



PACIFIC REGION INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITY

A partnership for better infrastructure  
services in Pacific Island Countries

## PRIF NEWSLETTER

Issue 6, August 2011

Dear Colleagues,

Through this newsletter, we wish to bring you up to date with PRIF's work and also invite your comment and feedback on its activities. We intend to provide quarterly newsletters and encourage you to share these with your colleagues. To subscribe/unsubscribe to the PRIF newsletter, or to provide any comments or feedback please contact the PRIF Secretariat on [secretariat@theprif.org](mailto:secretariat@theprif.org) or telephone +61 2 9235 6571.

The Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility (PRIF) is a multi-partner infrastructure coordination and financing mechanism comprising of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), AusAID, the European Commission (EC) and the European Investment Bank (EIB), NZMFAT, and the World Bank Group (WBG). PRIF builds on the successful programs of the development partners, helps identify gaps in infrastructure and enhances the planning and delivery of infrastructures services.

The Pacific Infrastructure Advisory Centre (PIAC) is the technical assistance and advisory support arm of PRIF engaged with Pacific island countries. PIAC provides a range of practical support services including analytical studies, preparation of technical assistance and investment proposals, capacity building and institutional strengthening support, and policy advice.

This issue of the PRIF newsletter will cover:

1. **Progress in Kiribati: Water Supply and Sanitation**
2. **The Tonga-Fiji Connectivity Project**
3. **Positive progress: the Samoa National Infrastructure Strategic Plan (SNISP)**
4. **Strengthening of the Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA)**
5. **Assistance for the Cook Islands Energy Sector**
6. **Pacific Benchmarking: Power and Water Utilities**

Following on from Item 1 which provides an update on the water and sanitation sector in Kiribati, the 'Activity In Focus' for this newsletter is on the *South Tarawa Sanitation Improvement Project*.



## Update on PRIF's work

### **1. Kiribati – Coordination of the Water Supply and Sanitation Sector**

The water and sanitation sector of Kiribati, and in particular the urban centres of South Tarawa and Kirimati, is characterised by significant vulnerability in relation to the provision and quality of water and sanitation services. (For more on the state of the water/sanitation sector in Kiribati please see the 'Activity in Focus' section at the end of this edition).

The last few years have witnessed the development of a number of infrastructure projects by the PRIF donor partners to tackle the concerns arising from water supply and sanitation pressures, including the World Bank's *Kiribati Adaptation Program*, New Zealand's *Sustainable Towns Project*, and the ADB's *Public Health and Environment Improvement (SAPHE) Project*. However the combination of a dense population, complex interrelated infrastructure problems and a variety of individual development partner projects in close proximity had created the need for a long term harmonization of infrastructure implementation. PRIF in its coordinating role brought together the country and development agencies to increase information sharing and to coordinate planning of Kiribati's water and sanitation infrastructure.

During 2010 the PRIF partners and PIAC worked with the Government of Kiribati in formulating the *South Tarawa Program for improved Water Supply, Sanitation and Solid Waste Management*, which represents a coordinated and government led effort to improve service delivery and operations in the water and sanitation sector in South Tarawa.

During the coming 6 months, the Government of Kiribati and PRIF partners, with co-financing of the Government of Australia, are planning to implement the following projects and activities:

- The World Bank-led *Kiribati Adaptation Program (Phase III)*: improving the resilience of Kiribati to the impacts of climate change on freshwater supply and coastal infrastructure.
- The ADB-led *Tarawa Sanitation Improvement Project*: developing effective collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater by the Public Utility Board; improving capacity for effective planning and management of water and sanitation services and strengthening implementation services.
- The joint ADB/World Bank-led *Kiribati Road Rehabilitation Project*: improving the condition of South Tarawa's main road network and reconstructing and rehabilitating roads, causeways and sections of the water main.



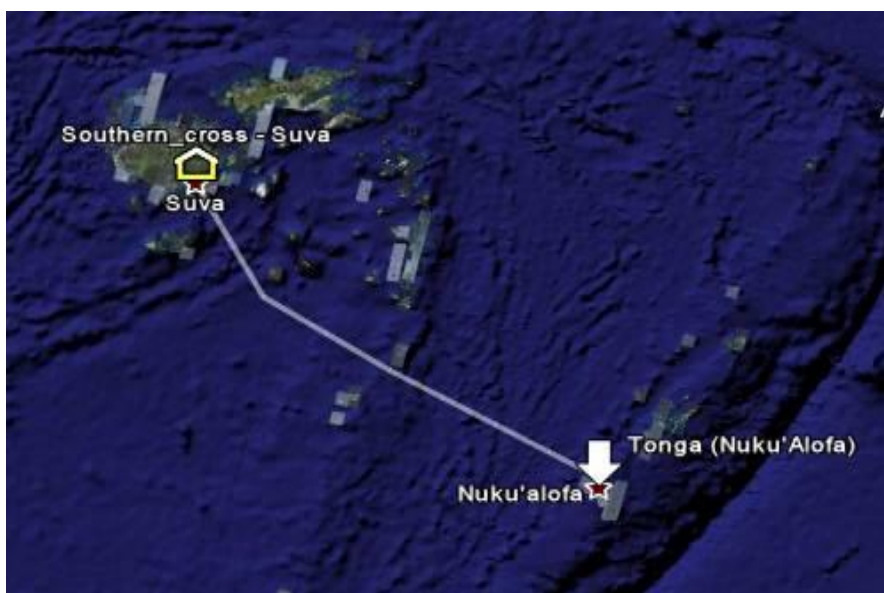
*KAPIII discussions, Kiribati (Source: N.Hale)*

- The NZMFAT-led *Kiribati Urban Development Programme*, previously known as the *Sustainable Towns Program*: developing liveable and sustainable towns, establishing improved access for clean water and sanitation and improved on-site sanitation facilities and hygiene awareness while encouraging local service delivery.

