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Pacific Leaders Commit to Tackle the Global Economic Crisis

A stock market collapses on the other side of the globe. A seafarer from a Pacific Island country loses his job. His children have to drop out of high school. There is very little money for his elderly mother's medical expenses and his wife wonders how the stock exchange collapse on the other side of the globe could wreak such havoc for her family.

It was situations like this which brought Pacific Island country delegates together in Vanuatu to discuss the global financial and economic crisis and consider ways to protect their people from its impact.

The Pacific Conference on the Human Face of the Global Economic Crisis addressed what countries can do to limit the impact of the global economic crisis and prepare themselves better to face future crises with greater resilience.

At the centre of the discussions was people's vulnerability and how the rights of children, youth, women, people with disabilities, people affected by HIV and AIDS and the urban and rural poor can be more effectively addressed in policies and programmes while continuing to make progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

It is estimated that at least 6.44 million people in the Pacific are potentially vulnerable to the impact of the global economic crisis; mainly women, children under 15 years of age, and people over 60 years of age, representing 67 per cent of the current total Pacific population of 9.68 million.

The Chair of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and Administrator of United Nations Development Programme, Helen Clark delivered the keynote address at the conference.

Ms Clark who is also the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, highlighted that the call for the conference had been formally made at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Cairns in 2009 and their meeting in 2010 would review the recommendations.

"Even before the crisis, a number of Pacific Island countries had been facing challenges associated with



Call for action: UNDP Administrator urges Pacific leaders to work together to protect the Pacific's vulnerable from the impact of the crisis

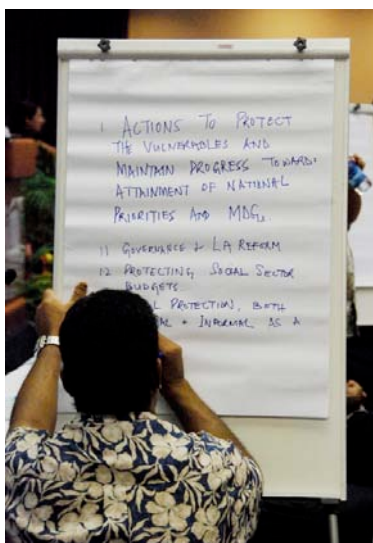
low rates of economic growth and increasing unemployment," said Ms Clark.

She added that these tough times called for lateral thinking and new ways of addressing the fundamental problems standing in the way of development.

"There is a need for further improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure across the board – every dollar counts and must be carefully prioritized, with the needs of the most vulnerable put first," Clark said.

Ms Clark also stressed the need to increase social protection, advance gender equality, encourage business investment, and reorient economies to low-carbon development.

She said the crises made the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) tougher.



Country commitments: A delegate from Palau lists the actions his country can take

"Advances towards the MDGs in this region had been mixed. A number of countries had shown good progress on most, if not all, goals. Some countries were lagging behind on one or more MDGs, while others were making little progress on any. The recession and other concurrent crises have made the task of reaching the MDGs harder."

"UNDP's Pacific Centre in Suva calculates that in the twelve countries for which data are available, the poverty rate has worsened over the last two years as the incomes of the poorest and most vulnerable people declined."

Ms Clark added that the improvements in growth rates and the progress towards MDG targets observed in a few Pacific coun-

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Timor Leste Shares Strategies for Achieving Universal Education by 2015

For a young nation like Timor Leste, education is one of the main keys to unlocking the potential of its people.

And it is with this in mind that the government of Timor Leste embarked on a plan to achieve literacy by 2013, two years before the deadline to achieve the MDGs.

Education Minister Dr Joao Cancio Freitas presented on this government's education priorities at the Pacific Conference on the Human Face of the Global economic Crisis.

Access to universal education is MDG 2 and relates to the achievement of basic education by all children in any country.

He said the government recognized the value of vocational and technical training and this was the second national priority in the area of education.

"Our youth are not well skilled. In our national strategic plan we have a high priority for intensifying technical and vocational training as a response to labour market forces."

He added that the education sector in Timor Leste practiced and demon-



Dr Joao Freitas

strated gender mainstreaming.

"Thirty percent of our teachers are females and almost 50% of the students enrolled in secondary schools are girls."

He said his country still faced some cultural challenges relating to the education of girls.

He added that to overcome the cultural barriers of girls getting education, the government provided scholarships for girls and conditional cash transfer to families was tied to girls being in schools.

"These are being used as incentives to ensure that girls in Timor Leste do not miss out on education."

