



Solomon Islands Water Governance Programme



Report on Visit to Samoa

Tuesday 16th May – Friday 19th May 2006

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

As part of the Solomon Islands Water Governance Programme, a delegation of Solomon Islands representatives came to Samoa for a four day visit from the 16th to the 19th May 2006. Due to some turbid events that occurred in Honiara in April, a public awareness consultation, initially scheduled to be held in the Solomon Islands capital city, was consequently moved to Samoa, given the timeframe for project implementation.

The three delegates, Mr Robinson Fugui, Director of Environmental Health, Ministry of Health, Mr Charlie Bepapa, Director of Mines, Energy and Water, Ministry of Natural Resources and, Mr John Waki, General Manager of Solomon Islands Water Authority visited water related government agencies to discuss common water issues and develop an understanding of the wide sector approach Samoa has adopted for sustainable water management. The visit, that included a one day consultation with the Solomon Islands community living in Samoa and various Government officials, was also aiming at agreeing and confirming the project activities and objectives for the coming months.

Conclusions

One of the problems the project is facing and at a larger scale with regards the water sector in Solomon Islands, is the lack of coordination and cooperation of various agencies involved. This visit to Samoa was an opportunity to bring together three major stakeholders and build a working group to take the leading role as their active involvement is crucial for the successful implementation of this project and beyond, for the move toward a wide sector approach. The visit was a success as it enabled the exchange of views on various issues from different perspectives: rural and urban water supply and sanitation, central and provincial governments, current organization of the water sector; and also the discussion of areas to be targeted by the pilot projects.

From the discussions held during the consultation, the need for awareness and education arose as a major issue from a community point of view. The presentations from the three representatives stressed lack of financial resources, skills and coordination as key areas of need. The need for a water policy and a comprehensive water legislation was also highlighted to be addressed together with land issues.

Consequently, it was decided with the newly established working group to target the following critical areas: water policy and legislation, coordination and awareness. On a medium and long term perspective, Solomon Islands will be able to capitalize on these components to seek for further funding to progressively adopt an integrated sector approach for the effective management of water resources.

Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below are based on the outcome of discussions with the Solomon Islands Water Governance Programme Working Group. For each recommendation, the primary agency and timeframe for implementation is suggested:

- Ensure the newly elected government's support of and commitment to the development of the water sector, particularly as the water sector has been identified as a lesser priority in the Solomon Islands. The Government should take the lead and drive the process. (Ministry of Natural Resources, Department of Mines and Energy; ongoing).
- Conduct additional stakeholders consultations in the Solomon Islands (Project Consultant and Working Group, ongoing between June and November 06)
- Recruit a Water Governance Project Officer in the Solomon Islands to ensure the successful implementation of activities and follow-up. This position should be maintained after the end of the project to assist the proposed Water Sector Steering Committee in implementing further water sector developments (Project Consultant, by the end of June 2006).
- Engage a legal adviser to draft the legislation as the project timeframe will only allow for preparing the skeleton outline of the act (Project Consultant, by the end of July 2006)
- Strengthen the sector coordination by setting up a National Water Sector Steering Committee (Project Consultant and Working Group, by December 2006)

1. Meetings with Water Related Government Agencies

Meetings were arranged with the main actors of the water sector in Samoa to share experiences and identify common issues.

The delegation had fruitful discussions with the following persons:

- Minister of Works, Transport and Infrastructure,
Hon. Tuisugaletaua Aveau Sofara
- Managing Director, Samoa Water Authority, Mr Moefaaou Taputoa Titimaea
- CEO, Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Meteorology,
Tuuu Dr. Ieti Taulealo
- Water Sector Support Programme (WaSSP) Management Unit.



Meeting with the Water Sector Support Programme Team

The delegation also visited some key water sites, including the three main Water Treatment Plants at Alaoa, Fuluasou and Malololelei, The Hydro Dam at both Alaoa and Afulilo and some hydro generation turbines at Alaoa. Rural water pumping stations at Tiavea as well as the whole rural reticulation system network were included in the site visits.

2. Consultation “Water is Precious”

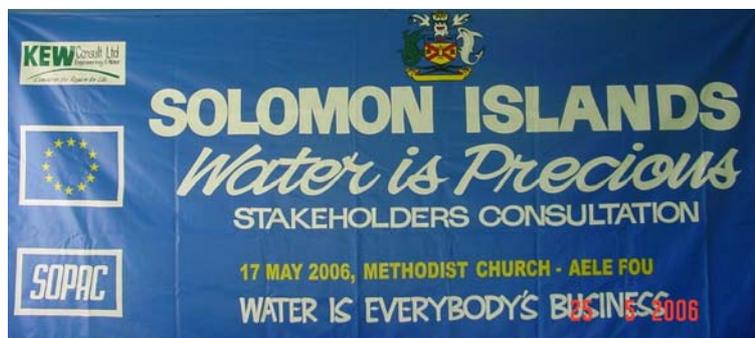


The consultation “Water is Precious” was held on Wednesday 17th May at one of the villages in Upolu, Aele Fou, to bring together the Solomon Islanders currently living and working in Samoa and Samoa water related agencies representatives to discuss water issues in the Solomon Islands from the wide community perspective.