Through these activities and the work of the Government of Kiribati and PRIF, it is expected that Kiribati will achieve improved access to clean and safe water supply and sanitation and reduce chronic illness and diseases.

## 2. Tonga-Fiji Connectivity

The ADB, AusAID and the World Bank along with the Government of Tonga are collaborating on a project to improve domestic growth and regional integration. The Tonga-Fiji Connectivity project will support the laying of over 800 kilometers of submarine cable between Tonga and Fiji in order to provide services for Tonga's 100, 000 people. The project aims to increase access to communications infrastructure and services including internet and telephone services, as well as reduce the overall price of international communications. With PRIF support the project will also provide a regulator to ensure further capacity development for the telecommunications sector.



This project is the first phase of the Pacific Regional Connectivity Program, which aims to connect Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu by submarine fiber optic cables to the global communications network via Australia, Fiji, New Caledonia and the United States.

The project is currently undergoing approval processes to begin implementation in 2011.

*The above route illustrates the Tonga cable, which will be connected to an existing trans-pacific international cable via Fiji (Source: N.Beschorner)*

## 3. Positive Progress: the Samoa National Infrastructure Strategic Plan (NISP)

On 26 May 2011 the Samoa Cabinet Development Committee (CDC) approved the Samoa NISP and reconfirmed the infrastructure priorities of Samoa. The NISP proposes major initiatives for the water supply and sanitation, information technology, transport, power and solid waste management sectors for the next 5 to 10 years. PRIF development partners have welcomed the Plan and PIAC is working with the Government to organize a workshop involving national stakeholders from the government and private sector and development partners, to discuss the management, implementation and monitoring of the NISP.

## 4. Strengthening of the Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA)

In April 2011, PIAC mobilized an interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chief Finance and Administration Officer (CFAO) for SIWA. The additional management resources prepared a short-term Recovery Strategy and Action Plan (RAP) promoting the immediate improvement of service levels and operations. This plan was approved by the SIWA Board in mid-May 2011. A resolution was subsequently presented to the Government of Solomon Islands and in-country development partners, and support obtained for the various recommendations. The Government of the Solomon Islands and the Government of Australia have agreed to include Water and Sanitation as a priority sector in the bilateral cooperation sector and Australia has agreed to financially support implementation of SIWA's recovery strategy and action plan.

## 5. Cook Islands Energy Sector Assistance

In June 2011, PIAC conducted a mission to the Cook Islands in support of the preparation of an Implementation Plan for the draft Cook Islands Renewable Energy Chart (CIREC). The draft CIREC outlines how the Cook Islands Government will develop its Renewable Energy Pathway and its strategies to achieve 50% of its electricity source from renewable energy sources by 2015 and 100% by 2020 (the 50/15 – 100/20 policy).

PIAC consulted with a number of key stakeholders including the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Te Aponga Uira (TAU) Power Company, the National Environmental Service, and the Cook Islands Economic Task Force. PIAC and the stakeholders discussed the implications of generating renewable energy-sourced power for the existing power system in the country. Consultations also addressed the capital expenditure requirements and funding options; impact of the policy on TAU's longer-term operational and financial sustainability; and the support needed by Government-related agencies and SOEs to achieve the policy.

PIAC is currently preparing a Concept Note for the CIREC Implementation Plan for consultation with the Government and development partners.

## 6. Pacific Benchmarking: Power and Water Utilities



*Regional power benchmarking workshop, Guam  
(Source: C.Yap )*

In August 2010, the Pacific Power Association (PPA) and the Pacific Water and Wastes Association (PWAA) in coordination with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) and with the support of PIAC, agreed to conduct a set of benchmarking exercises for the Pacific power and water utilities.

The purpose of these benchmarking exercises is to help improve the service delivery of power and water utilities by providing a comparison of performance and encouraging shared learning and regional information sharing. The PPA and the PWAA have overseen the management and coordination of the benchmarking exercises while SPC will be the central data repository for the power benchmarking information and SOPAC provides technical support in the analysis of data for water benchmarking.

### ➤ **Benchmarking for Pacific power utilities**

In April 2011, the inaugural Benchmarking Steering Committee meeting, comprising of PIAC, PPA, SPC, 3 representatives from respective small, large and medium-sized power utilities, and PRIF development partner representatives, met in Nadi, Fiji to put in place the initial phase of the benchmarking exercise.



Following these initial processes of data collection, in July 2011 PIAC chaired a follow-up Steering Committee meeting and facilitated regional workshops in conjunction with the PPA Annual Conference in Guam. The workshop was attended by PPA, SPC, development partner representatives and Chief Executive Officers and Benchmarking liaison officers from fourteen (14) Pacific power utilities namely, Solomon Islands Electric Authority, Kosrae Utilities Corporation, Public Utilities Corporation, Palau Public

Utilities Corporation, Yap State Public Utilities Corporation, Fiji Electric Authority, PNG Power Ltd., Marshalls Energy Company, Kwajalien Joint Utility Resources, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation, Chuuk Public Utilities Corporation, American Samoa Power Authority, Te Aponga Uira O Tumu-Te-Varovaro and UNELCO.

The workshops endorsed ‘sustainable annual benchmarking’ as a management tool for improving the performance of Pacific power utilities. The PRIF partners also expressed their support for this endeavour and discussed future collaborative work with selected utilities to develop and implement benchmarking performance improvement plans.

A completion report for the overall power benchmarking exercise is expected in October 2011.



*Power Benchmarking Steering Committee meeting (top-left) and benchmarking workshop participants (above), Guam (Source: PPA )*

### ