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South Pacific Regional Environment Programme

Environmental Impact Assessment Training in the South Pacific Region

Meeting Report

Tarawa, Kiribati
20 - 24 July 1992

With technical and
financial assistance from the
Asian Development Bank (ADB),
United Nations Development Fund (UNDP),
United Nations Environment Fund (UNEP),
and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to provide an introduction to the Meeting Record for the Environmental Impact Assessment Training Course held in the Republic of Kiribati. This course was the third in a series of EIA Training courses conducted by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in the Pacific Islands.

These courses address a fundamental issues for Pacific Island countries; that of how to successfully integrate environmental considerations into economic planning. Too often such considerations have been seen in a negative light, as a break on economic development.

Thankfully, this perception is changing and decision makers in the Pacific countries are increasingly aware of the need for careful and long term environmental planning. Environmental Impact Assessment is an important tool in bringing this about. It is important that EIA be applied in an appropriate manner in the Pacific. EIA must be relevant to the social and political systems in Pacific countries and it must be simple and easy to apply. It is not an academic exercise.

These EIA training courses build on the important work carried out by SPREP in the Pacific with the development of National Environmental Management Strategies. These Strategies are being developed through the RETA (Regional Environment Technical Assistance) project and the NEMS (National Environmental Management Strategies) project. These important projects are funded by the Asian Development Bank, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the United Nations Development Programme UNDP). I would like to thank those agencies for their generous support. I would also like to thank the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for their generous support of this EIA Training Programme.

Dr. Vili A. Fuavao
Director
South Pacific Regional Environment Programme

1. Senior Government Officials One-Day Workshop: 20 July 1992

1.1 Participants:

Name	*Postion*
Hon. Tiwau Awira	(Minister, Environment and Natural Resource Development [ENRD]
Nakibae Teuatabo	(Secretary, ENRD)
Tokia Greig	(Senior Assistant Secretary, ENRD)
Baraniko Baaro	(Secretary, Home Affairs and Rural Development)
Teken Tokataake	(Secretary, Transport, Communications and Tourism)
Hon. Anterea Kaitaake	(Minister, Education, Science and Technology)
Meita Beisbure	(Secretary, Education, Science and Technology)
Mikaere Baraniko	(Chief Planning Officer, Finance)
Makurita Baaro	(Secretary, Foreign Affairs)
Peter Timeon	(Secretary, Cabinet)
Tererei Abete	(Environmental Coordinator, ENRD)

1.2 Meeting Record

1. The Workshop was opened by the Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources Development, the Hon Tiwau Awira who noted the importance of the theme of Sustainable Development in the light of the recent Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the need to understand the environmental implication of human activity.

2. The Secretary for the Environment and Natural Resources Development, Mr Nakibae Teuatabo, chaired the remainder of the day's proceedings.

3. Komeri Onorio, SPREP's Environmental Assessment Officer, introduced the Workshop, putting it into the context of SPREP's work in the developing of National Environmental Management Strategies [NEMS] and explaining the principal workshop objectives of raising awareness and conveying the broad principles of environmental assessment techniques.

4. Mr Teuatabo offered some introductory remarks concerning the importance of EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) and its roles with respect to improving development projects. He indicated that the purpose of the day was to see whether consensus could be reached regarding EIA's place in Kiribati administration.

5. There followed a presentation and discussion of the origins of EIA, the experience of other countries including North America and New Zealand, its principles and procedures, and its environmental and social benefits.

6. Issues raised and discussed by participants in this session included the following. Should EIA be applied at all by countries with developing economies? Should it be applied to aid-funded projects? If so how? What are the costs of EIA and how should they be met? How can the costs be made an integral part of the project investigation and design costs? How can any EIA process be focused on achieving better projects rather than on preventing or frustrating worthwhile development?

7. The present Kiribati project planning procedures were outlined by the Chief Planning Officer who pointed out that they contained provision for incorporating environmental information. Ways of ensuring a fuller environmental analysis of projects subject to be achieved without EIA procedures having to be given legislative backing. The adoption by the Government of Kiribati of EIA Guidelines could however be helpful and the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resource Development would give further consideration to this.

8. The SPREP workshops in Kiribati were seen to be for the purpose of raising general awareness about EIA and for teaching principles and methods, rather than being to examine and recommend any particular EIA procedure or legislation to the Government of Kiribati.

9. The first day of the workshop did not receive clear support for incorporating of EIA in planning procedures. It appeared that the senior officials would be more receptive if the workshop was conducted by a non I-Kiribati.