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tries before the crisis demonstrated what could be achieved with good leadership, good policy, and the right level of support from the international community.

"If we get the basics right, Pacific nations will move forward to achieve the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals too," Ms Clark said.

Speaking at the opening of the conference, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Honorable Edward Natapei urged the Pacific Island countries to remain vigilant and active to ensure that their policies and economic reforms strongly support the enabling environment for economic growth.

"We have to pay special attention to our social protection policies to ensure that our poor, our children and our women, who are the most vulnerable, are not left behind," said Honorable Natapei.

He also highlighted strong leadership as being vital in economic recovery programmes and resilience building.

Throughout the conference country delegations shared their experiences of the global economic and financial crisis.

"UNDP's Pacific Centre in Suva calculates that in the twelve countries for which data are available, the poverty rate has worsened over the last two years as the incomes of the poorest and most vulnerable people declined."

UNDP Administrator Helen Clark

On the last day of the conference, country delegations focused specific attention on developing country actions designed to:

- improve the efficiency and equity in public expenditure/management;
- strengthen social services and social protection and infrastructure; enhance income creation and the promotion of the private sector and informal economy;
- improve data collection and analysis for evidence-based policy, planning and monitoring;
- promote sustainable green growth; and make strategic investments in information and communications technologies.

The country actions range from activities that can be undertaken within one year to those that will take up to two years or more.

They will be presented at the 41st Pacific Island Leaders Forum scheduled for August in Vanuatu. It was agreed that for many of the actions to be successful, there was a need

for strong leadership, vision, good policies and concerted action as well as support from development partners.

The conference was closed by the Tuiloma Neroni Slade, the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat who echoed Ms Clark's and Honorable Natapei's calls for strong leadership.

"We must look for innovative and sustainable regional solutions to lift our people out of poverty. This will require Pacific Islands Countries to take a strong leadership role in their development efforts and continue to work in partnership with the international community."

The conference was organized by the government of Vanuatu with support from the United Nations, the Asian Development Bank, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the University of the South Pacific and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. It was attended by more than 250 people.

Youth Share their Views on the Global Economic Crisis

Young people have been highlighted as one of the vulnerable groups that would first feel the brunt of the global financial and economic crisis.

At the opening session of the Pacific Conference on the Human Face of the Global Economic Crisis, seventeen year old, Danielle Willis from Palau spoke on behalf of Pacific youth who had gathered in a two day pre-conference meeting.

She said that the global economic crisis had impacted on the lives of Pacific peoples in various ways.

"More fathers and mothers are unemployed and have less income. Families have started to skip meals or cut the variety of foods, pulling children from school, engaging children in labour, and leaving children without appropriate care while families struggle to make ends meet. Frustration, tension and violence at home and within communities is increasing. Increased substance

abuse worsens these situations. Girls and women are the most vulnerable due to existing gender inequality," said Miss Willis.

She urged the leaders at the conference to "listen carefully to what the voices of the vulnerable are telling you".



The human face story: June Atomea receives her prize from UNDP Administrator Helen Clark for her story

Youth delegates raised these issues throughout the conference as they participated in discussions and in the working sessions focussing on Labour; Education; Health and Food Security; and Governance and Legislative Agenda.

Prior to the conference, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), organized an essay competition that was open to young people in the Pacific, aged 18–25 years. They were asked to write about how they felt the global economic crisis was affecting them or those around them.

University of the South Pacific student, June Atomea won the Human Face story competition. Twenty-two year old, Ms Atomea, who is from Northern Malaita in the Solomon Islands submitted her essay titled 'Silent Cry of John, a Village Boy'.

The story was about a young boy who wanted to become a teacher but he had to drop out of school as his family could not afford to pay for his education (excerpt below).

Ms Atomea travelled to Vanuatu to receive her prize from UNDP Administrator Helen Clark.

Excerpt from "Silent Cry of John, A Village Boy"

"That was in 2002 when John started kindergarten at an age of five. He had to walk up and down the mountainous terrain every day to attend primary school which is around 16 kilometres away from his home. His parents who are both subsistence farmers had to wake him up around 4 am each morning to enable him to reach school by 7.30 am. His breakfast and lunch were mostly dry baked potato or taro, and other days he would just sacrifice lunch. He would always wonder why he can't be like the children from the coastal village who usually brought biscuits, bread, or rice for their lunch.

One day little John innocently asked his mother, "nai na'a ufitu na toto kwesi ngalia bo'o bereta mada raisi

uri lans nau?"(Mummy why is that at no time I am able to take bread or rice for my lunch). Tears flowed down her mother's cheek as she told her little John that it's because they could not afford it. This motivated John to perform really well in school and topped his class from Grade 1 to Grade 6. He eventually passed the secondary school entrance examination in 2008 and was accepted into Form 1 at a top national secondary school in the city, Honiara. His aim was to become a school teacher.

John came to Honiara and topped his class with all straight 'As' in the semester 1 2009 examinations. Unfortunately the effects of the Global Economic Crisis crept into the Solomon Islands economy around that same period. Prices of food and other things skyrocketed, and gardens

were also affected due to the effects of climate change. John's mother had no other option to fend for her eight children and at the same time meet John's school needs. As a result of the economic hardship, the very bright and promising little John was forced out of school ending his childhood dream of becoming a school teacher one day. There was no other alternative for John so he had to accept his fate.

But the important question to think about is why this world is so unfair? The Global Financial Crisis is probably the result of human greed and the sad thing about it is that it costs the future of one village boy, and who knows he may be one of the many silent cries of similar nature throughout the Pacific."

Full text: <http://vanuatu2010.un.org.fj/pages.cfm/youth-side-event/about-youth-side-event.html>



UNDP Administrator Helen Clark spoke at the opening session of the conference. She highlighted the vulnerabilities of the Pacific Island countries vis a vis the global financial and economic crisis. The Prime Minister of Vanuatu Honorable Edward Natapei addressed the meeting and highlighted the work his country had done to counter the impact of the crisis. The speeches can be accessed from <http://vanuatu2010.un.org.fj/pages.cfm/press-corner/speeches-statements/>



On the first day of the conference country delegations set the scene by discussing the actions they were already engaged in to counter the impact of the crisis. Above: A delegate from Tonga presents on the experience of her country



Followed by a group photograph of heads of state, heads of regional organizations, and heads of UN agencies, heads of regional initiatives.

Information for the conference can be obtained from:

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Local and regional media attended and covered the proceedings of the conference. Daily press briefings were organised (above).



...s. On the first day Hon. Bob Hawke for International Development Australia spoke (pictured above). The Prime Minister of Vanuatu Honorable Edward Natapei addressed the meeting and highlighted the work his country had done to counter the impact of the crisis. The speeches can be accessed from <http://vanuatu2010.un.org.fj/pages.cfm/press-corner/speeches-statements/>

...ua New Guinea David Abbott (R)



Below (R): Ajay Chhibber, Director of UNDP's Regional Bureau Asia and the Pacific speaks to the media.

Left: Dr Noeleen Heyzer, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific makes a point at a press briefing.



Pacific-Caribbean dialogue on disaster risk management for small islands

A new south-south exchange program, led by regional agencies in coordination with UNDP, seeks to facilitate sharing of experiences and transfer of technologies which have proven useful for small island developing states (SIDS) in managing and preventing disasters due to the high incidence of cyclones, floods, tsunamis and other such hazards which continually threaten the islands and their peoples.

In one of the first activities launching the larger exchange program, a delegation from the Pacific islands travelled to Jamaica in December last year to participate in the annual Caribbean event for disaster risk management stakeholders – the Comprehensive Disaster Management Forum.

The Pacific delegation was invited by host agency CDEMA (Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Management Agency), to make relevant presentations on topics of concern to both the Caribbean and Pacific, given their shared vulnerabilities as SIDS, following up on the Caribbean participation to a regional forum held in Fiji last year.

Mosese Sikivou of SOPAC (Pacific Islands' Applied Geoscience Commission) made a presentation in Jamaica on the Pacific's regional process for implementing the Hyogo Framework of Action, to ensure that risk management practices meet the standards outlined under the overarching international framework. Fine Lao from SPREP (Pacific Islands'

of disasters, including food preservation techniques which can keep remote communities supplied with adequate food in the difficult days and weeks following a disaster's impact.

Williams Worwor, from the Vanuatu Meteorology Service, spoke to group on how Vanuatu has managed to successfully integrate climate change adaptation and disaster management concerns into overall government planning and budgeting processes in that country.

The Pacific delegation in Jamaica engaged with a wide range of topics presented at the CDM forum by national and regional agencies in the Caribbean, including tsunami impact assessment, mobilization of youth and communities for disaster preparedness, and how the public health sector can improve its resilience in the face of disasters.

Support for this exchange was provided by UNDP Pacific Centre and the regional UNDP program Caribbean Risk Management Initiative (CRMI), as well as the UNDP's Special Unit for South-South Cooperation, which is funding the larger program.

The ongoing program for south-south cooperation among small islands in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and the Pacific will initially run for two years, with a strong knowledge management dimension.

A range of issues will be addressed during that program, with a focus on building capacity through exchange visits, study tours, inter-regional discussions, as well as the transfer of specific tools and methodologies.



South south exchange: Williams Worwor, from the Vanuatu Meteorology Service, at a landslide mitigation project site in Jamaica

Regional Environmental Program) shared information on community-based initiatives for climate change adaptation which have worked well in various Pacific islands. Loti Yates, the Disaster Manager from Solomon Islands, introduced a new topic to the forum, outlining traditional coping practices used in Solomon Islands to withstand the aftermath

Gender, Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Training of Trainers

The training, held in Suva, was attended by officials from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation as well as several other ministries. All participants had experience in working in the areas of disaster risk management, or with vulnerable communities. The training included practical exercises, such as those relating to Vulnerability Capacity Assessments (VCA) developed by the Red Cross. These are conducted by a community to identify and assess the potential hazards it faces. VCA leads to better disaster preparedness and is an important tool in disaster risk management. It was organised by the UNDP Pacific Centre in partnership with Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation.



Getting to know each other: UNDP Pacific Centre's Karen Bernard (L) during a group activity.

Reports on HIV Launched

Why are women twice as likely as men to get infected by HIV, and yet they are dependent on men's choice's for their protection? How does violence against women and children contribute to the spread of HIV? Why is the economic empowerment of women important in the fight against HIV? Are there laws in place in the Pacific that contribute to risky sexual behaviour? How can the existing legislation in Pacific Island Countries be amended to support effective HIV prevention, treatment, care, and public initiatives?

These questions and many more are answered in two reports on HIV in the Pacific launched by UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident



Sharing knowledge: UNDP Resident Representative Knut Ostby shows the newly launched reports to the Ambassador of Republic of Marshall Islands, Ms Elizabeth Kabua Amatlain

Representative Knut Ostby in Suva as part of the World Aids Day events last year. December 1 marks World AIDS day.

The reports "Gender and HIV in the Pacific Islands Region: A literature review of evidence with recommendations" and "Enabling Effective Responses to HIV in Pacific Island Countries: Drafting Instructions for Human rights-based Legislative Reform" were produced by the UNDP Pacific Centre in partnership with UNIFEM, UNAIDS and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

The launch was witnessed by more than a hundred people who had gathered at Sukuna Park, in the heart of Suva town as part of a candle light vigil, in memory of those who had died of HIV. The event was conducted in partnership with FJN+, the national network of people living with HIV. FJN+ provides peer support, community care, as well prevention support and advocacy.

The launch was designed to be interactive, with members of the public invited to share their views on HIV by commenting on key messages extracted from the reports and displayed at strategic locations at the launch venue.

Staff news in brief

Ms. Suki Beavers, the Pacific Centre Human Rights Adviser left the Centre in January 2010 and has been promoted to a more senior post with the Bureau of Development Policy (BDP) gender team in New York. Suki had been with the Pacific Centre since its inception in 2006.

Mr. Jean Luc Stalon, the Senior Adviser and Project Manager for the Crisis Prevention and Recovery

team left the Centre in February 2010 to take up the post of Deputy Country Director in the Pakistan Country Office. Jean Luc joined the Pacific Centre in 2008.

Sefanaia Tudonu, Executive Assistant to the Pacific Centre Manager Garry Wiseman left the Centre in March 2010 to pursue his studies. Sefa had been with the Pacific Centre since April 2008.

Event briefs

Knowledge Exchange

Steve Glovinsky, a UNDP adviser, travelled to Suva on a scoping assessment looking to establish a value added research service, called Solution Exchange which offers a free, UN-sponsored space where development professionals with similar interests ("Communities of Practice") connect to share knowledge and experience towards the common objective of problem solving. Communities are organized around national development priorities and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), contributing to their successful achievement. Members come from all organizations – government, NGOs, development partners, private sector, research institutes and academia – interacting on an ongoing basis to learn, share and collaborate.

The Pacific Centre is continuing to consult with key stakeholders about the proposal and to identify funding options.

Security Sector Governance

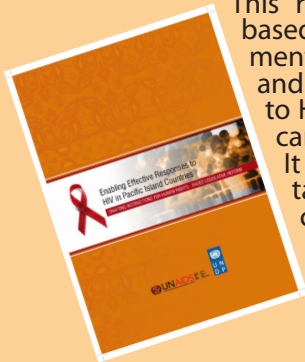
The Solomon Islands Strategic Planning Session on Security Sector Governance (SSG) was hosted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Centre in partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

Government officials, Members of Parliament, civil society and accountability institutions representatives and security personnel met in Honiara in February to determine priorities and support required to enhance SSG in the Solomon Islands.

Meanwhile, the Speaker of the Solomon Islands Parliament, Honorable Sir Peter Kenilorea launched a joint UNDP Pacific Centre and PIFS report "Enhancing Security Sector Governance in the Pacific Region: A Strategic Framework". (More on the report on page 8)

Latest Knowledge Products

Enabling Effective Responses to HIV: Options for a Human Rights-based Legislative Reform

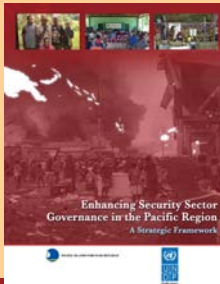


This report presents options for human rights-based legislation for the prevention and management of HIV, for protecting those already infected and those particularly affected by or vulnerable to HIV, and ensuring that people living with HIV can continue to live useful and productive lives. It has been designed specifically for the Pacific, taking into account the particular cultural contexts, constraints and opportunities presented in Pacific Island Countries.

The report is a joint UNDP Pacific Centre and UNAIDS publication.

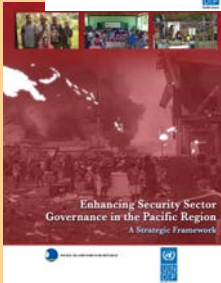
<http://www.undppc.org.fj/pages.cfm/publications/democratic-governance-reports/>

Enhancing Security Sector Governance in the Pacific Region: A Strategic Framework



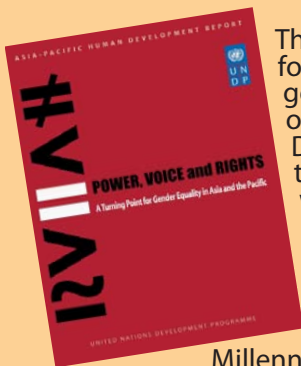
The Pacific region has witnessed violent conflict, civil unrest and political crises. This has led to a growing recognition of the critical role of law enforcement agencies and security institutions. However, in recent years, there have been concerns that these institutions lack capacity to meet the challenge of providing security to the general public; that governments do not have the necessary civilian security expertise to manage them; that legislatures are not empowered to oversee them; and that security forces are not held accountable under the law for their actions.

This report, a joint UNDP Pacific Centre and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat publication, is intended to support regional and national stakeholders to develop appropriate policies and programming.



http://www.undppc.org.fj/pages.cfm/publications/crisis-prevention-recovery-reports

Power, Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in the Pacific



This Asia Pacific Human Development report focuses on the critical question of advancing gender equality, as seen through the prism of women's unequal power, voice, and rights. Despite the region's many economic gains, the report chronicles how in many instances women across the region continue to be held back and disadvantaged. The report makes it clear that achieving gender equality promotes human development not only for women, but for whole societies, and is central to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

<http://www.undppc.org.fj/pages.cfm/publications/other-reports/>

PASIFIKA Focus is a publication of the UNDP Pacific Centre.

UNDP Pacific Centre focuses on specific issues within the practice areas of UNDP that impact on small vulnerable island countries of the sub region. The primary focus of the Pacific Centre is to deliver policy and technical advice and build capacity of Pacific Island countries to respond more effectively to the development challenges of the region.

UNDP Pacific Centre, 7th Floor,
Kadavu House,
414 Victoria Parade, Suva, Fiji
Postal address: UNDP (Pacific
Centre), Private Mail Bag, Suva,
Fiji

Tel: (+679) 330 0399,
Fax: (+679) 330 1976

registry.pacificcentre@undp.org

www.undppc.org.fj

Upcoming Events

Strengthening Capacities for Peace and Development in the Pacific: Induction Workshop 3 - 12 May, Nadi, Fiji

This induction workshop is part of a programme to build and strengthen the conflict prevention capacity of key conflict prevention organizations in the Pacific region using different methods.

Strengthening Capacities for Peace and Development in the Pacific (CPAD) aims to build a cadre of Peacebuilders in the Pacific – representing governments, CROP agencies and Civil Society Organizations – to work together on regional and national peacebuilding interventions.

The induction workshop will identify how the "peace community" would function; explore key concepts in conflict and peace analysis, how to design strategic and programming responses to build better peace; as well as determine which policy issues are critical to take up in the Pacific region.