water and sanitation solutions,' Dr Tukuitonga said. 'What we're now seeing in the region is increasing collaboration between sectors, stakeholder groups, and also between Pacific Island countries and territories.'

Dr Tukuitonga was speaking in Apia at the United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States, or SIDS, which is bringing together partners from across the globe to focus the world's attention on a group of countries that remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities.

'Pacific SIDS have demonstrated the tangible benefits of working in partnerships through programmes such as Pacific Integrated Water Resources Management, which has pioneered innovative and collaborative solutions to some of the region's most difficult water and sanitation issues,' he said. 'The hard work of our members has shown that genuine and durable

partnerships can be effective in dealing with a whole range of issues facing small island communities.'

However, Dr Tukuitonga feels that the challenges are becoming larger and more complex as Pacific SIDS develop, grow in population, and begin to face the emerging impacts of climate change. Access to safe and sustainable drinking water and sanitation is a critical development issue. But for the Pacific as a whole, progress continues to be poor compared to neighbouring regions.

'While all Pacific SIDS have made some progress in water and sanitation, many of these efforts are not keeping up with population growth, meaning that the region as a whole is actually going backwards compared to progress made by the rest of the world,' Dr Tukuitonga said.

SPC is proposing that current partnership success stories be replicated and expanded, with accelerated support from regional and international partners.

'Over the coming months, SPC will be joining with several of our members to progress a new Pacific Partnership for Atoll Water Security to support atoll-based SIDS to better anticipate, prepare for and withstand the impacts of drought,' said Fabian McKinnon, Deputy Director-General (Programmes). The Government of Tuvalu has welcomed this partnership in light of the country's 2011 drought.

He added that SPC was also seeking support from other relevant partners for a reenergised Pacific Partnership for Action on Safe Water and Sanitation, to take a fresh look at this difficult issue with a view to supporting Pacific SIDS in their efforts to meet critically important development goals, and to give a voice to those who have a key role, but to date a limited voice, in water and sanitation issues.

'We feel such a partnership is needed at this critical juncture for Pacific SIDS, where the challenges of providing safe drinking water and sanitation are retarding economic growth, endangering public health, impacting the environment, and threatening fundamental human rights.'

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