

Climate Early Warning and Capacity Building Unit

Proposed case studies

ii) Building National and Regional Capacity to Implement Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA) by Strengthening Planning and State of Environment Assessment and Reporting in the Pacific - INFORM

Project ID: 5195

Regional - Small Island Development States (SIDS)

Informed environmental decisions for the Pacific

The Pacific Islands are hard-hit by the economic, social, and environmental costs of climate change. Despite the region's less than 0.02 per cent contribution to the world's total greenhouse gas emissions, Pacific Island countries are at the frontline of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Climate change related disasters such as floods and droughts are leading to displacement of people, while biodiversity, which underpins development in the Islands is under threat. An increasing consumer-based way of life is also contributing to pollution in the Pacific.

These growing challenges mean Pacific Island countries need to adapt and ensure long-term planning through evidence-based decision-making. Decisions on climate change are however often complex, expensive and have long-term implications, highlighting the importance of basing such decisions on quality and readily available data.

For the first time ever in 2017, Pacific Island countries began to collect environmental data, and house it in national and regional databases. This was done as part of the UN Environment Programme-led, Global Environment Facility-funded Inform project. Designed with the goal of building the capacities of Pacific Island governments to share data and knowledge to enable streamlined reporting and informed decision-making, the project facilitated the use of environmental data for national planning and sustainable development and assisted Pacific Island countries with meeting legislated national reporting requirements.

Working with partners from across the Pacific, the Inform project produced 14 national repositories and one regional data portal for the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Among the key achievements of the project was the development of data processes and standards that have been integrated into national government and department workflows, leading to availability of data for informed decision-making in Pacific Island countries.

In Vanuatu, officials of the Department of the Environmental Protection and Conservation (DEPC) were trained in managing environmental networks as well as collecting, analyzing, and sharing data. The training, which was conducted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), focused on facilitating the use of environmental data for national planning and sustainable development, including the collection of data to populate the portal.

"We [now] have a Vanuatu portal established by SPREP and dedicated to uploading necessary information relating to the environment. Access to information by the general public has been the most important benefit of the Inform project to Vanuatu."
Trinison Tari, Principal Officer of Provincial Outreach, Information and Communication in Vanuatu's Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation

The project has also collaborated with the Government of Vanuatu to facilitate decision-making on the regulation on the use of single-use plastics, the first such legislation to be passed in the region.

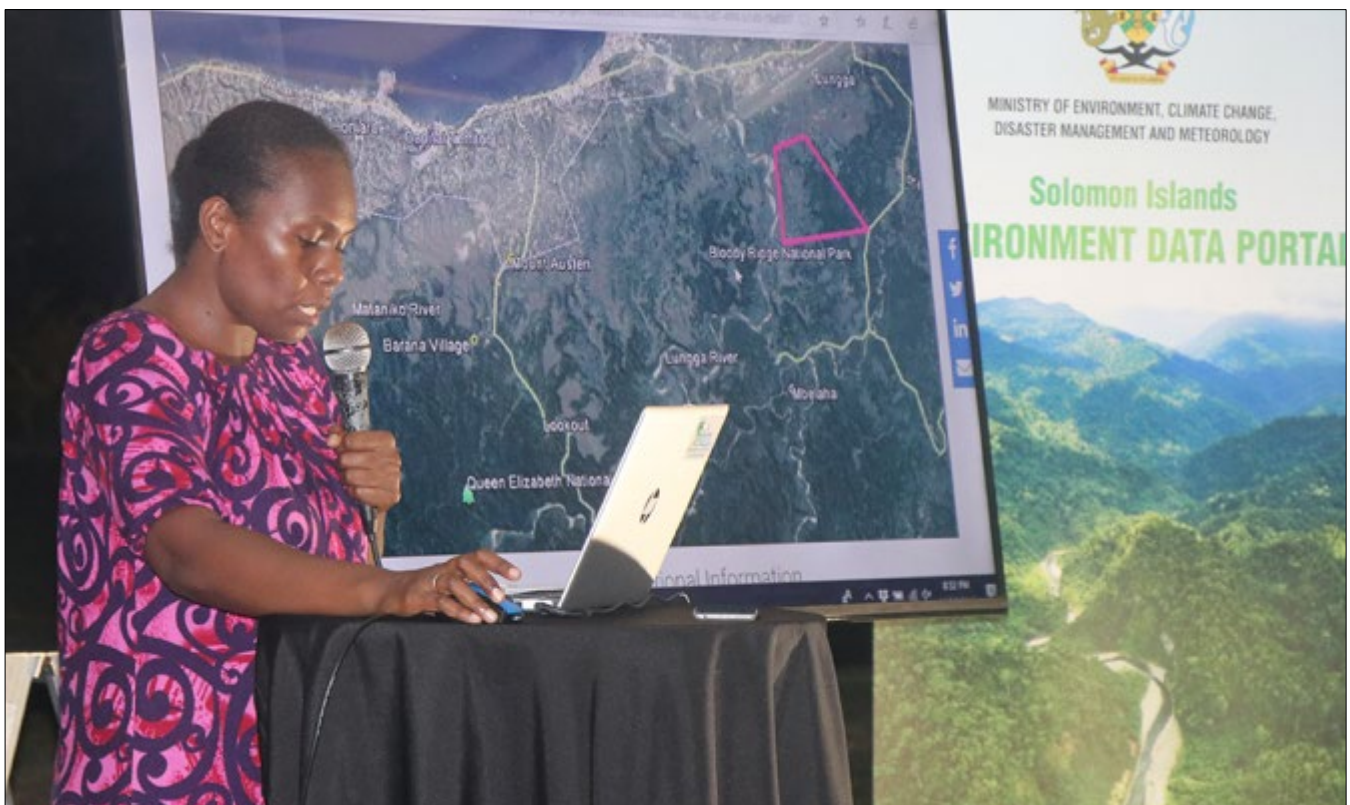
"Government officials now have access to information we have put in the portals, which enables them to create policies regarding plastic pollution, in addition to coming up with regulation initiatives," Trinison Tari says.

Elsewhere in Tonga, Nauru and Samoa, practitioners were trained on the use of Geographical Information Systems. This enhanced the management and conservation of protected areas by enabling practitioners to find relevant up-to-date information resources, and to use spatial data to produce maps of protected areas with standard features. In remote areas of the Marshall Islands, the Inform project built on the existing regional approach to overcoming data challenges, by creating open-access portals and interactive webpages where data is now readily available.

“The Inform project has been a success in unlocking the potential of environmental data for decision-making in the Pacific,” Director of the Early Warning and Assessment Division at UNEP, Jian Liu, says.

“The project has contributed significantly to the understanding of the triple planetary crisis of climate, nature, and pollution in vulnerable island nations. Moreover, it has enabled data-driven reporting, planning, policymaking, and action at national and regional levels.” In future, the Inform project will continue to work in the Pacific through the [Climate Information and Knowledge Services for Resilience in 5 Pacific Island Countries programme](#). (UNEP CIS-Pac5).

“I am pleased that UNEP and partners are upscaling the work of the Inform project through the Green Climate Fund (GCF) funded UNEP CIS-Pac5 programme, which will make a major contribution to the UN Secretary General’s [Early Warnings for All Initiative](#),” says Jian Liu.



Solomon Islands Government Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management demonstrating the use of data for policy making. Photo: Inform project