The village of Aele Fou was chosen to host this consultation due to its historical links with the Solomon islanders who arrived in Samoa at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The event. opened by the Minister of Natural Resource, Environment and Meteorology, the Hon. Faumuina Tiatia Liuga, was attended by 29 persons.

The consultation had a good media coverage as it was covered by several media including the local newspapers, the Samoan Observer and Government newspaper, Savali, as well as two TV channels SBC1 (State Television) and Lau TV (privately owned) (refer to articles in Appendix A).

The presentations delivered by the Solomon Islands delegates offered an overview of the water sector in the Solomon Islands and an insight into rural and urban water supply and sanitation systems and issues. To broaden understanding of the water sector approach and provide the audience with a practical example, a presentation was given on Samoa’s experience.



Consultation Banner “Water is Precious”

2.1. Presentations

2.1.1. Presentation “Solomon Islands Water Sector Overview” by Charlie Bepapa, Head of Department of Mines and Energy



The presentation started with basic information about the Solomon Islands.

The water resource division under the Ministry of Mines and Energy is responsible for:

- Implementation of government policies and legislation
- Evaluate water resources
- Undertake hydrogeological activities such as investigation of groundwater, collection of data and analysis).

The issues raised in the presentation are:

- In-adequate policies and legislation
- Lack of coordination and fragmented water management
- Lack of capacity and human resources
- Awareness and low literacy rate
- Lack of funds for the water sector
- Water is a “low priority” for the government
- Data collection and information sharing

The questions raised by Charlie for reflexion:

- What should be rights and obligations of and owners regarding water?
- What should be rights and obligations of commercial and public utilities regarding water?
- What should be the principles to guide the development of fees and charges?
- What should be the principles to guide compensation?
- What should be the water pricing and recovery in rural areas?

Question from Latu: how to address the issue of low literacy rate?

Answer by Charlie Bepapa: It is a major problem especially in rural areas. As water is not in schools curricular, there is a little knowledge in the general public. To address these issues awareness programmes have been developed.

Comment from Eron Kama: There is a need to educate people about land and water to address the issue of land access and compensation, which is a critical issue affecting the water resources management in the Solomon Islands.

2.1.2. Presentation “Solomon Islands Urban Water Management” by John Waki, General Manager of the Solomon Islands Water Authority.

John Waki started his presentation with geographical facts and data to highlight the difficulty of managing urban water as:

- 9 urban centres are scattered on different islands.
- 16% of the population lives in the urban centres which poses the problem of financial viability of the SIWA.
- Small size of urban centres often show most water sources are located on customary land.
- Infrastructure required so large for the small urban population to maintain.



SIWA which is under the Department of Mines and Energy of the Ministry of Natural Resources is managing water supply in 4 urban centres out of 9, namely: Honiara, Noro, Tulagi and Auki. In the other 5 cities, the Provincial Government manages the provision of water infrastructure and supply.

The major issues for urban water management are:

- Poor infrastructure or no basic carrier system in place to manage.
- Economically unviable to take on management of water in all urban centres.
- Management of urban water is fragmented and for some urban centres not done or in existence.

- Most water sources are on customary land and often difficult to access due to dispute over ownership of water.
- All urban centres are separated by sea.
- High operating cost for pumping.
- Management of urban water fragmented & mostly subsidised by national budget.
- No standard management practice applied.

2.1.3. Presentation “Samoa Water for Life: A water sector plan” by Nigel Walmsley

Nigel Walmsley, the Technical Assistance Consultant to the National Authorising Officer for EU-Water Sector Programme in Samoa, explained the process Samoa went through to move towards a sector-wide approach. He emphasised that it is an ongoing process.

He explained that a water sector plan is a living document that should be reviewed on an ongoing basis and involving consultation with all stakeholders.

Question from Hon Ulu Vaomalo Kini (Former Minister of Police & Prison, Samoa):

“What are the main problems and difficulties to implement a policy in the Solomon Islands especially considering the size of the territory?”

Answer by John Waki: It is a major problem considering that it can take several days by boat to reach some islands of the Solomons.

2.1.4. Presentation “Solomon Islands Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme”, Director of the Environmental Health, Ministry of Health

The main functions of the Environmental Department for the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation are:

- Collate provincial annual construction plans and seek for fundings
- Manage RWSSP materials/supplies and freight construction materials to provincial centres
- Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of the construction program;

- Manage the developments of community awareness programs
- Arrange training programs to meet the required needs

The main issues for the rural water supply and sanitation are:

- Staff shortage and limited training opportunities;
- Lack of funds
- Lack of comprehensive legislation
- Existing Environmental Health Act limited in scope to deal with RWSSP issues/problems.



Presentation by Robinson Fugui

2.2. Record of brainstorming session discussions

Theme: Water Resources Management

- Government role: Water is not the main priority in the Solomons from the perspective of the Government. However, the Government role is crucial for driving the process to move towards an integrated water sector approach. There must be strong political will. To address water issues the Government should take a more concerted approach.
- Comments from John Waki: there are water shortages related to catchment issues. To be addressed there is a need for more data (collection focus needs to be strengthened) and awareness programmes.

- It has been questioned why the Solomon Islands Water Resources Act from 1992 is still in draft form. Response: the Act has been submitted to Cabinet, however with change of Government and political unrest over the years it has been lying idle. The Water Resources Department was trying to revive the draft Act but will wait for the reform programme of the new Government.
- Proper business management skills are needed in the sustainability of water resources management.



Aele-Fou Community at the Consultation Workshop

Capacity building and awareness

- It has been stressed by participants that awareness and public consultation are the key to success of policy implementation as it enables ownership of policies. It is crucial to recognize the different but real needs of the people who are expected to take the policies and legislations on board.
- There is a need for awareness in schools from the primary level upwards and to include water issues and education in the schools' curricular.
- Sara (Samoa Water Authority) – Public Relations Unit (PRU) – advice to SIWA – perhaps establish a specific unit for public awareness programmes. Target the younger children – even at preschool level for education. The Bible says “If you love your neighbours you love yourself” need to help each other and support communities for public educations programs. Regarding land ownership issues, Sara explained that PRU is working together with the

village pulenuu (mayor) to address these problems. The pulenuu are the 'gateway' to accessing the people, including landowners in Samoa.

- Introduction of water metering is a good measure for water conservation but people have to be informed about the reasons for metering water. The message that WATER IS PRECIOUS needs to be convincing and get across to people. From Samoa's experience it seems that water metering is more difficult for people in rural areas to accept. In Samoa, it is cheaper to pay metered water rather than a flat water rate.
- The Community perception is very important and it is crucial to listen to the real needs of the people, not copy or imitate what other advanced countries are doing.
- To prevent people misinterpreting assistance and approaches from NGOs, donor organisations and the government, the people at the grassroots level need to be informed before any work or project is implemented.

Access to water and land issues:

- Land issues is a critical issue for water management in the Solomon islands. For urban water management, the amount of access fees to water sources is a threat to financial sustainability for SIWA. One of the responses to the problem would be to identify and set up a suitable arrangement between the Authority and the community through a consultative process for land access.

Financial sustainability

- Eron Kama, a participant residing in Samoa, stated that Solomon Islanders really need water and people are willing to pay for this service. The issue remains on how to bring the water to the homes. Awareness programmes, education and training are essential for the communities in the Solomons. Appropriate programmes are needed to improve standard of living.

Infrastructure management and technology

- Infrastructure –Technology needs to be appropriate for each island.

- When there is ownership over assets, resources, etc then cooperation in maintenance and protection is improved. A good partnership is needed between the Government and the people. However, there is another issue when giving the villages the infrastructure, then they can abuse the notion and think that they own the infrastructure and don't need to pay for the water supply.

3. Review of pilot project scope and objectives

For the last day of the visit, a debriefing work session was organised at KEW's office to discuss the Consultant's work plan for the coming months and confirm the strategic areas to be addressed by the present project.

The revised work programme for the coming months has been agreed and finalized, as well as the areas to be targeted by the project: policy, legislation, coordination and awareness. The detailed work plan is in Appendix E.

3.1. Pilot projects and strategy

Strategic area	Outputs	Strategy
Water policy	Develop a water policy.	Draft a water policy and undertake stakeholders consultations for comments and input to ensure ownership of the document and later successful implementation.
Water legislation	Develop a comprehensive water legislation	Analyze existing legislation and draft the outlines of a comprehensive water legislation for presentation to stakeholders at all level of the society for comments and inputs. Given the project timeframe, the drafting of the full document will be left to a legal adviser to be recruited.
Awareness and community education	Undertake awareness and community education regarding water governance.	Consultations and community education undertaken from May to November 2006.
Coordination of the water sector	Establish a perennial coordination system for the water sector to foster a concerted approach.	Establish a National Water Steering Committee to coordinate the water sector and establish a monitoring system with targets and indicators.

3.2. Project implementation arrangements

For the effective implementation of the project, a National Working Group comprising Charlie Bepapa, John Waki, Robinson Fugui has been established to foster cooperation among various agencies involved in the project and facilitate the project implementation.

The possibility of allocating some funds from the project for the provision of a Project Coordinator in the Solomon Islands to coordinate the implementation of the project and assist the Working Group was discussed. It is envisaged that this proposed position would be maintained beyond the timeframe of the project with some governmental funding to pursue efforts towards an appropriate integrated water resources management system and ensure the project's achievements' sustainability.

Given the somewhat constrained timeframe, with regards the legislative component of the project, our objective is to come up with the main points of the legislation and recruit a legal adviser to draft the Act.

APPENDIX A: Programme of the Visit

APPENDIX B: Programme of the Consultation

APPENDIX C: List of Participants

APPENDIX D: Review of the Press

APPENDIX E: Confirmed Work Programme

APPENDIX F: Draft Water Policy