



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



# Evaluation of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community – Government of Australia Partnership: Final Report

Office of Development Effectiveness

August 2016

# Foreword

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) are entering the third year of their 10-year Partnership. The partnering approach is a credit to both organisations; they have agreed to work more closely together to deliver more, and better, development results for Pacific islanders. Through the Partnership Australia demonstrates good donorship, providing more predictable and more flexible funding and other targeted engagement to enhance SPC's capability. For its part, SPC has committed to focus its efforts on strengthening systems and processes for continuous improvement, enabling it to be effective and efficient in its role as the Pacific region's largest scientific and technical organisation.

I led an independent evaluation of SPC in 2012 following the review of the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Framework. Looking back at the strengths and weaknesses we identified then, there has been good progress in SPC on some issues but other challenges remain, such as clearly identifying priority areas of work, mainstreaming gender into its programs, and pursuing full cost recovery. Australia has been a strong supporter and friend to SPC, but there is more DFAT could do to strengthen the Partnership. DFAT would do well to take the stand-out success of its support for strengthened performance management as a model for how it might engage with SPC on other capability issues.

This is the first of three evaluations which DFAT and SPC are committed to undertake over the 10-year life of their Partnership. At this point in time, a fifth of the way through, I hope both parties will take the opportunity to reflect on achievements to date and agree on areas where progress requires renewed effort.



Jim Adams  
Chair, Independent Evaluation Committee

Cover: Horticulturalist Anderson Ifui with technical adviser Jack Gilchrist at the Honiara Botanic Gardens. Photo: DFAT / Peter Davis

## Office of Development Effectiveness

The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) is an independent branch within the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). ODE monitors the Australian aid program's performance, evaluates its impact, and contributes to international evidence and debate about aid and development effectiveness. ODE's work is overseen by the Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC), an advisory body that provides independent expert advice on ODE's evaluation strategy, work plan, analysis and reports.

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# Acknowledgements

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The evaluation was undertaken from October 2015 to June 2016. The evaluation team would like to thank DFAT Pacific Regional Branch, SPC Strategic Engagement Policy and Planning Facility, DFAT Suva post and DFAT Noumea post for their engagement and cooperation throughout the evaluation process.

# Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
AU\$	Australian Dollar
Conference	Conference of the Pacific Community, the governing body of SPC
CFP	<i>Change Franc Pacifique</i> , the currency used in French overseas collectivities
CRGA	Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
EDD	Economic Development Division, SPC
EDF	European Union's European Development Fund
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EQAP	Educational Quality and Assessment Program, SPC
FAME	Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems Division, SPC
FFA	Forum Fisheries Association
FJD	Fijian Dollar
Forum	Pacific Islands Forum
GoA	Government of Australia
HLC	High Level Consultations
IEC	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Independent Evaluation Committee
IER	Independent External Review (of SPC) completed in 2012
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
NCD	Non-communicable diseases
ODE	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Office of Development Effectiveness
PAF	Performance assessment framework
Partnership	Partnership for Pacific Regionalism and Enhanced Development 2014–2023, signed by SPC and GoA
PHD	Public Health Division, SPC
PICTs	Pacific island countries and territories
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PRO	Pacific regional organisation

RAS	Regional Advisory Service, funded by Australia and offering technical and advisory services to Pacific regional organisations
RIF	Regional Institutional Framework
RRRT	Regional Rights Resource Team, SPC
SEPPF	Strategic Engagement Policy and Planning Facility, SPC
SOPAC	Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission
SPBEA	Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
US\$	United States Dollar
USP	University of the South Pacific
WHO	World Health Organization





# Executive summary

## Introduction and rationale

In March 2014 the Government of Australia (GoA) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) signed a 10-year Partnership agreement. The Partnership for Pacific Regionalism and Enhanced Development 2014–2023 (the Partnership) supports SPC by investing in the implementation of SPC's Strategic Plan and divisional business plans. The Partnership agreement makes explicit reference to the use of evaluation at key intervals to assess the Partnership.

This evaluation assesses progress under the Partnership to date, with a focus on questions of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, acknowledging that the Partnership is just entering its third year. The report identifies achievements and challenges of the Partnership in addressing its objectives and principles, highlights lessons learned and provides recommendations on how the Partnership could be improved.

## Key findings

### Relevance

The evaluation examined whether the Partnership was a relevant mechanism in relation to both SPC's and Australia's stated aims, and the interests of Pacific island members. This included exploring whether the partners' stated objectives were clear and well understood, and how relevance might be strengthened.

There is good alignment between the Partnership goals and the stated objectives and strategies of both Australia and SPC. The evaluation found that the Partnership is relevant to SPC's mandate as articulated in the Strategic Plan. SPC's specific role relative to that of some other Pacific regional organisations is, however, less clear. Donors have played a mixed role in helping resolve this situation. Australia advocates consistently with donors, members and regional organisations for clear roles and active cooperation between regional organisations, but there have been instances where its own actions appear at odds with these messages.

To the extent that regionalism, defined as collective action between Pacific island countries, is served by the improved performance of regional organisations, the Partnership's focus on supporting SPC's organisational reform agenda, including its performance management in priority program areas, is very relevant to Australia. However, the introduction of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism appears to have moved responsibility for the Pacific regionalism agenda away from regional organisations and towards member countries, making the regionalism aspect of the Partnership now less relevant.

SPC members see good alignment between the work of SPC and their development needs. They also report observing a strong and longstanding relationship between Australia and SPC.

### Progress against Partnership objectives

The extent to which the Partnership has helped strengthen SPC's capacity to support development in the Pacific was assessed by looking at SPC's approach to planning and prioritisation, progress against the Partnership performance framework, and improvements made on key capabilities such as monitoring and evaluation and financial management. Assessments on each of these also considered the contribution, if any, made by Australia.

The evaluation found that the practice of prioritisation is still a long way from the longer term vision articulated in the Partnership. Prioritisation is a difficult process that touches upon the interests of different groups including members, donors and the individual work units within SPC. The process is still evolving and it is probably too early to rate it as sound. There are initial signs, however, that Australia's provision of flexible funding under the Partnership has helped contribute to the emerging discipline of prioritisation within SPC. Australia's current involvement

in the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA) Strategic Plan Implementation Subcommittee and potential support for governance training signal an increased focus for the Partnership in this area.

This evaluation noted some good examples of multisector approaches, but also found that this is not yet core to SPC's programming approach. Similarly, divisional-level funding has helped improve efficiency but not necessarily prompted these areas to re-examine what they deliver. Although it is still early in the life of the Partnership, the scale of project consolidation to date is short of both parties' expectations and the target outlined in the Partnership performance agreement. At the same time, the evaluation notes that this target is overambitious.

Although improving performance on gender does not feature heavily in the Partnership agreement, it is a clear area of focus across the Australian aid program. This evaluation found there has been some positive progress on gender in discrete areas of SPC: the proposed gender stocktake across all SPC programs and the incorporation of gender considerations into proposals assessed by SPC's programming assessment committee are two such examples. Across SPC, progress on gender is mixed in the absence of an appropriately resourced, organisation-wide gender mainstreaming strategy. While dialogue on this subject has been substantial, the Partnership could look to additional forms of support such as technical assistance and tagged divisional-level funding.

Building on a longstanding, positive relationship, the Partnership has brought about some important changes, including significant improvements to monitoring and evaluation practice and strengthened program planning and outcome reporting. This has resulted in provision of more flexible funding to divisions which meet the Partnership criteria. However, there is an urgent and overdue need for SPC to introduce a number of reforms which will strengthen its financial position and financial management capability, acknowledging that there has been some recent movement in this area. Progress in organisational reform under the Partnership has been most successful where Australia has provided SPC with hands-on technical support to address challenges.

### Impact of the Partnership on institutional arrangements

The evaluation examined whether the institutional arrangements supporting the Partnership are sound. Aspects of this inquiry included the extent to which the Partnership is being 'lived', whether management and communication arrangements had improved under the Partnership, and whether there was greater collaboration at the country and regional level on both technical and strategic issues as a result of the Partnership.

The evaluation found that the relationship between DFAT and SPC does, for the most part, reflect the Partnership principles. There is a history of healthy collaboration between SPC and DFAT at the technical and program-management level; this does not appear to have changed as a result of the Partnership. There are clear lines of communication around program implementation, and the establishment of focal points for day-to-day management of Partnership issues is seen in a positive light by both parties.

One of the approaches adopted by the partners to building improved collaboration is twice-yearly formal consultations. The evaluation found that these High Level Consultations (HLCs) are useful but fall short of their potential. Both Australia and SPC have expressed a desire for more strategic discussions; thus far collaboration on high-level strategic issues remains a largely aspirational goal of the Partnership. Individuals in both organisations also commented that there was a lack of clarity around the assignment of responsibility within DFAT for taking the Partnership forward. With significant DFAT structural and staffing challenges now behind it, hopefully this situation will be quickly resolved.

The Partnership has made limited ground on bringing a whole-of-government perspective to the relationship, although given the distinct technical focus of some agencies this is perhaps unsurprising. The evaluation team agrees with the observation by some in DFAT that it would be more accurate to refer to the Partnership as a DFAT-SPC partnership. It notes that additional steps could be taken to improve the involvement of DFAT's Pacific bilateral programs in the Partnership. These steps are important if the efficiency and coherence of Australian support to the Pacific is to be maximised.

## Overall conclusion

The Partnership approach taken by Australia and SPC is commendable. The Partnership aligns well with development effectiveness principles including the Forum (Cairns) Compact. It promotes good donor practice, mutual respect, responsibility, accountability, predictability and a focus on results. Although no longer SPC's largest donor, Australia is the lead donor in the provision of flexible and core funding to the organisation. In this regard Australia has helped set the agenda for a stronger, more effective SPC. SPC sees the relationship with DFAT in very favourable terms, but notes that there is some distance to travel before the Partnership reaches its full potential, particularly in regard to collaboration at a strategic level. DFAT values its relationship with SPC because of its unique role and depth of expertise in technical implementation as well as in understanding how to work in the Pacific. DFAT however also expressed some concern with the broad scope of SPC's work and the mixed performance exhibited by some areas of the organisation.

There is strong alignment between the Partnership goals and objectives and the stated interests of SPC and the Government of Australia, and the Partnership is a relevant mechanism for jointly pursuing shared objectives. An important exception to this is the project of advancing Pacific regionalism; the evaluation did not find a clear, common understanding of what this means within or between the two parties, and found that the context has changed with the adoption of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism.

Given the strong and positive relationship between DFAT and SPC at the starting point of the Partnership in 2014, overall progress in the intervening two years has been positive but modest. Both SPC and DFAT value the Partnership, which was entered into with a genuine desire to achieve even better things together. Changes within and between the two organisations are required if the Partnership is to achieve its potential, and this involves ongoing effort to sustain momentum. Enhanced progress will require deeper engagement and more strategic discussions, pursued with openness and energy.

## Recommendations

1. Australia and SPC consider how the partnership can further support the strengthening of SPC's financial management capability. This might include support for the development of a cost recovery mechanism and a model to guide the allocation of core funding.
2. Australia and SPC update the Partnership Agreement to reflect regional developments since 2013 and confirm management arrangements. This may include reviewing the role of HLCs with the possibility of using these meetings to progress key priority areas through sustained and targeted collaboration.
3. DFAT Pacific Division and SPC make efforts to raise awareness in DFAT bilateral programs of SPC activities in individual countries and actively promote engagement wherever possible.
4. SPC develop a resourced strategy to mainstream gender across its programs, giving priority to major projects and programs.
5. Australia and SPC examine the usefulness of the current PAF and consider how this can be improved for the next funding round. The PAF should continue to align with SPC's existing results reporting system but include a small number of priority corporate reforms as triggers for the provision of further flexible funding.
6. Building upon the success of partnership in helping strengthen SPC's M&E capability, DFAT and SPC work together to prioritise areas of SPC's operations which would benefit from similar support. If necessary DFAT to explore providing SPC with technical advice to advance such areas.
7. DFAT and SPC work together to encourage all SPC development partners to support an aligned approach towards financing, visibility, reporting and evaluation.

# Management Response

The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) undertook the first mid-term Independent Evaluation of the Pacific Community (SPC) – Government of Australia Partnership Agreement, the first evaluation milestone in the ten year partnership. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and SPC thank the ODE review team for their work and for producing a useful document that will inform the next phase of the Partnership. In the spirit of the Partnership, DFAT and SPC have agreed to issue a joint management response.

DFAT and SPC welcome the positive assessment of the Partnership which has increased predictable, flexible funding for SPC and contributed to its monitoring and evaluation and program planning strategies. The Evaluation demonstrated the existence of strong working relationships between the SPC and the Australian Government built on a history of technical collaboration and shared expertise. The report affirmed that DFAT remains a major development partner for SPC, is a leader in implementing internationally recognised donor practices and is a champion for the organisation's change agenda. SPC is the principal research and technical organisation in the Pacific and remains an important partner of choice to deliver Australia's aid program in the region. The evaluation found that the Partnership objectives remain relevant to the SPC's new Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and the Australian Government's development policy - Australian aid: promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability.

DFAT and the SPC appreciate that we can improve the effectiveness of the Partnership. There is scope to raise awareness of the Partnership across DFAT and the Australian Government. We also support stronger strategic policy collaboration on key issues. We support the majority of the recommendations in the Final Report and have commenced discussions on actions to address each of them. In relation to the Partnership Performance Assessment Framework, we are committed to the principles of minimising duplication and easing the reporting burden. Further consideration is required to develop a Partnership framework that is able to address our collective needs relating to performance management, reporting and new funding agreements.

DFAT is committed to supporting the SPC reform and prioritisation agenda by providing tailored support on key issues, including financial management capability and gender equality. The Partnership can also benefit our relationships with fellow regional organisations and donors by encouraging all development players to work in an efficient, coordinated and consistent way. Finally, we agree with the Final Report's characterisation of the Partnership as a "living" document. We will update the Partnership to ensure the objectives remain relevant and sustainable.