2. EIA Workshop for Technical Officers and Interested NGOs: 21 - 24 July

2.1 Participants:

Tererei Moanteata - (MHARD)
Moata Takirua - (MHARD)
Tebungitai Taraitoi - (SDA)
Tangeta Rakio - (MHARD)
Tekabotu Kabiriera
Alexander Teabo - (MHARD)
Ubaitoi Matu - (MHARD)
Padraig Healy - (MEST)
Tawita Teibira - (MHARD)
Robati Corcoran - (MHARD)
Romatoa Ubaitoi - (PVU/)
Mataio Ubaitoi - (MHARD)
Taboia Metutera - (PWD)
Pita Iabeta - (PWD)
Burentia Kaiea - (Ag)
Ioteba Redfern - (MCIE)
Temakei Tebano - (USP)
Nantei Tenanai - (MEST)
Roreti Tetau - (MHARD)
Nabiri Kiaua - (MHARD)
Teem Uriam - (MTCT)
Veaiefa Namanoku - (WKK)
Takaeang Reiti - (MENRD)
Reina Timau - (MFEP)
Timau Tiira - (MEST)
Ahling Onorio - (KGV)
Been Toaaba - (MHARD)
Rabunataai Tekaai - (MHARD)
Kabwearuru Temoti - (MHARD)
Taate Botara - (MHARD)
Rine Veara - (MHARD)
Beniamina Kiboboua - (MHARD)
Uarai Koneteti - (MTCT)
Anterea Birimaere - (MHARD)
Tekarawa Amatia - (MHARD)
Makin Ngatau - (MHARD)
Bwebwentaratai Benson - (LDS)
Rereao Tebau - (AMAK)
Naomi Biribo - (MENRD)
Neeri Tiaeke - (MHFP & SW)
Katutu Maurintetaake - (MHARD)
Buretau Mareweata - (MHARD)
Teebete Baringa - (MHARD)
Margaret Pump - (KPC)
Tiriata Betero - (L & S)
Riteti Eritama - (PUB)
Tawake Taniara - (MHARD)
Tokoia Arobati - (MHARD)
Mwemwenikeaki Bauro - (MHARD)
Joe Russell - (Baha'i)
Bita Nabureinara - (MENRD)
Tererei Abete - (MENRD)

2.2 Meeting Record

Day 1:

1. The workshop was opened and Chaired by Mr Tokia Greig, the Senior Assistant Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Development.

2. The SPREP organisation and programme were introduced by Mr Komeri Onorio.

3. The principles, background and methods of EIA were introduced by Alisdair Hutchison and David Hill. Reference to the use of EIA in New Zealand was included.

Day 2:

4. A scoping example : the instuctors demonstrated how they would go about identifying the key options, affected parties, and impacts of a major construction project. The proposed extension to the Bonriki International Airport runway was used to illustrate the approach.

5. Small groups prepared a short EIA using the table of contents list in the course book. The project given was an hypothetical Rubbish Tip on the lagoon side of South Tarawa requiring a 50 metre square reclamation.

6. An introduction to Social Impact Assessment concentrating particularly on effects of urban drift, population, and resettlement.

7. An introduction to Physical Impact Assessment concentrating particularly on the adverse environmental effects of : sedimentation on coral, land-sourced nutrients on lagoon water, reef channel blasting on marine life and storm surges, and excessive drawdown of the freshwater lens on water quality and availability. In each case measures to prevent or reduce these effects were presented and discussed.

8. In small groups participants were asked to develop a list of 20 measures that could be implemented during a very severe drought to preserve an atoll's water lens from pollution and excessive draw-off.

9. Commencement of the three major case studies - i.e. Betio port redevelopment/expansion, Bonriki sand mining and an hypothotical causeway development between Abatao and Buota. Selection of groups and group leaders, allocation of sections of EIA, and preparation for site visists.

Day 3:

10. Case study site visits and commencement of write-up of the EIAs including conclusions and recommendations to minimise adverse effects and maximise benefits.

Day 4:

11. Completion of EIAs on the 3 case studies and presentation of them to invited guests - which included the Ministers of Health; Transport, Communications and Tourism, and Commerce, Industry and Employment, Senior Officials from the Monday Workshop; as well as senior representatives from the British, Australian and New Zealand High Commissions.

12. The workshop was formally closed by the Minister of Health, Family Planning and social Welfare, the Hon. Baitika Toom.

2.3 Evaluation of the Technical Officers' Course

An assessment form was distributed at the end of the course but only about half of the forms were returned. General impressions gained from the completed forms were as follows.

- Generally participants found the course helpful and gave the two instructors good ratings. A small number of respondents indicted that they had difficulty hearing and understanding what was being said. There was a widely expressed appreciation of the discussions that took place in I-Kiribati, and of the session facilitated by Kiribati experts.

- Some people would have preferred the course handbook to be in I-Kiribati rather than in English.

- Most of the respondents found the scoping demonstration using the airport expansion example too complex. The reclamation exercise carried out in groups was very successful. The social impacts presentation and discussion was well received. The water crisis exercise went well but one or two respondents found the concept of a non site-specific EIA a bit difficult to grasp - despite the relevance of the topic in Tarawa.

- The three case studies all proved to be good subjects for study. Participants enjoyed the hands-on practice at EIA, but there were some adverse comments about the size of the groups being too large.

Overall the participants completed the course with a greatly enhanced knowledge and appreciation of environmental assessment principles and methods and how they could be used in Kiribati to improve projects. Participants also experienced the value of group work when preparing EIAs and demonstrated how, by drawing on their considerable individual expertise, they were able to produce proficient EIAs on complex projects with only a low level of help from outside Kiribati. In preparing the EIAs they learned in particular how to draw accurate conclusions about environmental effects and how to formulate specific recommendations.

We thank you for your enthusiastic participation and for your hospitality.

Kam Rabwa. Ti a bo.