### Individual Management response to the recommendations

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
<b>Recommendation 1</b> Australia and SPC consider how the partnership can further support the strengthening of SPC's financial management capability. This might include support for the development of a cost recovery mechanism and a model to guide the allocation of core funding.	Agree	<p>Strengthening SPC's financial management capability is an important objective in the Partnership. SPC is taking forward a three year sustainable financing strategy to address expected deficits, increase levels of core funding and implement a cost recovery model.</p> <p>DFAT has supported SPC's sustainable financial strategy including by advocating for financial reform at SPC governing council forums, encouraging other donors to move to predictable and core funding models and supporting a 2014 study into full cost recovery.</p> <p>DFAT is committed to continuing to support SPC's financial management capability particularly during this next phase of financial reform.</p>	<p>At the recent High Level Consultations on 17 June 2016, DFAT and SPC discussed available options for enhancing financial management capability including through funding consultants or supporting an internal position. SPC will determine its specific requirements and develop a proposal for consideration by DFAT. DFAT will continue to urge other donors to support SPC's cost recovery strategy and increase flexible funding.</p> <p>DFAT and SPC will support the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) initiatives (including the Analysis of Governance and Financing) to review the financing mechanisms of regional organisations and develop strategies for more effective collective action</p>	<p>By end 2016</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<b>Recommendation 2</b> Australia and SPC update the Partnership Agreement to reflect regional developments since 2013 and confirm management	Agree	<p>There have been major developments since the Partnership's inception including, the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the AusAID-DFAT integration, changes to the Australian aid program and the development of the new SPC Strategic Plan. As a living document, the Partnership should reflect the current operating environment and refer to relevant regional</p>	<p>DFAT and SPC will agree updates and corrections to the Partnership that will be subsequently incorporated via an amendment.</p> <p>DFAT and SPC will identify two to three common priorities at each HLC for future collaboration. The priorities could be either corporate or program goals.</p>	<p>By end September 2016</p>

arrangements. This may include reviewing the role of HLCs with the possibility of using these meetings to progress key priority areas through sustained and targeted collaboration.		<p>strategies.</p> <p>DFAT and SPC have now convened five HLCs in Canberra and Noumea. While all have facilitated productive discussions we recognise that we can further improve the quality of biannual HLCs with better follow up action and closer integration with other SPC – Australian Government mechanisms.</p>	<p>DFAT and SPC will convene (via teleconference) one-off working groups with relevant officers to progress the issues identified at HLC meetings.</p> <p>HLC discussions will remain focussed on strategic issues. DFAT and SPC will manage other issues that do not require high level engagement through regular interaction between SPC and Australian Government Focal Point Officers</p>	<p>Prior to the next HLCs in November 2016</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>DFAT Pacific Division and SPC make efforts to raise awareness in DFAT bilateral programs of SPC activities in individual countries and actively promote engagement wherever possible.</p>	Agree	<p>DFAT and SPC agree that better communication between DFAT's Pacific bilateral programs (Canberra Desks and Posts) and SPC's regional and multi-country programs is important.</p> <p>Greater awareness of SPC's country programs among DFAT bilateral programs will create entry points for closer engagement and present opportunities for collaboration.</p> <p>Improving communication is particularly timely as SPC undertakes its prioritisation strategy and identifies programs that may be discontinued. DFAT bilateral programs will need to consider how its activities can address gaps during this transition phase.</p> <p>While awareness-raising will be focussed through people-to-people engagement, we will also use the upcoming redevelopment of the SPC website to improve information flows to DFAT staff and</p>	<p>DFAT and SPC have identified the following actions targeted at DFAT Posts and Heads of Mission (HOMs), DFAT bilateral desks and DFAT thematic programs:</p> <p>Briefing by SPC Director- General at next DFAT Heads of Mission (HoM) forum in Canberra;</p> <p>SPC Senior Leadership Team members to call on HoMs when travelling to Pacific island countries;</p> <p>Improved reporting on SPC and Partnership issues within DFAT Pacific Division and Posts including cables, verbal briefings and distribution of SPC Bulletins and resources;</p> <p>SPC will improve access to country work programs as part of the SPC website redevelopment;</p> <p>DFAT Pacific Division to consider engaging SPC in annual bilateral discussions with</p>	By June 2017 and ongoing



		others.	<p>Pacific island countries;</p> <p>A summary of DFAT Pacific Division quality reporting on SPC programs will be prepared and distributed to bilateral programs and other interested programs.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>SPC develop a resourced strategy to mainstream gender across its programs, giving priority to major projects and programs.</p>	Agree	<p>SPC and DFAT are committed to ensuring that gender is considered across all of SPC's programs. Supporting gender equality is a commitment in the Partnership as well as a policy priority for Australia and an objective in SPC's Strategic Plan.</p> <p>As part of its prioritisation strategy, SPC is determining how to maximise its limited resources including its respective investments in internal mainstreaming and targeted gender equality programs. DFAT will work with SPC to identify how the organisation can best contribute to gender equality.</p>	<p>SPC will develop a strategy which outlines its definition of and approach to internal gender mainstreaming; and considering available resources in the Gender unit incorporates accessible, appropriate gender equality tools and training support. Good practise models (for example the model designed in the Fisheries Division) will guide development in other programs.</p> <p>SPC's approach to gender mainstreaming will be consistent with integrated programming which will also build stronger links with Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation and human resources areas.</p>	By November 2016

<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <p>Australia and SPC examine the usefulness of the current PAF and consider how this can be improved for the next funding round. The PAF should continue to align with SPC's existing results reporting system but include a small number of priority corporate reforms as triggers for the provision of further flexible funding.</p>	<p><b>Agree in part</b></p>	<p>DFAT supported the endorsement of SPC's Strategic Results Framework (SRF) by SPC's governing council in June 2016.</p> <p>DFAT and SPC have also agreed in principle to use the SRF to assess progress of the Partnership in preference to the current Partnership Performance Assessment Framework (PAF). Use of the SRF will align with SPC's existing results reporting system and minimise the reporting burden on SPC.</p> <p>DFAT will consult further internally with its SPC program managers to confirm whether the SRF is fit-for-purpose for their internal reporting and information needs.</p> <p>DFAT and SPC will jointly consider the feasibility of including triggers for further flexible funding in the Partnership performance framework and whether the SRF or a new iteration of the PAF should be the basis for negotiating future funding under the Partnership, which will commence in late 2016.</p>	<p>DFAT and SPC will finalise the mechanism for assessing Partnership performance, either by the SRF or a revised PAF, including consideration of targeting a small number of priority corporate reforms to trigger provision of further flexible funding.</p>	<p>By end September 2016</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>Building upon the success of partnership in helping strengthen SPC's M&amp;E</p>	<p><b>Agree</b></p>	<p>SPC and DFAT recognise that the support Australia has provided to SPC for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) development through the Partnership has been a useful model for building capability and securing organisational change. DFAT and SPC will work together to</p>	<p>SPC has identified priority areas for corporate reform that would benefit from a similar approach as taken with MEL, including gender mainstreaming, resource mobilisation, program design and governance training. Discussions will continue to identify the</p>	<p>By November 2016</p>



capability, DFAT and SPC work together to prioritise areas of SPC's operations which would benefit from similar support. If necessary DFAT to explore providing SPC with technical advice to advance such areas.		<p>identify other areas that might benefit from ongoing advisory and technical support.</p> <p>Support for MEL was previously provided via the placement of short term consultants employed under the Regional Advisory Services (RAS) program. DFAT is considering other mechanisms to provide flexible and tailored technical assistance to SPC in addition to the RAS.</p>	<p>highest priority and an appropriate delivery mechanism.</p> <p>DFAT notes that support is dependent on budget constraints and should be considered alongside other commitments (eg financial management capability – see Recommendation 1).</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b></p> <p>DFAT and SPC work together to encourage all SPC development partners to support an aligned approach towards financing, visibility, reporting and evaluation.</p>	<b>Agree</b>	<p>The Partnership affirms the principle of donor harmonisation - a key tenet of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.</p> <p>DFAT will continue to encourage other development partners to provide SPC with more flexibility to manage its finances, publicise partnerships, streamline reporting and consolidate evaluation. As noted under Recommendation 1, DFAT has actively pursued this agenda at the SPC governing council, donor forums and during bilateral and trilateral discussions with fellow funders.</p> <p>SPC and DFAT also support Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) initiatives that encourage harmonised donor approaches across regional organisations.</p> <p>DFAT's advocacy for alignment with SPC systems by other development partners, underpinned by the Partnership, is welcomed by SPC.</p>	<p>DFAT supported SPC's recommendations on preferred financing models at the June 2016 governing council meeting.</p> <p>DFAT will continue to support SPC proposals on financing, visibility, reporting and evaluation to encourage other development partners' to align with SPC systems and reduce the need for parallel processes, through bilateral engagement and at Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) meetings.</p>	Ongoing

# 1 SPC, Australia and the Partnership

## 1.1 Pacific regional context

The Pacific region is made up of 22 countries and territories spread across the world's largest ocean. The total population of this region is around 10 million people; the total land area is just over 550,000 square kilometres, with the five Melanesian countries\* accounting for about 98 per cent of this total and all of the region's land-based resources. The 17 countries and territories of Micronesia and Polynesia have a combined land area less than the land area of Vanuatu. However, they account for approximately 72 per cent of the region's combined exclusive economic zones (EEZs), making their oceanic resources extremely important.

Pacific islands share common economic growth and development challenges in terms of geographic isolation, small populations and markets that limit economies of scale, as well as vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters. Their human and institutional capacity constraints limit their ability to respond to the complex development challenges.

For Pacific island countries and territories, regional organisations offer an efficient means of coordination and information sharing, provide technical analysis for leaders to reach consensus on priorities for regional collaboration, and they provide members with better technical and political leverage to improve their development prospects.

## 1.2 Overview of SPC

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community was established in 1947 and is the largest provider of technical assistance in the Pacific region, providing scientific, research, policy and training services to its member states. SPC implements a broad range of programs spanning more than 20 sectors, addressing sustainable economic development, sustainable natural resource and environmental management, and human and social development.

Australia is a founding member of SPC and one of four metropolitan members, along with France, New Zealand and the United States of America. SPC's membership also encompasses 22 Pacific island countries and territories†. The governing body of the SPC is the Conference of the Pacific Community (Conference), a ministerial forum that meets every two years to decide on key governance issues. The Committee of Representatives of Government and Administrations (CRGA) meets annually and is empowered to make decisions on governance in non-Conference years.

SPC has an annual operating budget of around US\$110 million and employs approximately 600 staff. SPC's headquarters are located in Noumea, New Caledonia with a large regional office in Suva, Fiji and a small regional office in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia. SPC also maintains offices in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

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\* Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu

† American Samoa, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna.

### 1.3 Background to the Partnership

The Government of Australia and SPC signed a 10-year Partnership agreement in March 2014. The Partnership for Pacific Regionalism and Enhanced Development 2014–2023 (Partnership) supports SPC by investing in the implementation of SPC's Corporate Strategic Plan and divisional business plans. There is no funding directly attached to the Partnership; all funding is provided through grant agreements that are linked to the Partnership.

The Partnership is intended to bring together the comparative advantages of the Government of Australia (GoA) as a key member and financing partner and SPC as a Pacific-owned and managed specialist technical and scientific organisation with acknowledged expertise in advancing regional development. It is designed to shift the relationship between the two parties to one that actively supports reform and organisational development within SPC and optimises the potential for effective regional development.

The overarching goal is to bring together GoA's and SPC's respective intellectual and technical capacities to support Pacific island states in the context of emerging regional development challenges.

The Partnership agreement sets three objectives for the period 2014–2016.

1. Effective and efficient regional service delivery to support Pacific island countries and territories (PICTs) to achieve sustainable development outcomes in areas including fisheries, public health, forestry, agriculture, statistics, applied geoscience, transport, energy, educational assessment, human rights and gender
2. Enhanced SPC capability to support regional and island member development priorities
3. To have built a combined and proactive approach to addressing major regional and global development challenges.

The full Partnership document and Amendment 1 to the Partnership can be accessed on the DFAT website:

<http://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/regional-architecture/pacific-islands/Pages/spc-australia-partnership-for-pacific-regionalism-and-enhanced-development-2014-2023.aspx>

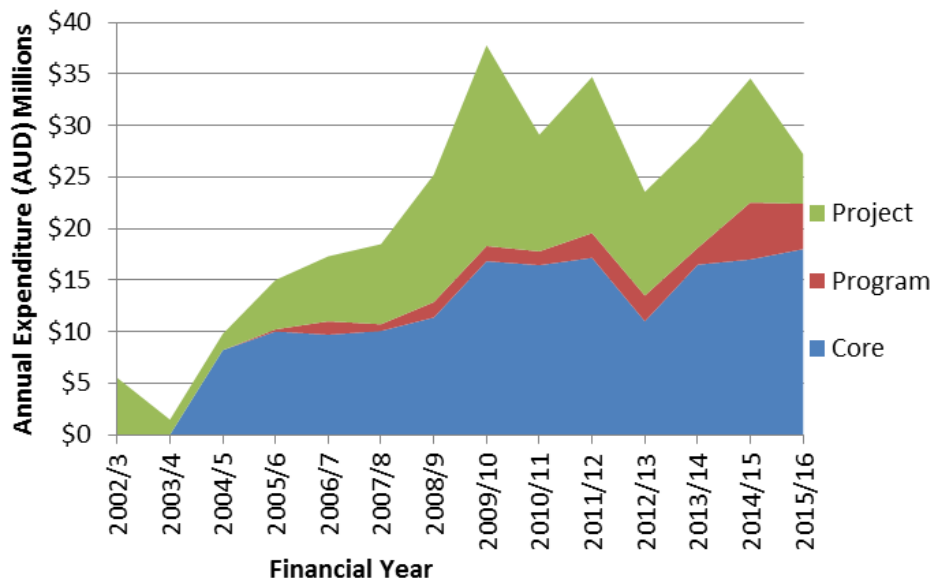
### 1.4 Australian financial support to SPC

Australia is SPC's second largest donor and the single largest source of core funding. Australia's funding to SPC falls into three categories:

- › **Core budget support:** Untagged and available for all executive, corporate, administrative and program functions at SPC's discretion. Membership contributions are included under this category.
- › **Program support:** This funding is tagged (or restricted) to support the implementation of individual divisions' business plans. Australia currently provides program funding to the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems (FAME), Public Health (PHD) and Economic Development (EDD) Divisions.
- › **Project support:** This funding is tagged at the activity level, to support discrete and time-bound areas of work undertaken by SPC divisions. Under the Partnership agreement Australia has undertaken to reduce support for project activity in favour of program and core budget support.

Analysis of financial information provided by SPC shows that approximately 94 per cent of Australian funding comes from DFAT, with the balance in the form of project support from agencies such as the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology.

Figure 1 Trends in DFAT funding to SPC



This figure provides an illustration of the quantum and nature of DFAT funding over time. It demonstrates the volatility associated with project funding and the relatively recent decline in project support against modest increases in program and core funding.

2015 financial data shows an Australian contribution of AU\$25.2 million, of which 36.7 per cent is core funding, 17.3 per cent program and 46 per cent project funding.\* Consistent with a key commitment under the Partnership, Australia's core funding for SPC now exceeds the level of project funding provided by Australia.

\* Differences in accounting periods, exchange rate variations and the impact of currency hedging give rise to variations in the figures reported by SPC against those captured in DFAT's financial management system.

## 2 About the evaluation

The Partnership agreement makes explicit reference to the use of evaluation at key intervals to assess progress against the Partnership. This section outlines how this evaluation has been framed and undertaken.

### 2.1 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess progress at this point in the life of the Partnership with a view to identifying both achievements and challenges, highlighting lessons learned and providing recommendations for improvement.

It is expected that the evaluation will be used to inform the management of the Partnership going forward. As such the primary intended audience is the DFAT Pacific Division and Senior Executive, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. It is also hoped that SPC members, other donors and Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) agencies will find this evaluation useful.

The evaluation provides an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Partnership in addressing the objectives and principles outlined in the Partnership agreement. The evaluation team has summarised these to form a theory of change, which provides a simplified illustration of how changes supported by the Partnership are expected to help achieve the desired higher objectives and goal (see over page).

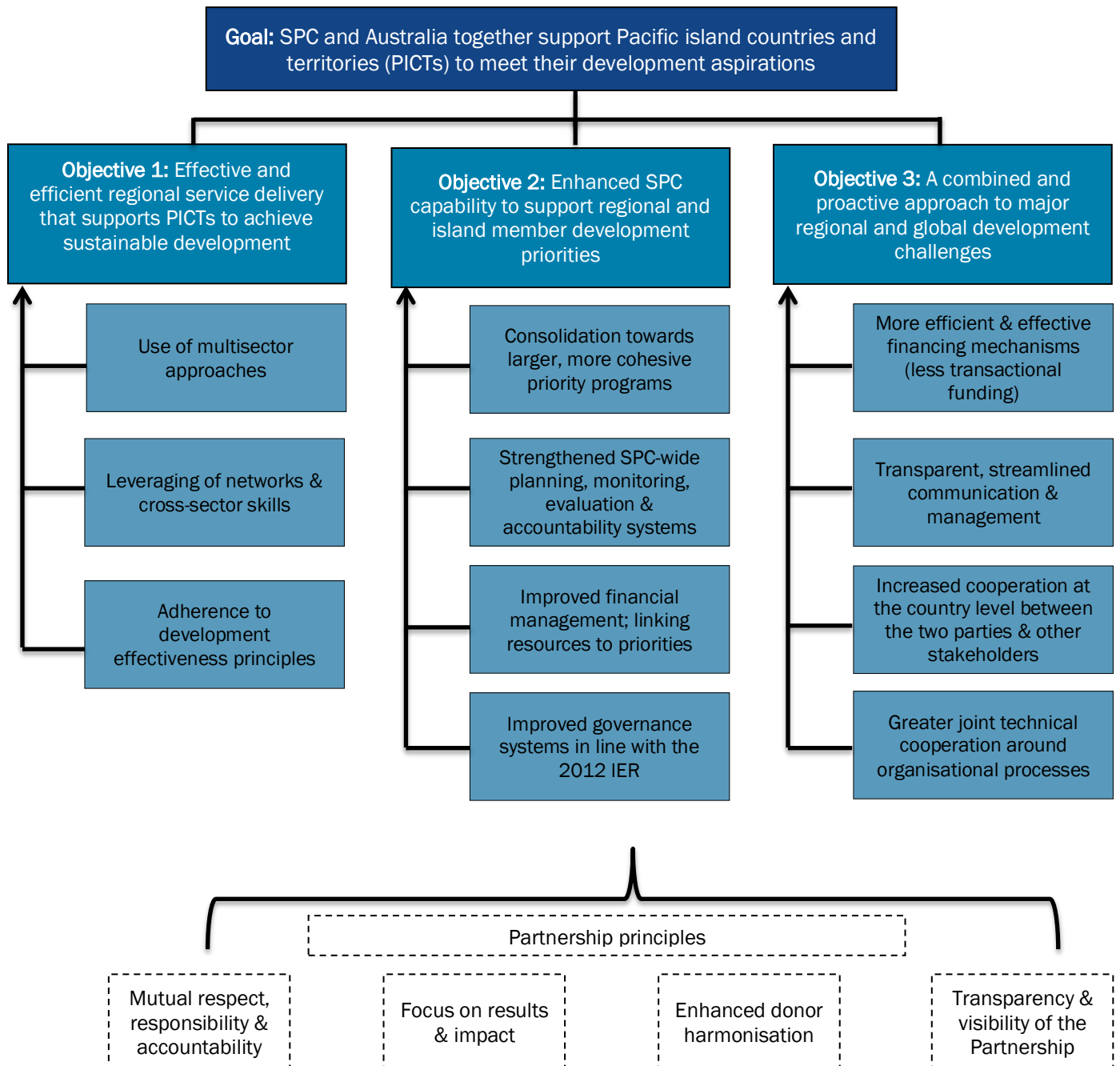
#### 2.1.1 Evaluation framework

Building upon this theory of change, the evaluation team developed a series of evaluation questions exploring the key dimensions of many, but not all, of the Partnership objectives and principles.

- 1. Relevance: Is the Partnership a relevant mechanism for advancing Pacific regionalism and sustainable development?**
  - a. Is the Partnership helping SPC to fulfil a clearly defined and complementary role in relation to other Pacific regional organisations?
  - b. To what extent do SPC activities focus on regional approaches and solutions?
  - c. Is the Partnership assisting SPC to deliver services relevant to the development aspirations of PICT members?
  - d. Is there sufficient alignment between the Partnership goals and objectives and those of other strategies being pursued by both SPC and the Government of Australia in the Pacific?
- 2. Effectiveness: Is the Partnership helping to strengthen SPC's capability to support regional and island member development aspirations?**
  - a. Is the process for determining the priorities outlined in the SPC's Strategic Plan sufficiently sound and to what extent has the Partnership supported these?
  - b. Is adequate progress being made on program consolidation, consideration of cross-cutting issues such as gender and the use of multisector approaches?

- c. Is the funding and other support provided by Australia under the Partnership helping SPC to improve its performance?
- d. Have the parties made adequate progress against the Partnership performance assessment framework?
- e. Is adequate progress being made on reforming SPC's funding base?

Figure 2 Partnership theory of change



### 3. Efficiency: Are the institutional arrangements underpinning the Partnership sound?

- a. Does the Partnership agreement accurately guide and reflect the extent of interaction between the Government of Australia and SPC?
- b. Is the Partnership facilitating streamlined and improved management and communication arrangements within and between the Government of Australia and SPC?
- c. Is the Partnership enabling greater collaboration at the country and regional level between Australia and SPC on both technical and strategic issues, including liaison with other stakeholders?
- d. To what degree are interactions between the partners consistent with the principles of mutual respect, responsibility and accountability?

### 4. Performance management: Is the Partnership supported by robust and appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes?

- a. Has sufficient progress been made on the strengthening of SPC-wide monitoring and evaluation systems?
- b. What role has the Partnership played in helping strengthen these systems?

## 2.2 Approach

This evaluation focuses on whether the shift to a partnership approach is delivering benefits for both SPC and the Government of Australia. It is largely concerned with examining the nature of the relationship between the parties, not with assessing the performance of SPC or DFAT in isolation from the Partnership.

The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) approached this evaluation as one that was jointly commissioned by both DFAT and SPC. A preliminary visit was made to SPC and DFAT in Suva, Noumea and Canberra locations to establish an understanding of the evaluation process among the parties and conduct preliminary scoping of issues. Draft terms of reference and a draft evaluation plan were provided to each party for input to help determine the focus of the evaluation. A recommendation workshop was conducted that enabled the parties to discuss, and if necessary contest, the draft recommendations, and collectively explore how they can be most effectively addressed going forward. ODE was careful to ensure that both SPC and DFAT were afforded the same opportunity to engage with the evaluation. The evaluation was also subject to the external oversight of the Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC), which helps to ensure ODE's independence.

## 2.3 Evaluation methods

The evaluation used the following methods to identify and analyse the key achievements, issues, challenges and lessons learned under the Partnership to date. Evidence was triangulated where feasible, with most major evaluation findings drawing on multiple sources of data as well as being tested in interviews and/or the recommendations workshop. Methods used include:

- › **Document review** entailed review of DFAT and SPC policy and strategy materials, regional strategy documents (generally from CROP agencies), implementation performance reports, financial records and other specialist papers. Documents were coded against the evaluation framework. A bibliography of relevant documents can be found at Annex 2.
- › **Semi-structured interviews** were undertaken with DFAT and SPC staff, member country representatives, key donors and other CROP agency representatives. Interview guides were

used to guide discussions and aid in the comparative analysis of responses. Over 50 interviews were conducted. All were audio recorded. Detailed notes from each interview were also coded against the framework.

- › **Financial analysis** was undertaken of DFAT financial records going back to the 2002–03 financial year. All payments made through DFAT\* were categorised as either core funding, program or project support. Financial data, including details on support provided by other Australian government agencies, was cross-checked with financial records provided by SPC.
- › **A focus group discussion** was used to explore key issues with DFAT Suva-based officers responsible for liaison with various SPC divisions. This format provided an opportunity for an exchange of views between participants, providing the evaluation team with rich insight into a range of important themes.

The evaluation made extensive use of qualitative data obtained through interviews which is used alongside quantitative data from financial and results reporting to inform findings

## 2.4 Limitations

ODE believes that the approach and methodology employed has made for a robust evaluation of the Partnership. However several limitations were encountered.

- › Opportunities for **non-participant observation** as outlined in the evaluation plan were more limited than anticipated. The only such instance relates to an evaluation team member observing High Level Consultations between DFAT and SPC prior to finalisation of the evaluation terms of reference.
- › The larger than anticipated number of key informant interviews **limited time available for spot checks** as outlined in the evaluation plan. Nevertheless during interviews key SPC staff were asked to explain how outcomes reported in the *SPC Programme results report 2013–14* were collated, quality assured and, if appropriate, acted upon.
- › Again because of the time demands associated with the large number of interviews, **there was limited opportunity for comparative analysis** between the experiences of the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems and Public Health Divisions. In the judgement of the evaluation team, limiting this analysis was preferable to reducing the number of SPC divisions interviewed.

The evaluation consulted a large number of people from a range of stakeholder groups including representatives of other donors, Pacific island country and territory (PICT) members and other CROP agencies to help bring greater objectivity to the evaluation. Although this evaluation draws heavily on the perceptions and opinions of stakeholders, these show a high degree of congruence on key issues and help in bringing further objectivity to the evaluation. Emergent issues were cross-checked against official documentation including reports, cables, emails, meeting minutes and agendas. Draft evaluation findings were provided to SPC and DFAT alongside an invitation for these to be challenged where appropriate. In some cases this led to further rigorous analysis of both pre-identified and newly presented documentary evidence, with a number of findings amended as a result.

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\* Or previously AusAID



## 3 Is the Partnership a relevant mechanism?

### Introduction

This chapter examines the relevance of the SPC – Government of Australia Partnership for Pacific Regionalism and Enhanced Development relative to three considerations:

- › its relevance to SPC's stated aims and mandate
- › its relevance to Australia's stated objectives
- › its relevance to the interests of other SPC members.

This includes exploring whether the partners' stated objectives are clear and understood and how relevance might be strengthened or more fully realised.

### 3.1 The Partnership's relevance to SPC

A strong indicator of SPC's buy-in to partnering is its moves to negotiate similar arrangements with other players, including New Zealand (signed)<sup>1</sup> and the European Union (in concept), and its keenness to enter into increased dialogue with Australia on issues of mutual concern. For example, SPC believes there is potential for SPC and Australia to learn from each other and jointly contribute to addressing diabetes and heart disease in the Pacific. This potential is as yet unrealised, and is an area which could be progressed through the regular High Level Consultations (HLCs) attended by the parties.

*'The model is something extremely positive and we are trying to replicate it with a number of other partners.'*

SPC informant

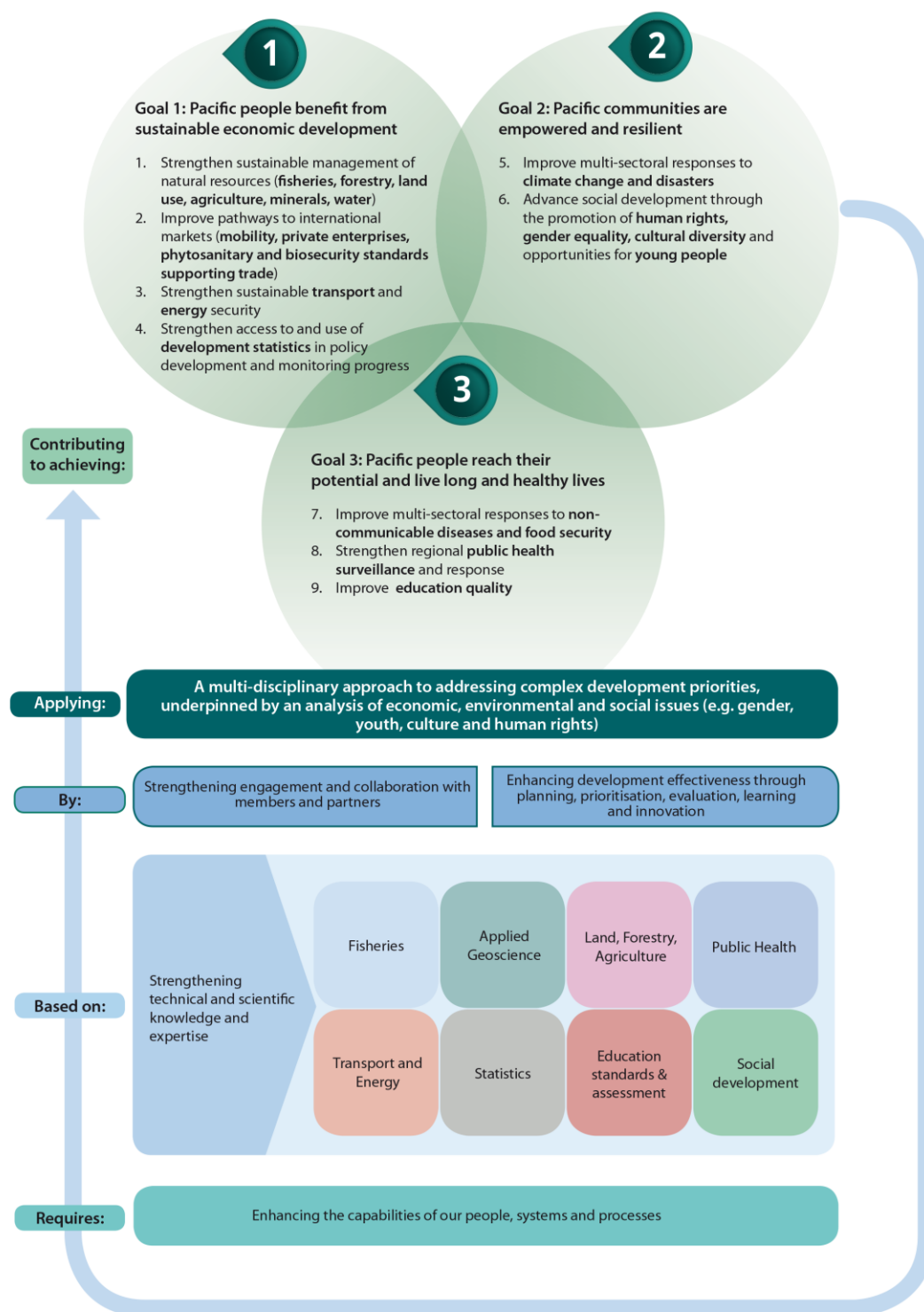
As the Pacific's first regional organisation, SPC is often seen as having the broadest mandate. SPC's *Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2016–2020* describes SPC as the '*principal scientific and technical organisation supporting development in the Pacific Region*'. Despite changes over the years to its name, governance, membership and sectoral and geographical focus, SPC's mandate as a non-political research and technical body in the service of the PICTs remains largely unchanged. Although the decision by Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) leaders in 2007 to integrate the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC)\* and Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA)<sup>†</sup> into SPC as part of the Regional Institutional Framework (RIF), reforms contributed to a major increase in SPC's scope, budget and staff.<sup>2</sup> While the RIF process sought to clarify the respective roles of the Pacific regional organisations, some overlaps in functions remain and the prospects for further reform continue to be discussed.

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\* Now SPC's Applied Geoscience and Technology Division

<sup>†</sup> Now SPC's Education Quality and Assessment Program

Figure 3 Development goals of Pacific Community members and strategic organisational objectives<sup>3</sup>



Interviews conducted with Australian and SPC informants indicated some ambiguity, and at times concern, around SPC's mandate with respect to that of other Pacific regional organisations, in particular the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). Defining and adhering to boundaries between scientific and technical advice, implementation, policy and political roles can be difficult in an environment of competition for limited resources. External financing can exacerbate or soothe these tensions and as such donors have particularly important roles to play.

Australia's assistance in clarifying roles among Pacific regional organisations has included ongoing dialogue, as well as financial and advisory support for PIFS to undertake two relevant studies: the Analysis of Governance and Financing, and the Review of Regional Meetings.

Australia also cites its involvement in the SPC Strategic Plan Development Subcommittee as a vehicle to help clarify SPC's role relative to other regional organisations.

On the other hand, some donor funding, including from Australia, has potentially added to ambiguity around Pacific regional organisation roles. For example, France has funded a Climate Change Director in SPC, a position some members see as more appropriately residing in SPREP; a number of DFAT informants noted examples of Australia (and other donors) tasking PIFS to implement decisions rather than just coordinate the efforts of other CROP agencies. One example of a donor encouraging cooperation between Pacific regional organisations, cited during interviews, was the European Union's European Development Fund 11 (EDF11) process, which requires submission of joint proposals for funding; no single organisation can apply for funding on its own. The United States of America (USA) also reports encouraging similar collaboration through its programs. Whether bringing the regional organisations together in this manner has actually improved broader coordination between them is as yet unproven.

*'In a number of sectors, such as disability, we fund PIFS to implement ... They are supposed to play a coordinating role but we have actually provided funding to PIFS to implement.'*

DFAT informant

Nevertheless SPC has had some success in clarifying respective roles through direct consultation and negotiation with a number of regional organisations. For example, SPC and the University of the South Pacific (USP) have negotiated a memorandum of understanding setting out their roles and agreed approaches. The World Health Organization (WHO) and SPC discuss work programs and joint approaches to health issues. The fisheries sector is reported to be the strongest sector for cooperation and clarity of roles. Respondents attribute this to the strong historical and ongoing relationships between SPC and Forum Fisheries Association staff in this sector. The example of innovation in the coastal fisheries sector was cited by a number of respondents as a prime example of cooperation and collaboration between organisations on a key regional issue.

In 2013 SPC issued its Corporate and Strategic Plan 2013–15 and began developing an integrated programming approach in recognition of the cross-sectoral nature of most development issues in the Pacific. This plan was widely welcomed by members and the current version (Strategic Plan 2016–2020<sup>4</sup>) is regarded by respondents as a further improvement. Over time this planning discipline is expected to help further distil SPC's mandate and differentiate it from that of other regional organisations, however for now some stakeholders continue to hold inconsistent views on SPC's function and the scope of its work.

## Findings

- › The evaluation found that the Partnership is relevant to SPC's mandate as articulated in the Strategic Plan.
- › SPC's specific role in relation to some other Pacific regional organisations is less clear, and donors have played a mixed role in this. Australia advocates consistently with donors, members and regional organisations for clear roles and active cooperation between regional organisations, but there have been instances where its own actions have been at odds with these messages.

## 3.2 The Partnership's relevance to Government of Australia

The Partnership was established in the context of Australia's broader pursuit of Partnerships for Development in the Pacific. The Partnership document cites<sup>5</sup> DFAT's *Guidance note: Pacific regional organisations 2013–2023*<sup>6</sup> as the guide on Australia's interactions with SPC and all other Pacific regional organisations (PROs) during the Partnership period. While the guidance note pre-dates the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, it draws on the same 2013 review of the Pacific Plan<sup>7</sup> to derive its key message of promoting regionalism (defined as collective action between Pacific island countries). It includes criteria for assessing regional initiatives and a strategy for engaging PROs on these. The note calls on Australia to work with Pacific island

states to develop a clear, collective perspective on what regionalism can deliver and to better understand the potential and limitations of regional organisations by:

- › developing a consensus on what the Pacific wishes to pursue collectively
- › promoting clear and complementary roles defined and agreed for regional and subregional organisations
- › fostering appreciation among all members of the potential and the limitations of regionalism.

Australia has played an active role in Pacific regionalism and its membership of PROs is an important means for it to transparently and collegiately advance its national interests in significant foreign relations, regional stability and economic growth.<sup>8</sup> Australia views regionalism as a vehicle to enhance the economic growth, stability and development prospects of all Pacific countries, individually and collectively, by offering leverage and economies of scale that cannot be achieved at a country level.

Multiple references in the Partnership document\* and interviews with both current and former DFAT officers involved in the development of the Partnership point to the intent, at least in part, for Australia and SPC to pursue regionalism together. Interview respondents from Australia, SPC and other PROs provided a range of views on what regionalism meant in the context of the Partnership including:

- › improved performance of regional organisations
- › greater integration of regional organisations
- › regional technical agencies being better engaged in the PIF leaders' regional priority setting process for new initiatives
- › a political conversation that technical agencies have no part in
- › a process for advancing issues that need to be organised supranationally and are most effectively tackled on a regional basis—e.g. tuna stock management, regional health surveillance or a common approach to non-communicable diseases
- › regional economic integration.

Few DFAT respondents drew a link between regionalism and the Partnership with SPC, considering engagement with other players in the region to be more relevant to this topic. This perhaps reflects a change of strategy following the adoption of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, which places more emphasis on the role of states rather than regional organisations. It appears that DFAT's expectation for furthering regional collaboration and integration through the Partnership is less than what was signalled at the beginning of the Partnership. This finding does challenge the relevance of the Partnership's focus on regionalism as indicated in the title of the Partnership document.

To the extent that regionalism is served by the improved performance of PROs, the Partnership is a relevant vehicle to promote SPC's organisational reforms as envisioned in the 2012 Independent External Review<sup>9</sup> of SPC. DFAT has provided valued support to SPC through its Regional Advisory Service (RAS),<sup>†</sup> the Pacific Leadership Program<sup>‡</sup> and funding for SPC to commission the 2014 governance review. The extent to which SPC staff understand the organisation's reform agenda is mixed, however. Most see a series of unrelated change projects rather than a coherent change agenda. However, SPC staff know change is necessary and happening even if it is, at times, uncomfortable.

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\* References include the Partnership title, the preamble, Objective 3.2 c., and paragraphs 4.3 b), 6.11 and 7.4.

† In January 2015, RAS began providing a range of technical assistance to the major regional organisations including SPC. Respondents particularly noted RAS supporting SPC on monitoring, evaluation and learning.

‡ This program has provided adaptive leadership training and mentoring to SPC staff.

The Partnership aligns with, and derives from, Australia's commitment to development effectiveness principles, including the high-level commitments emerging from Paris, Accra and Busan and the Forum (Cairns) Compact.\* It promotes good donor practice, mutual respect, responsibility, accountability, predictability and a focus on results. One significant development effectiveness change envisaged through the Partnership is the move to more flexible and predictable multiyear financing. An increasing proportion of project funding is to be directed to program and core budgets, where divisions in SPC and their activities meet specific criteria. For the most part, SPC identifies significant improvement in funding predictability from Australia, and DFAT and SPC informants noted that this has brought a number of benefits to the way they work together.

As a whole-of-government Partnership, DFAT has committed to strengthening its coordination with other Australian Government departments that engage with SPC and develop common, whole-of-government positions on regional issues. The extent of this approach is discussed later, in Section 5.2.2 of the report. Most Australian agencies described long, deep and productive relationships with SPC and value the relevance of the work to their domestic and international objectives. For example, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology noted its work with SPC fulfilled a number of its obligations to the World Meteorological Organization, and Geoscience Australia described how tools developed through work in the Pacific region have since been used in Australia and other regions. Many see merit in transitioning to tagged program funding, but would not like to see funding of their specific interests put at risk.

## Findings

- › There is broad alignment between the Partnership goals and the stated objectives and strategies of Australia. However, the introduction of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism appears to have moved the emphasis on Pacific regionalism away from regional organisations and towards member countries, making this aspect of the Partnership less relevant to DFAT than at inception.
- › To the extent that regionalism is served by the improved performance of regional organisations, the Partnership's focus on supporting SPC's organisational reform agenda, including its performance management in priority program areas, is highly relevant.

### 3.3 The Partnership's relevance to other members of SPC

Consistent with other reviews of SPC,<sup>10</sup> members highly value the work of the organisation in delivering both country-specific and regional public goods. They acknowledge SPC's focus on small island states and its responsiveness to their needs. However, they largely see its services as 'free goods', which may explain some of the challenges facing SPC in its attempts to prioritise resources. Based on responses from many SPC officers, it seems SPC is better at saying 'yes' than 'no' to members' requests for assistance, even though a number of Pacific island members are significantly in arrears, with SPC currently carrying around US\$3 million in unpaid member contributions.

While the evaluation was only able to interview a sample of SPC member representatives, those it did speak with were consistent in their appreciation of the longstanding, strong relations between the Government of Australia and SPC. All except New Zealand reported being unaware that a partnership had been negotiated, although many were aware that Australia had moved to more flexible and predictable funding. None had observed other changes in the relationship since the Partnership was signed, perhaps due to the pre-existing, close and longstanding connection between the parties.

Observers have noted the lack of representation from Pacific island country and territory members on the Strategic Plan Implementation Subcommittee and similar groups. There are a

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\* The Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination (Forum Compact), adopted by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders at their meeting in August 2009

variety of views on the reasons for this. Some attribute it to lack of capacity, which is understandable in very small governments with competing priorities; some suggest lack of interest; while others suggest island states have been crowded out of the process by the metropolitan members who exercise the de facto priority setting and governance roles that come with provision of significant funding.\*

## Findings

- › The evaluation found that few SPC members were aware of the special partnership between Australia and SPC, but they observe strong relationships none the less.
- › The members see good alignment between the work of SPC and their development needs.

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\* The 2014 SPC governance review noted significant and perennial challenges in the governance of international membership organisations generally, including: the difficulty in prioritising between national and supranational interests; the tendency for delegates to represent country – as opposed to organisational – interests and priorities; the implications of consensus-based decision-making; the inevitable distortionary effects on the agenda of external donor-financing and the parallel governance processes that accompany it.

## 4 Progress against the Partnership performance framework

### Introduction

This section examines the extent to which the Partnership has helped strengthen SPC's capacity to support development in the Pacific. This includes analysis of:

- › SPC's approach to planning and prioritisation
- › progress against the Partnership performance framework
- › progress on issues such as gender mainstreaming and project consolidation
- › improvements made on key capabilities such as monitoring and evaluation and financial management.

Assessments on each of these also consider the contribution, if any, made by Australia.

### 4.1 Effectiveness of planning and prioritisation

The Partnership agreement envisages that over time an increasing proportion of Australian funding will be used to support priorities identified by SPC. It is Australia's clear expectation that these priorities be shaped by the Pacific island countries and territories (PICTs); a key performance indicator in the Australian Government's Pacific Regional Aid Investment Plan is 'increased engagement of Pacific island country members in decision-making at Pacific regional organisation governing body meetings'.<sup>11</sup> But in relation to SPC this statement appears aspirational. The 2014 review of SPC's governance arrangements concluded that the organisation's principal governing bodies (the Conference and the Committee of Representative of Governments and Administrations [CRGA]) provide neither strategic nor policy direction.<sup>12</sup> It recommended that members provide stronger direction on 'what the organisation is about and how it allocates its resources across the many competing demands made on it'.<sup>13</sup> Another expectation that Australia appears to hold is that SPC's members will rise above narrowly defined national interests by giving preference to the implementation of regional approaches. The guidance note on Pacific regional organisations referenced in the Partnership agreement signals that Australia will only support regional organisations to deliver initiatives that meet at least one of the seven tests outlined in the 2013 Pacific Plan Review.<sup>\*14</sup>

While the cited documents define longer term ideals, this evaluation analyses current practice during this early stage of the Partnership and how this is tracking towards the defined end point.

A common perception among many DFAT interviewees is that while the most recent strategic plan represents an improvement on the former, it fails to effectively prioritise SPC's activities. Interviews with this group highlighted the consistent view that vested interests within SPC had too strong a voice in the planning process, that the plan captures too many things that are not a priority and that the end priorities are no different from those that SPC started with. As SPC's single largest source of flexible, untagged funding Australia has a legitimate interest in ensuring that the organisation's priorities are sound. Since completion of the plan, Australia has taken up

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\* These tests were later adopted in the 2014 Framework for Pacific Regionalism.



a position on the CRGA Strategic Plan Implementation Subcommittee and sees this as an important mechanism to promote effective prioritisation. Australia has also offered governance training to CRGA members through the RAS in order to strengthen the role of SPC members in determining the organisation's priorities.

Interviews with SPC staff revealed agreement on many of the key points raised above. Staff described the prioritisation process as very difficult but an improvement. They highlighted the extensiveness of consultation and (perhaps as a result) many agreed that the plan hasn't changed the existing priorities. Some SPC informants indicated staff are reluctant to critique the work of those in other divisions, while others question whether it is politically feasible for SPC to turn down members' requests for assistance. It was explained to the evaluation team that the divisional business planning process is where the hard prioritisation will occur. Linking these business plans to budget will further drive prioritisation but as yet this is a work in progress. The evaluation team probed for examples of SPC withdrawing from low-priority activities or of SPC declining requests from members or donors based on poor alignment with identified priorities. While the cases are few, SPC's Public Health Division cited its decision to discontinue management of the Global Fund and the transferral of a sexual and reproductive health project to United Nations Development Programme as examples that demonstrate it is possible. It would appear likely that the flexible funding provided to the Public Health Division under the Partnership helped make such a decision possible.

Interviews with a sample of representatives from other regional organisations, donors and PICT members reinforced the view that SPC tries to do too much. Some questioned whether SPC had sufficiently incorporated the prioritisation process outlined in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, although they noted the complex reality of being driven by both supply (donor funding) and demand (PICT expectations) factors. A number of interviewees reflected that island members are often largely silent when it comes to important discussions on priorities.

## Findings

- › The evaluation found that the practice of prioritisation is still some way from the longer term vision articulated in the Partnership agreement. Prioritisation is a difficult process that involves the interests of different groups including members, donors and the individual work units within SPC. The process is improving but it is probably too early to rate it as sound.
- › Australia is the leading donor in the provision of flexible funding to SPC. This has not only encouraged SPC to take on the difficult work of prioritisation but also gives them the means to fund some of the emerging priorities. SPC's Public Health Division provides a positive example of this.
- › Looking forward, Australia's involvement in the CRGA Strategic Plan Implementation Subcommittee and in potential governance training support signal an increased focus for the Partnership in this area.

## 4.2 Strengthening design and delivery

The Partnership document highlights a number of areas where SPC can be potentially more effective. Three of these are examined below.

### 4.2.1 The move towards multisector approaches

The 2012 Independent External Review (IER) of SPC found that 'the current divisions of SPC do not act as an integrated whole... [They] operate as loosely related, but separate entities...[and] tend not to leverage the opportunities for working together and building on their respective strengths'.<sup>15</sup> One of the three Partnership objectives seeks to address this situation, highlighting a need for multisector approaches that make use of networks and cross-sector skills. CRGA meeting minutes show that this shift has been endorsed by SPC's governing body. This focus was confirmed in interviews with CRGA member representatives.

While the intent is clear and well established, the evaluation team identified mixed progress in implementing these approaches. The organisation's 2014 annual report highlights SPC's leading role in a multisector approach to tackling non-communicable diseases.<sup>16</sup> The Educational Quality and Assessment Program described to the evaluation team how they



provide tools and advice for other areas in SPC to assist them in measuring learning in their programs. Interviews suggest there is scope across the SPC divisions for much greater use of the statistical data available through the Statistics for Development Division. According to one key informant, it is not enough for SPC simply to encourage talk between the divisions; position descriptions and the organisation's systems (including monitoring and evaluation and financial) need to support this move away from working in silos.

Respondents noted improved conversations around supporting multicountry and regional approaches in the sectors that receiving tagged program funding under the Partnership.

#### 4.2.2 Progress on project consolidation

Another finding highlighted in the 2012 IER that has been picked up as a Partnership (sub)objective relates to the need for project consolidation. The review identified over 200 programs\* with a modest average annual value of only 350,000 CFP units.<sup>†</sup> 17 The SPC *Programme results report 2013–14* acknowledges the need for larger, more cohesive programs and a move away from a predominantly project-based approach.<sup>18</sup> However the report does not explicitly acknowledge the imperative for fewer projects nor does it reveal what, if any, progress has been made on the ambitious Partnership target of consolidation to only 50 projects. The evaluation team suggests that this target, which reflects a 75 per cent reduction in project numbers, is neither achievable nor desirable.<sup>‡</sup> Financial analysis undertaken by the evaluation team shows little consolidation progress on the Australian side of the ledger, with 10 separate investments with SPC still active against a baseline of 11 in financial year 2012–13, and a Partnership target of only one by 2015. It is noteworthy that the related target on the proportion of Australian core and program funding (57 per cent) to project funding has been exceeded.

*'The more projects you have, the higher the transaction cost.'*

SPC informant

Interviews with DFAT and SPC staff highlighted good examples of consolidation in the Public Health, Fisheries, Aquaculture and Marine Ecosystems and Economic Development Divisions.<sup>§</sup> SPC staff indicated that Australian funding had helped them to think beyond projects while noting that SPC now needed to revise its systems in order to better support this. Both DFAT and SPC interviewees also highlighted that the Educational Quality and Assessment Program (EQAP), the Statistics for Development Division, the Social Development Division and the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) would be undergoing a similar transition to that experienced by the above divisions. However, interviews with relevant SPC staff and subsequent discussions with DFAT have revealed that this transition process has been less than smooth and, ultimately, has necessitated the extension of the current project-funding agreements for both EQAP and RRRT. These two areas will now have a further 12–18 months to fulfil the criteria outlined in the Partnership agreement for the provision of more flexible funding, a significant delay on the original schedule.

#### 4.2.3 Mainstreaming gender

Gender gets a small mention in the Partnership agreement alongside many other (sub)objectives. As a priority area for the Australian aid program and a critical component of

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\* There is some inconsistency in the use of the terms program and project. While a program is generally understood to be a larger unit, which may consist of several projects, in this instance it is understood to constitute the smallest individual unit to which a funding agreement applies (i.e. a project).

† Approximately AU\$450,000 at March 2016 exchange rates

‡ It is noteworthy that Australia's own target for consolidation across the entire Australian aid budget calls for a more modest 20 per cent reduction over four years. See DFAT, *Making performance count: enhancing the accountability and effectiveness of Australian aid*, June 2014, 11.

§ These are the three divisions which have thus far been specifically targeted under the Partnership.

development effectiveness, this evaluation examines the effectiveness of SPC gender mainstreaming. The *SPC Programme results report 2013–14* highlights work that SPC is doing across the region, with DFAT financial support, to assist Pacific island members to mainstream gender into policies, programs and services. While this outward-focused work is funded, interviews suggest there is a lack of resources available within SPC to assist each division in ensuring its own programs take adequate account of gender. Many SPC staff interviewed reflected upon the increasing awareness and discussion of how gender issues should be addressed by SPC, but indicated that there was insufficient capacity within the organisation to make this occur.

Documents reviewed by the evaluation team confirm that discussions between the partners have consistently focused upon the issue of better integrating gender considerations into all of SPC's work. One way in which Australia has emphasised the importance of this work is in specific changes made in 2014 to the Partnership performance assessment framework. Meeting records from the November 2015 High Level Consultations show that DFAT again highlighted the importance of gender mainstreaming, particularly in the implementation of the forthcoming strategic plan. Consistent with a recurring theme obtained through interviews, the HLC records show that SPC reaffirmed its commitment to gender mainstreaming but that the challenge was how to effectively implement this commitment given resource constraints.

A number of DFAT and SPC interviewees emphasised the need for tagged or targeted funding to Social Development Division in order to improve gender mainstreaming within the organisation. These interviewees were pessimistic about the prospects of achieving a greater share of core funding to help support this function. Within the context of these challenges, the evaluation team also noted some positive steps. One such step is the gender stocktake, to be undertaken across all SPC programs. This process should not only yield useful insight on how to improve on gender, but could also facilitate greater cross-divisional collaboration. Another pleasing development is the explicit requirement that gender issues be examined in the consideration of proposals reviewed by SPC's programming assessment committee. A third area of strength is the shift to fully integrate gender across fisheries activities rather than treat it as a separate, vertical issue.

## Findings

- › While this evaluation noted some good examples of multisector approaches, the team believes this is not yet core to SPC's programming approach.
- › Divisional-level funding has helped improve efficiency but not necessarily prompted these areas to re-examine what they deliver. Although it is still early in the life of the Partnership, the scale of project consolidation to date falls short of the target outlined in the Partnership performance agreement. At the same time, the evaluation notes that this target is overambitious.
- › It is clear that Australia has consistently engaged SPC in discussion about how gender is integrated into its planning. Equally, SPC has acknowledged this as an area requiring improvement and is committed to doing so. However, the Partnership is yet to achieve the degree of change deemed necessary by both parties. While dialogue on this subject has been substantial, the Partnership has not provided additional support through either technical assistance or tagged divisional-level funding. This evaluation found that while there has been some positive progress on gender in discrete areas of SPC, this falls short of an appropriately resourced, organisation-wide gender mainstreaming strategy.

## 4.3 Supporting SPC's performance

The Partnership agreement outlines a quid pro quo; over time as SPC demonstrates improved performance management through business planning and performance monitoring, Australia will progressively transfer increased amounts to flexible funding.<sup>19</sup> Linking funding to performance is in no way unique to this partnership, although Australia's status as both a founding member and key financier of SPC is less typical. Perhaps in recognition of this, Australia has undertaken, through its partnership agreements, to 'support Pacific regional institutions to improve their governance, corporate administration and accountability to members...help[ing] them optimise their resources to achieve improved development

outcomes'.<sup>20</sup> Among other mechanisms, the Regional Advisory Service (RAS) was established to help promote the effective performance of SPC and other Pacific regional organisations.

The following three sections explore different dimensions of SPC's performance.

#### 4.3.1 Progress against the Partnership performance indicators

The Partnership agreement document is accompanied by a performance assessment framework (PAF), which was last updated in January 2015. Documents cited by the evaluation team show that SPC and DFAT have consistently worked together to refine and improve the quality and usefulness of the framework. The agreement signals the intent to use the framework as a means to measure performance and progress against the Partnership. The framework also reflects a commitment to minimising the administrative reporting burden on SPC, as it is largely comprised of standardised, non-donor-specific indicators.

Analysis undertaken by the evaluation team of reporting against the performance framework suggests that the parties would be ill advised to rely exclusively upon the framework to make judgements about performance. The evaluation team noted that some targets are not well defined and as such do not readily lend themselves to simple, objective assessment. For example, measures relating the quality of leadership and monitoring and evaluation in the Public Health Division\* are judgement-dependent and not readily verifiable. The evaluation also found a degree of misalignment between some of the indicators and targets outlined in the PAF and those reported upon in the *SPC Programme results report 2014–15*. For example, SPC reporting against the indicator for improved understanding and management of environmental risks† omits detail on the number of countries supported, which is specified in the target. Another example is SPC reporting on strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment,‡ which is entirely at odds with the performance measures outlined in the (updated) framework. In other cases no data was provided against 2014 and/or 2015 targets; this may be related to inherent measurement difficulties or simply a lack of data or appropriate systems to capture it. The evaluation team understands that capturing data such as the overall proportion of PICT leaders who regularly attending key regional health meetings is likely to prove difficult.

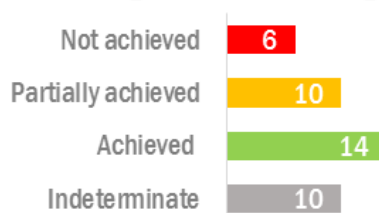
In a preliminary draft of the *2014-15 SPC Programme Results Report*, SPC assigned ratings against many of the 40 targets outlined in the performance framework. The evaluation team has examined these assessments and verified the majority of these as robust based on the information provided in the report or data gathered during the evaluation. In the few cases where the evaluation team has deemed it necessary to amend ratings, this has been footnoted and a justification provided. (See Annex 1 Progress against the PAF with ODE ratings.)

To aid analysis, the evaluation team has assigned simplified ratings using categories of 'achieved', 'partially achieved' or 'not achieved'.

Where no rating is possible this has been marked 'indeterminate'. While analysis reveals that well over half of all targets have either been achieved or partially achieved, it also shows that for a large number of targets (25 per cent) no rating is possible. This was generally either because no data was provided, or the data provided did not align with the prescribed indicator. SPC has explained that some indicators are specific to the

Figure 4 Progress against the PAF

#### Suggested ratings for achievement against 2015 targets



\* Indicators 13 and 14

† Indicator 19

‡ Indicator 20

Partnership and are reported upon separately during High Level Consultations, but this does not fully explain all data gaps and inconsistencies. As a result it is not currently possible to make any conclusive statement as to whether progress against these agreed targets has been adequate or otherwise.

In undertaking this analysis the evaluation team noted that SPC is endeavouring to report against well over 70 individual indicators in the 2015 results report to CRGA. The complexity inherent in defining these measures and ensuring appropriate systems and procedures are in place to capture, collate and quality-assure data may well explain the significant gaps. Learning from this experience, SPC has since explained that the draft strategic results framework for the 2016–20 Strategic Plan contains a more manageable list of 17 key results.

#### 4.3.2 Improving SPC's approach to monitoring and evaluation

A focus on results and measuring impact are among the underpinning principles documented in the Partnership agreement. Consistent with recommendation 36 of the IER,<sup>21</sup> this requires SPC to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capability. This has been an area of particular focus under the Partnership, with significant Australian support provided through the RAS\* dating back to the pre-Partnership period.

Confirming the findings of the IER, a number of SPC interviewees reflected upon the historically weak approach taken by SPC to M&E. They described an approach focused upon reporting project-based activities and outputs. However, SPC has since lifted its performance analysis to the level of the outcomes and results that SPC divisions and the organisation as a whole are aiming for—the forthcoming (2015) program results report will mark the second anniversary of this improvement. The Partnership agreement stipulates that improved M&E frameworks at the division level are a key criterion for the provision of more flexible funding. The organisation now employs a cadre of M&E staff not only within the relevant corporate area (SEPPF) but also within a number of program divisions. DFAT and SPC interviewees alike attribute the emergence of these positions to Australian support, not only in the form of more flexible funding but also via the impetus created by RAS involvement. SPC staff spoke of the emergence of an 'M&E culture' that appears to be building momentum.

*'What I do see is that Australia has brought to SPC over the current life of the Partnership a lot of expertise to help strengthen SPC's internal capacity...the engine room.'*

SPC informant

With the right people in place and the experience of learning-by-doing, SPC is now embarking on systematising monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) within the organisation. SPC's new performance management policy (*Planning, evaluation, accountability, reflection and learning [PEARL]*) is due to be presented for management endorsement in early 2016 and will be accompanied by a *MEL at SPC: principles and guidelines* document. A key SPC informant explained that by having clearly demonstrated to program divisions the value of an enhanced M&E focus, the timing is now right for the introduction of a new policy and associated processes. Another senior SPC interviewee reflected positively on progress to date but warned that SPC still had some way to go in ensuring that the organisation's experience, both good and bad, was effectively fed into its current and future programs. Others reflected on the difficulty of validating data and ensuring consistent standards across the organisation but hoped an easier and more efficient system would emerge.

DFAT staff were also largely positive about SPC's progress on strengthening M&E. It was explained to the evaluation team that DFAT needed to wait until the right pre-conditions existed before it could assist SPC in building its M&E capacity. However the evaluation team thinks otherwise, having heard multiple and compelling accounts of the influential role the RAS adviser

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\* This support also pre-dates the establishment of the RAS.

played in helping shape both DFAT and SPC's thinking in this area. This provides a good example of what can be achieved through the provision of sustained and consistent support over time.

A well placed SPC staff member described the improvements in M&E as 'the huge success of the Partnership'. This evaluation agrees.

#### 4.3.3 Strengthening financial management

The Partnership document highlights sound financial management alongside improved monitoring and evaluation and robust prioritisation processes as implicit pre-conditions for further increases in flexible funding. The 2012 Independent External Review (IER) put forward eight separate recommendations for strengthening SPC's financial position and its financial management capacity. Documents reviewed and interviews undertaken in the course of this evaluation reveal that while there has been progress against some of these recommendations, at least three key issues remain.

**Increasing levels of core funding as a proportion of SPC's overall revenue.** The IER recommended that SPC have control over at least 35 per cent of its financial resources. At present this figure is less than 25 per cent. Australia has already shifted a significant proportion of its funding to flexible (i.e. core) funding and signalled a willingness to further increase this proportion, subject to criteria outlined in the Partnership agreement. However, even as a major SPC donor, Australia's flexible funding will not yield sufficient dividends unless other significant donors either follow suit or by other means give support to the reforms outlined below. Interviews were conducted with SPC's five largest donors. A number now provide more flexible funding than has been the case historically, although this does not necessarily give SPC full discretion over the use of funds.\* SPC's largest donor, the European Union, indicated that there are structural limitations that prevent it from providing core funding. The United States also reported similar impediments. The evaluation finds that Australia has assisted SPC in securing more flexible funding through advocacy with other donors and through setting a good example. While Australia is playing its part in this respect, levels of flexible funding remain well short of the target.

**Introducing a robust methodology and systems to support full cost recovery.** SPC currently charges a project management fee of 7 per cent on the majority of its contracts, however SPC estimates that in reality its indirect costs associated with delivering these activities is in the order of three times that amount. As a result SPC's Finance Director claims that 'SPC has to subsidise every project we have.' For Australia this presents the real risk that its untagged, core contributions are being used to provide a subsidy to the underfunded and potentially lower priority project interventions of other donors. This situation highlights the urgent need for SPC to complete cost recovery work so that the true cost of corporate functions and program delivery can be accounted for and secured. This is not a new issue, as CRGA meeting minutes from 2013 show. Consultants were engaged in 2013–14 to assist with development of a cost recovery mechanism but interviews undertaken in 2016 reveal that this work is not yet complete. The introduction of this important financial reform is now substantially overdue.

**Developing a transparent model for the allocation of core funding.** Related to the above, there is a need for SPC to review how it allocates core funding (which is currently based largely on historical precedent†). Numerous DFAT and SPC interviewees expressed concern that if their currently tagged project or program funding was shifted to discretionary core funding it would result in their activities being de-funded. A transparent and criteria-based system for the allocation of SPC's core (i.e. discretionary) income across divisions and corporate areas, consistent with their importance and/or resource mobilisation potential,‡ is required. This issue is scheduled for discussion in early 2016 among the SPC senior leadership team. Interviewees

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\* The same can also be said for Australian funding 'tagged' to SPC divisions.

† According to multiple SPC interviewees

‡ i.e. corporate functions cannot be expected to be self-funding



reflected that any move away from the status quo is likely to be contentious within SPC. However, a move towards more transparent, criteria-based decision making will put the SPC senior leadership team in a better position to tackle the challenge of prioritisation that lies ahead, inevitably involving some hard decisions.

It is also worth noting that SPC has passed only four out of the seven pillars associated with European Union's Pillar assessment process.\* Weaknesses were noted in relation to SPC's approach to procurement, grant management and sub delegation. The European Union and SPC have confirmed for the evaluation team that SPC is actively working to address these issues. Australia has provided support through the RAS to strengthen SPC's corporate systems, including those relating to procurement. Furthermore, a recent DFAT baseline due-diligence assessment of SPC found that overall the organisation represents a low risk.

## Findings

- › There is strong evidence confirming the positive impact the Partnership has had on performance management. While it is too early to assess whether SPC's actual performance has improved, a big improvement in the measuring of performance is evident, particularly given this early point in the life of the Partnership.
- › This evaluation has found that there is an urgent and overdue need for SPC to introduce a number of reforms to strengthen its financial position and financial management capability. Unlike with monitoring and evaluation, Australia has provided SPC with only limited hands-on technical support to address these challenges.
- › The Partnership performance assessment framework closely mirrors SPC's own results reporting system, and it is therefore aligned with development effectiveness principles that support the use of partner systems, rather than the creation of additional, parallel systems. As a tool to measure and report upon performance and progress against the Partnership, the PAF itself is limited. On the other hand, the PAF process has highlighted key lessons for both parties, which will hopefully inform how they define success, measure progress and discuss performance in future.

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\* The Pillar assessment applies to organisations managing EU funding, and looks at internal control and accounting systems, external audit and procedures relating to grants, procurement, financial instruments and subdelegation.

# 5 Partnership institutional arrangements

## Introduction

This section looks at institutional arrangements under the Partnership to determine whether they are sound; this is preceded by a brief discussion of the general features and challenges of partnership. Aspects of this area of inquiry include the extent to which:

- › the Partnership is being ‘lived’, consistent with Partnership principles, including whether interactions are guided by the Partnership
- › management and communication arrangements within and between the parties has improved under the Partnership
- › there is greater collaboration at the country and regional level on both technical and strategic issues.

## 5.1 General features and challenges of partnership

The general definition of the term ‘partnership’ is ‘*an on-going relationship where risks and benefits are shared*’.<sup>22</sup> In practice this implies that each partner should ideally be involved with:

- › co-creating the partnership’s objectives and activities
- › bringing contributions (of different kinds) to the partnership
- › committing to mutual accountability.

International experience suggests<sup>23</sup> there are three key challenges that are fundamental partnership disablers. These are:

- › power imbalance (core partnership principle: equity, but not necessarily equality)
- › hidden agendas (core partnership principle: transparency)
- › each partner aiming to ‘win’ at any cost (core partnership principle: mutual benefits).

After almost 70 years of engagement, respondents reported that Australia and SPC have a strong relationship and adopt a range of roles including:

- › **Australia:** founding member / equal member, client, capacity builder, financier/donor, broker, partner
- › **SPC:** secretariat to a multimember organisation, scientific and technical organisation supporting development, consulting firm, project host, extension of member government services, supporter of small island states, partner.

A challenge for Australia and SPC is to adopt and maintain a partnering approach when they have been used to performing different roles for so long.

The evaluation looks at what aspects of the relationship are due to the Partnership or to pre-existing arrangements.

## 5.2 Living the Partnership

### 5.2.1 Quality of the relationship

The Partnership seeks to deepen the existing positive and longstanding relationship between the Government of Australia and SPC. Principles of mutual respect, responsibility and accountability are set out in the Partnership document and are intended to underpin all aspects of the relationship.<sup>24</sup> Openness in areas such as working together, exploring new opportunities and resolving tensions is the key attribute underlying these principles.

It is clear that there is a broad set of relationships at a number of levels across SPC and DFAT, and with other Australian government organisations, and that these represent a complex network of interactions. At a senior-management level, DFAT and SPC see the relationship as robust, with both parties saying they are able to be frank with each other, using ‘trust’ and ‘confidence’ to describe the relationship. They affirm that the relationship is among the closest and strongest either party has relative to other donor / Pacific regional organisation relationships. At the same time, the parties acknowledge that the relationship is yet to be tested over any critical differences. At technical and program-management levels, the relationship is largely seen as healthy and collaborative. This is discussed in more detail below in Section 5.3.2 Communication arrangements.

An issue of concern regarding mutual accountability was raised by a number of informants. This issue has already been mentioned in Section 4.2.3 of the report, and relates to the transition from project to program funding. Educational Quality and Assessment Program and the Regional Rights Resource Team were due to transition in the first half of 2016, subject to meeting Partnership requirements including developing a business plan and monitoring and evaluation framework. While efforts were made by both parties to manage the process, the transition was delayed and interim funding arrangements had to be used to ensure continuity of personnel and activities.

During evaluation interviews a number of SPC managers indicated their concerns as it was unclear to them whether there would be the continuity of funding necessary to retain valuable and hard-to-replace expert staff. ODE understands that these concerns have since been resolved through the negotiation of an additional transition period and attendant funding, doubtless an arrangement that both parties would have rather avoided.

The Partnership is constituted not just by institutional arrangements but also by the people involved. Staff changes are acknowledged by all to be inevitable within any large organisation, however both SPC and DFAT informants remarked upon a drop in senior-level engagement under the Partnership as a result of DFAT organisational and staff changes over the last year. Some DFAT and SPC staff, along with a number of other observers within the region, expressed the view that it will take time and effort to re-establish the depth of people-to-people relationships. With turnover of staff an acknowledged reality, it will be important for both DFAT and SPC to ‘induct’ new people into the Partnership and also to regularly remind themselves of the Partnership’s vision for how the two organisations work together and the goals they are jointly working towards.

*‘We do need to remind ourselves regularly what [the Partnership] is and what’s incumbent upon us to make it work.’*

SPC informant

Pacific island member and donor informants had a very good impression of the relationship between SPC and DFAT, but most were unaware of the Partnership, or any kind of special relationship between the two beyond what would be expected of Australian engagement as a large and active member-donor that provides multiyear funding commitments to SPC.

### 5.2.2 Government of Australia – SPC Partnership?

The Partnership between the Government of Australia and SPC was intended to encompass the interactions of all Australian government agencies.<sup>25</sup> As expressed in the DFAT 2015 Pacific Regional Aid Investment Plan, coordination of Australian whole-of-government partners in



relation to delivery of the Pacific Regional Program helps ensure policy consistency, and coherence in Australia's engagement with SPC. The proposed mechanism for pursuing this is an information-sharing group, convened by DFAT, which would meet regularly to discuss priorities and objectives and thereby avoid sending SPC mixed messages on key issues.<sup>26</sup>

DFAT confirmed that no such group has been established to date. In response to a request from SPC in 2014, DFAT arranged for a number of Australian government agencies to meet with SPC ahead of the April 2015 High Level Consultations,<sup>27</sup> however this appears to have been a one-off event and separate from the HLC itself. Many Australian government agencies have no experience with DFAT inviting them into the Partnership; indeed most informants from Australian government agencies were not aware of the Partnership. At the same time, informants generally indicated that they were comfortable operating on discrete projects with SPC and were not concerned about being brought into the Partnership.

## Findings

- › The evaluation found that the relationship between DFAT and SPC is, for the most part, 'living' the Partnership principles. SPC largely sees the relationship with DFAT in highly favourable terms, but notes that there is a significant distance to travel before the Partnership reaches its full potential, particularly in regard to genuine collaboration at a strategic level. DFAT values the relationship with SPC because of SPC's unique role and depth of expertise in technical implementation as well as its strong understanding of the Pacific, while expressing some concern with the broad scope of SPC's work and its mixed performance in some areas.
- › The Partnership has not brought an Australian whole-of-government perspective to the relationship, and there is still potential for mixed messages. Some in DFAT observe that it would be more accurate to refer to the Partnership as a DFAT–SPC partnership.

## 5.3 Efficiency of Partnership arrangements

### 5.3.1 High-level dialogue

The Partnership re-established annual High Level Consultations (HLCs) between SPC and DFAT; these were subsequently increased to biannual consultations. The purpose of the biannual arrangement was to create two separate meetings: one that focused primarily on discussion of strategic policy and emerging regional development issues (in Canberra) and another that focused on reviewing performance against the Partnership (in Noumea). Despite this distinction, neither the Canberra nor the Noumea consultations preclude discussion of regional issues, joint efforts to address complex challenges, areas for sharing knowledge and expertise or progress under the Partnership, according to Amendment 1 of the Partnership document.<sup>28</sup>

SPC and DFAT informants expressed the view that this arrangement has room for improvement. DFAT noted that the HLCs could be better used to explore areas of collaboration, but considered that the meetings, particularly the more strategically focused (Canberra) ones *did* address bigger issues. One key DFAT informant acknowledged that DFAT could be better prepared and thus get more value from the meetings.

SPC staff involved in the HLCs were less qualified in their assessment and expressed some disappointment, particularly in how well the meetings functioned as a forum for strategic conversations. SPC noted that the format of the meetings was not conducive to genuine discussion of strategic and policy issues, and often resulted in 'set piece' presentations and reliance on pre-scripted briefing notes. Certainly there was no apparent appreciation by many SPC informants of the nature of the biannual meetings as alternating between operational and strategic discussions. The difference in DFAT's and SPC's assessment of the HLCs suggests there is something of a disconnect between what the two parties understand the purpose of these meetings to be, and hence what they expect them to deliver.

### 5.3.2 Communication arrangements

The Partnership intended for there to be a single focal point within DFAT and SPC for all communications between the two parties.<sup>29</sup> The focal points are primarily used by DFAT and

SPC to liaise around broad program, organisational and other Partnership issues. Contact between the two parties on Partnership issues is open and regular. Both SPC and DFAT see the value of having a single focal point.

While lines of communication were clear between the focal points and at the senior-management level, many SPC informants and even some DFAT staff expressed uncertainty around DFAT roles and responsibilities for taking the Partnership forward following re-structuring and staff changes at Suva post.\* These changes are relatively recent and hopefully with time a widely shared understanding of roles and responsibilities will become embedded.

Regarding program implementation, SPC, DFAT and other Australian government agency staff said they were clear about who to contact regarding project or program-management issues. The vast majority of informants reported that they had good levels of dialogue, worked collaboratively to address challenges, and had strong engagement on management and technical issues. It was apparent to the evaluation team that there were well established relationships in technical areas of work, especially between SPC and Australian government agency staff, whose engagement through a series of projects over the years pre-dates the Partnership. Australian government agencies appeared to have greater continuity of staff than DFAT, allowing them to invest in relationships over the long term. Some technical staff had moved between the Australian government and SPC over the course of their careers.

### 5.3.3 Reporting arrangements

Reporting under the Partnership is through two annual mechanisms. One is reporting by DFAT and SPC against the Partnership performance assessment framework, which is discussed at the Noumea HLCs. The other is reporting by SPC against its strategic plan to its governing body, the Council of Regional Governments and Administrations. Australian-funded projects are still required to provide project-level progress reports. However, once funding is moved from project to program or core funding, separate reporting is not required.

The evaluation found that during the transition from project to program or core funding, there has been duplication of effort in reporting, with some areas of SPC asked to provide project-level reports as well as higher level outcome reporting to meet DFAT requirements. This is hopefully a short-term issue that will be resolved as funding arrangements, planning processes and performance management systems are bedded down for the affected areas.

The annual Aid Quality Check has brought to light some inefficiency in how DFAT reports on its support to SPC. In the context of DFAT's aid management simplification agenda, DFAT Pacific Regional Program managers have not re-visited the need for separate Aid Quality Check reporting on the performance of areas that now receive program funding under the Partnership. This also suggests that some DFAT staff have not fully realised that the Partnership requires a 'step change' in the way program performance is managed and reported by both SPC and DFAT. Requests from DFAT for additional SPC reporting caused some tensions, but appear to have been resolved satisfactorily.

### Findings

- › The HLCs are not fulfilling their potential or fully meeting the needs of either party. Both parties have expressed a desire for more strategic discussions.
- › There are clear lines of communication at the project and program level, and the establishment of focal points for day-to-day management of Partnership issues is seen as a benefit by both parties.
- › A certain lack of clarity remains, for individuals in both organisations, as to the responsibilities of various DFAT staff for taking the Partnership forward.

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\* Changes referred to include structural changes (the loss of a Minister Counsellor for Pacific regional issues in Suva with the abolition of the regional hub function of Suva post, and the transfer of DFAT responsibility for the day-to-day management of Partnership issues from Suva to Noumea) and changes in senior staff through the posting cycle.

- › DFAT quality reporting requirements have not been reinterpreted relative to the Partnership.

## 5.4 Government of Australia – SPC collaboration

Collaboration is referenced in a number of areas of the Partnership document including the preamble, the principles, the objectives and in the overarching goal, which states that the Partnership will bring together the Government of Australia's and SPC's respective intellectual and technical capacities to support Pacific island states in the context of emerging regional development challenges.

### 5.4.1 Collaboration at implementation

At the technical level, the evaluation found strong evidence of collaboration between SPC, DFAT and other Australian government agencies (as discussed in Section 5.2.2 above). Developing and sharing new technologies, problem solving and working together to adapt tools to the Pacific context were some of the ways informants talked about collaboration. Most informants indicated that this kind of collaboration is a longstanding practice and that the Partnership has not made a discernible difference to the nature of their engagement at this level. The exception to this is in divisions of SPC where DFAT has moved to tagged program funding; in these instances staff on both sides report that the nature of funding has changed the nature of the conversations they have with each other. They have become more about outcomes and high-level issues rather than about detailed project implementation matters, as anticipated under the third objective of the Partnership (Section 3.2 c.[i]).

### 5.4.2 Strategic collaboration

The language of the Partnership document indicates a firm intention to use joint approaches to address strategic issues; the HLCs are to be used, in part, to focus on how both parties can use their convening powers and technical expertise to address complex current and emerging development challenges in the region.

Despite probing, the evaluation found little evidence of DFAT and SPC working together to jointly address the type of major issues envisaged under the Partnership. SPC informants raised this consistently during interviews, indicating their strong appetite for engagement and joint approaches to regional issues. SPC cited a number of areas where joint work beyond the program level could benefit the region. Examples offered by SPC informants during interviews included benchmarking of Pacific students, and broader engagement on climate change and non-communicable diseases.

### 5.4.3 Collaboration with DFAT bilateral programs

Another area where collaboration could be improved is in greater coordination between DFAT's regional and bilateral programs. DFAT informants acknowledged that they have given little attention to this area, which SPC and other Australian government agencies raised during the evaluation. At the project level, these parties have observed DFAT bilateral programs pursuing technical activities in countries without being aware that Australian-funded SPC activities were operating in the same space. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) gave the example of their work with SPC, which suggested that in some countries the DFAT bilateral program was implementing activities with the national statistics office without any awareness of SPC or ABS operations in the same area, and without an appreciation of either the technical nature of the work (such as the linkages between surveys, or full use of surveys for other statistical outputs\*) or the implications of their individual activity for the broader regional statistics agenda. This type of overlap is, at best, inefficient in its potential for duplication of efforts or missed opportunities to get the best value for the country's efforts as a whole but, at worst, it could result in conflicting approaches to issues impacting on development.

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\* For example, a well-designed household income and expenditure survey can be used to rebase the consumer price index.

Increased cooperation and synergy at bilateral levels between the two parties is a (sub)objective of the Partnership.<sup>30</sup> SPC informants noted that they have expressed, through meetings and informal communications, a desire to have more engagement with DFAT's bilateral programs in order to share information, coordinate activities and have input into DFAT bilateral program planning and design. Some SPC divisions said that they routinely made contact with DFAT posts when visiting countries, but they did not receive much interest or ongoing engagement. Equally, SPC reported that it requested meetings with bilateral program managers in Canberra but there was a low level of engagement.

It is likely that important synergies are being missed due to a lack of bilateral program engagement with SPC in key areas. Indeed, it would be consistent with the intent of the Partnership for DFAT to ensure its bilateral programs were aware of SPC activity and engaged with SPC in all of the priority areas identified in the objectives (3.2 a.) of the Partnership.\*

## Findings

- › There is a history of strategic collaboration between SPC and DFAT at the technical and program-management level that has continued unchanged under the Partnership. At higher levels this strategic collaboration is less apparent and yet to match the aspirations outlined in the Partnership agreement.
- › Engagement with DFAT bilateral programs with SPC is minimal and potentially detracts from the efficiency and coherence of Australian support to the Pacific.

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\* Priority areas of the Partnership are fisheries, public health, forestry, agriculture, statistics, applied geoscience, transport, energy, educational assessment, human rights and gender.

## Annex 1 Progress against the PAF with ODE ratings

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
Overarching goal: Pacific island countries and territories will be making better progress in addressing development challenges and achieving aspirations through this Partnership	Under Objective 1 below	Under Objective 1 below	SPC CRGA reports and JCS reviews demonstrate increasing progress towards agreed-upon national and regional development outcomes set out in SPC's Corporate Strategic Plan and JCS	Same as 2014
<b>Objective 1: Effective and efficient regional service delivery to support PICTs to achieve sustainable development outcomes in areas including fisheries, public health, forestry, fisheries, statistics, applied geoscience, transport, energy, educational assessment, human rights, and gender.</b>				
› Is the available evidence sufficient to indicate that development outcomes have improved?				
› Is there a clear and logical link between the support provided through the Partnership and the identified outcomes?				
<b>Land, agriculture and forestry resources</b>				
1. Improved food and nutritional	Number of PICTs supported in active engagement between farmers and	8 PICTs	N/A	11 PICTs

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
security	suppliers of genetic resources (crop, tree, and animal)			<b>Achieved</b> 8 PICTs supported with crop resources and 3 with animal resources
2. Improved land, agricultural and forestry policy decisions, practices, research, management and development	Number of PICTs with newly adopted agricultural and forestry legislation, strategies and/or evidence-based frameworks that promote a coherent national/regional approach	2 PICTs have updated sustainable land management plans (Fiji 2006 and Cook Islands 2009) 2 PICTs have updated sustainable forest management plans (Fiji 2007 and Vanuatu 2011)	N/A	6 additional plans/policies and 1 regional framework
				<b>Partially achieved</b> 2 of 6 plans/policies complete. Status of regional plan indeterminate
3. Improved agriculture and forestry trade	Percentage increase in revenue from market access and trade among small and medium enterprises receiving SPC trade promotion support and assistance	FJD 556,500 (average 2012 export revenue of 17 enterprises )	N/A	5% increase above 2012 baseline
				<b>Achieved</b> IACT enterprise evaluation survey reports exports of agricultural products totalling FJD 10.5 million
<b>Energy services</b>				
4. Improved access to affordable and efficient energy services	Number of PICTs with at least a 10% increase in the share of electricity they generate by renewable sources, thereby reducing reliance on fossil fuels for power generation	4 PICTs as of 2009	N/A	2 additional PICTs
				<b>Partially achieved</b> 1 PICT has achieved target, another 1 has partially achieved target
<b>Transport services</b>				
5. Improved access to affordable and efficient energy services	Number of PICTs that have initiated processes to reform maritime transport services legislation and regulations to comply with recent amendments to international maritime obligations	As of 2013, EDD has supported legislative review in 2 PICTs	N/A	3 PICTs supported with legislative review
				<b>Partially achieved</b> Process underway in 2 PICTs
6. Improved access to safe, affordable and efficient transport services	Number of PICTs that have reviewed their port operation regulations/policies to comply with	As of 2013, EDD has supported port regulation reviews in 3 PICTs (Cook Islands, Tuvalu, FSM)	N/A	Reviews initiated with 7 PICTs
				<b>Achieved</b>

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
				Reviews completed in 8 PICTs
Fisheries				
7. Coastal fisheries are better managed for economic growth, food security, and environmental conservation	Number of PICTs with sustainable fish aggregating device programs established to enhance food security and livelihoods	10 PICTs assisted	N/A	7 PICTs have sustainable programs with data collection
				Achieved 8 PICTs now have sustainable programs
8. Coastal fisheries are better managed for economic growth, food security, and environmental conservation	Number of new aquaculture production systems becoming operational and enterprises established or expanded with SPC support	3 new enterprises and one cluster supported	N/A	3–4 viable enterprises per year
				Achieved 6 enterprises and 5 clusters assisted. Reporting suggests support was for existing, rather than new, businesses
9. Oceanic fisheries are better managed for economic growth, food security and environmental conservation	Tuna stock assessment results are accepted by the annual Scientific Committee of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCFC) as shown in the meeting record; peer reviews of assessment quality are favourable	2009–2012: all accepted; first peer review favourable	N/A	Maintain acceptance; 1–2 additional peer reviews anticipated
				Achieved All tuna stock assessments accepted. Reporting unclear on status of peer reviews
Health				



Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
10. Improved governance and leadership for public health development in the region	Proportion of PICTs leaders attending country-led forums (with support of SPC and partners). This includes Heads of Health (HoH) and Pacific Health Ministers Meetings (PHMM)  Tracking of HoH and PHMM decisions implementation at country level	Limited/lack of/ad hoc forum(s) for HoH to participate, develop, implement and monitor the Pacific health agenda  No tracking mechanism in place	80% PICTs HoH meet and develop/identify 3 priority policy areas for consideration by the PHMM in 2015; and demonstrate regional participation and leadership  Tracking mechanism in place	80% PICTs HoH attend 2015 meeting to follow up progress on the 3 key priorities identified by the PHMM; and monitor the Pacific Health Development Framework and agenda. Tracking mechanism in regularly updated and reported to PICTs
				<b>Indeterminate*</b> Reporting does not include details on proportion of PICT leaders attending meetings or details of 3 key priorities
11. Enhanced performance of PICTs to address socioeconomic determinants of NCDs	Number of PICTs with improved policies and legislation that addresses the socioeconomic determinants of NCDs (e.g. legislation on alcohol, and imports of fatty, salty and sugary foods; education; and exercise and healthy living)	4–5 PICTs	Policy document on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) developed	Policy paper on SSBs distributed to all PICTs. 2 PICTs to initiate or increase tax of SSBs and/or other unhealthy products
				<b>Achieved†</b> Discussion paper distributed and 3 PICTs increased taxes on SSBs
12. Scope of Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN) expanded through enhanced capacity for integrated regional surveillance	Capacity at national and regional levels (measured by number of specialised field epidemiologists trained in core public health services)  Number of PICTs with resources	Appropriate training in core public health services and field epidemiology non-existent in 2013	An expanded Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) feasibility study, for core public health services, conducted by SPC and presented to PPHSN coordinating body, HoH and PHMM	FETP curriculum planned, developed and funded  2 PICTs

\* Rated by SPC as 'fully achieved'

† Rated by SPC as 'partially achieved'

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
	allocated to support an FETP fellow and their planned projects to sustain and improve national surveillance activities	0 PICTs		<b>Partially achieved*</b> A total 217 students are certificate or masters level. SPC working with Fiji National University to have both levels accredited. Funding currently being sought
13. Improved monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting of the results of PHD programs	Results Framework and M&E Plan for PHD Strategy developed and implemented in alignment with the Corporate Strategic Plan	Draft Results Framework and M&E Plan developed		PHD M&E systems aligned with SPC Corporate M&E systems producing timely and quality reporting of PHD achievements which meet SPC's corporate reporting requirements for CRGA and the GoA-SPC Partnership (i.e. the SPC Corporate programme results report, country programme reports, and the SPC-GoA Partnership Assessment Framework)
				<b>Indeterminate</b> No data provided
14. Successful leadership and management of PHD	Timely and high-quality PHD work plans, budgets and financial reports produced for PHD and SPC Corporate reporting requirements	Budget, Finance, HR and Communication processes in place		Timely and high-quality PHD work plans, budgets and financial reports produced for PHD and SPC Corporate reporting requirements
				<b>Indeterminate</b> No data provided
<b>Applied geoscience</b>				

\* Not rated by SPC

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
15. National deep-sea mineral (DSM) resources law and policy frameworks developed; improved understanding of potential resources and responsible management of exploitation activities	Number of PICTs with sound minerals policy implemented to regulate best practice exploration and extractive activities	1 PICT (Cook Islands) provided with DSM policy and law in 2011	N/A	13 PICTs to have DSM policy or law (or both) completed
				<b>Partially achieved</b> 5 of 13 PICTS have completed and enacted DSM laws/policies
16. Defined maritime boundaries	Maritime boundaries defined by agreed geographical coordinates with all neighbouring PICTs	Around 50% of all boundaries now defined in the region	N/A	A further 20% of boundaries agreed
				<b>Achieved</b> 6 new maritime boundaries successfully negotiated and amendments to a further 3 existing treaties concluded
<b>Water and sanitation</b>				
17. Increased access for Pacific communities to safe drinking water and basic sanitation	Number of PICTs reporting increases in the proportion of people with access to both improved water supply and sanitation	2012 coverage as reported by countries through the UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP)	N/A	All PICTs reporting increased Proportional coverage through JMP reporting
				<b>Not achieved*</b> Reporting indicates progress is patchy at best
<b>Climate change and disaster risk reduction</b>				
18. Strengthened capacity of Pacific island communities to respond	Number of PICTs with strengthened disaster risk management (DRM)	Low levels of DRM institutional capacity in PICT National Disaster	N/A	DRM governance arrangements strengthened in 5 PICTs

\* SPC rated as 'changed/partially'

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
				Partially achieved Reforms to governance arrangements have commenced in 4 PICTs
effectively to climate change and disasters	governance arrangements	Management Offices		
19. Improved understanding and management of environmental hazards/risks, water resources, geological resources, and fragile geological environments	Awareness activities for the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative/Pacific Risk Information System risk profiles undertaken for Pacific Island Countries	Risk profiles developed in 2011 for all PICs	N/A	Awareness activities undertaken in 7 PICS
				Indeterminate Data provided does not align with target
Gender equality				
20. Strengthened capability for Pacific island communities to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment	SPC demonstrates that gender is being mainstreamed across all sectors through major corporate policy documents and statements, program and funding agreements and program delivery. This is monitored routinely by the Gender Mainstreaming Committee using the gender mainstreaming commitments monitoring and evaluation mechanism	Currently ad hoc although documents increasingly reference gender dimensions	N/A	Major policy documents and statements across sectors include prominent reference to gender equality and how gender relates to that sector or area of work
				Indeterminate Indicator reported upon by SPC differs from the (revised) indicator in the Partnership PAF
21. Strengthened capability for Pacific island communities to advance gender equality and women’s	Number of programs and strategies implemented by SPC including gender analysis and with appropriate	Not consistently applied across SPC	N/A	By June 2015, this will apply to all new programs and strategies developed at SPC

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
				<b>Partially achieved*</b> Activities to promote gender mainstreaming conducted in 5 SPC divisions
empowerment	integration of gender perspective in program formulation, budget, monitoring, evaluation and reporting			
<b>Human rights</b>				
22. Increase compliance with international human rights standards and obligations	Number of PICTs with increased compliance with international human rights standards through improved legislation, policies and practices	Human rights country status as noted in the Universal Periodic Review country reports	N/A	2 additional PICTs adopt treaties to protect civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights; 3 additional adopt treaties to protect people with disabilities
				<b>Indeterminate<sup>†</sup></b> Reporting does not align with prescribed targets
<b>Development statistics</b>				
23. Pacific national and regional statistics are accessible and are being utilised	Increased number of Pacific Island statistics offices adopting common regional methodologies including a core set for census questions, Pacific Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) methodology, and statistical classifications (Pacific Classification of Individual Consumption by Purpose [PACCOICOP]), to provide regionally	2010 World round of censuses, all PICTs used different census form  Standard Pacific HIES methodology developed in 2012, replacing 5 separate versions previously used	N/A	Commitment by all PICTs at 2014 census planning meeting to adopt <i>Pacific core set of census questions</i>  Adoption of common HIES methodology by 5 PICTs
				<b>Achieved<sup>‡</sup></b> All PICTs committed to using a core set of questions in 2015. 9 PICTs

\* Not rated by SPC

† Rated by SPC as 'partially/changed'

‡ Appraised by SPC as 'partially achieved'

Objective	Indicator  comparable statistics that are in line with international standards	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
				have either completed or are currently undertaking HIES
Literacy, numeracy and better quality education				
24. Increased PICT capacity to deliver better quality education	Number of member PICTs implementing national assessment policies and standards (literacy, teacher and principal standards) to monitor and evaluate the quality of education (PaBER)	7 PICT countries (PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu)	N/A	10 PICTs implemented assessment policies and educational standards
				Partially achieved* 5 PICTS have now used prescribed standards/policies. Note targets in PAF and Strategic Plan differ
25. Improved literacy and numeracy levels nationally and regionally	Number of PICTs utilising evidence based on research to inform and implement relevant policy intervention to improving literacy and numeracy levels (including PaBER)	3 PICTs (PNG, Solomon Islands, Samoa)	N/A	10 PICTs with research-based intervention programs
				Partially achieved 6 PICTs using research-based interventions
26. A regional system is established that facilitates international recognition of Pacific qualifications	Maintain the currency of information on the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS) database	29 qualifications and 50 registered providers in 3 PICTs (Tonga, Samoa, Fiji)	N/A	2 additional PICTs (PNG, Vanuatu) and 15 new qualifications uploaded and 10 newly registered providers each year
				Indeterminate† SPC reporting omits any detail on the number of countries, qualifications

\* Rated by SPC as 'exceeded'

† Rated by SPC as 'fully achieved'

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
				and providers
<b>Objective 2: Enhanced SPC capability to support regional and island member development priorities</b> › In what way are enhanced capabilities contributing to SPC improved performance? › What additional areas of SPC capability require development to support improved performance?				
Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
27. Development of an SPC-wide planning, monitoring, evaluation and accountability system that enables demonstration of results to members and donors and improved development effectiveness	27a) Improved organisation-wide monitoring, evaluation and reporting against agreed-upon national and regional development outcomes set out in SPC’s Corporate Strategic Plan and Joint Country Strategies	Integrated Reporting Information System developed and piloted with half of SPC divisions enabling improved output reporting. Needs to be supported with a clear process for organisational-wide monitoring, evaluation and learning analysis and reporting against the Corporate Strategic Plan	Monitoring, evaluation and learning plan developed and endorsed across the organisation for analysis and reporting against the key development outcomes in the Corporate Strategic Plan  SPC reports to CRGA 44 on its results against the Corporate Strategic Plan	Improved annual report against Corporate Strategic Plan demonstrating SPC outcomes/impact and lessons learned
				<b>Achieved</b> Current results report assessed by evaluation team as improvement on the 2013–14 results report
	27b) Number of country and/or regional sector evaluations completed and lessons learned applied for further improvement	No corporate evaluation schedule in place	Evaluation schedule finalised and 2 evaluations completed	4 evaluations completed
				<b>Achieved</b> SPC reports 20 evaluations logged for completion, language is a little ambiguous
28. Improved reporting on gender equality within SPC programs	Improved reporting on gender equality within SPC programs	Few SPC reports reflect gender equality outcomes, sex-disaggregated data is not included as standard	SPC reports to CRGA on progress mainstreaming gender equality across its programs	SPC reporting to CRGA includes sex-disaggregated data (where applicable) for all programs
				<b>Indeterminate</b> No data provided
29. Improved effectiveness of financial budgeting and reporting by more	N/A	SPC 2014 budget report	SPC provides in-year budget reporting to CRGA showing allocations against	Increase in resources for Corporate Strategic Plan priorities reflected in



Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
clearly linking resource allocations to key priorities in the Corporate Strategic Plan			Corporate Strategic Plan priorities	2015 budget <b>Not achieved*</b> Evaluation has not found any clear link between prioritisation and budget allocation, see Section 4.3.3
30. Enhanced effectiveness of SPC governance systems in line with recommendations of the Independent External Review	N/A	Current governance arrangements	CRGA review of SPC governance arrangements completed.	Agreed governance review recommendations are implemented by SPC and members <b>Achieved</b> SPC reports process established for governance self-assessment and training. Governance review identified options but it is unclear whether SPC has advanced any of these
31. Consolidation of SPC's portfolio of programs to larger, more cohesive priority programs	Number of focused core projects	200+ programs	200+ programs	50 programs <b>Not achieved†</b> Data on current number of programs not provided but the evaluation team understands this is well in excess of 50, see Section 4.2.3
<b>Objective 3: To have built a combined and proactive approach to addressing major regional and global development challenges.</b> › What are the aspects of the combined and proactive approach to working together that are making the greatest contribution to enabling SPC to achieve its objectives?				

\* Rated by SPC as 'changed'

† Rated by SPC as 'partially achieved'

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
› In what ways could working arrangements be further enhanced to support SPC in achieving its objectives?				
Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
32. More efficient and effective funding mechanisms	32a) Australian combined core and program funding as a percentage of total Australian funding	33%	51%	57%
				Achieved* Analysis of 2015–16 expenditure shows more than target devoted to core and/or program funding
	32b) Number of SPC–GoA funding agreements outside this Partnership	3	2	0
				Not achieved† Multiple funding agreements remain, see Section 4.2.3
33. Joint technical activity and cooperation	N/A	Technical cooperation operates on ad hoc basis within sectors and without strategic oversight from senior management teams	Specific areas of technical cooperation between SPC and GoA are identified and agreed upon in the HLC (may include development of strategic plans, evaluations, joint analysis of major regional development issues, sharing technical capacity, SPC staff participating in the Australian aid program’s quality assurance processes such as peer reviews, Australian participation in relevant SPC technical	Report to HLC on the progress in each identified area of technical cooperation
				Not achieved November 2015 HLC did not include a report on areas of technical cooperation

\* No rating or data provided by SPC/DFAT

† No rating or data provided by SPC/DFAT

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
			meetings)	
34. Transparent and streamlined communication and management arrangements	34a) Occurrence of HLCs between SPC and GoA	No HLCs held	HLC held annually with clear agenda, SPC–GoA joint progress report submitted and outcomes documented and shared with CRGA	Same as 2014
				<b>Achieved</b> Biannual HLCs held
	34b) Attendance at GoA information-sharing group	No GoA information-sharing group in existence	GoA information-sharing group established and meets twice. 50% of Australian Government partners attend	GoA information-sharing group meets three times. 70% of Australian Government partners attend
				<b>Partially achieved</b> HLC side meeting conducted with other Australian government agencies but a formal, regular information-sharing group is yet to be established
	34c) Percentage of funding proposals and reports submitted to GoA reviewed by SEPPF	SEPPF review proposals and reports on ad hoc basis	30%	60%
				<b>Indeterminate*</b> No data provided
35. Increased cooperation and synergy at bilateral levels between the two organisations and with other actors	Reflection of synergy in SPC's Joint Country Strategies	No structured linkages between GoA bilateral development assistance and SPC programs	New joint country strategies developed in consultation with PICTs reflect increased synergy with GoA bilateral arrangements  SPC programs reflected in GoA bilateral agreements and assessments (e.g. gender equality, statistics, health,	Same as 2014
				<b>Not achieved</b> Evaluation found little evidence of increased engagement between SPC and GoA through bilateral programs. It was acknowledged in November 2015 High Level Consultations that this area

\* SPC's 2014 reporting indicates that SEPPF had insufficient resources to fully execute this function; it is understood that this has since become the domain of the Program Appraisal Committee.

Objective	Indicator	Baseline	Cumulative targets	
			End of 2014	End of 2015
			fisheries)	needs greater attention

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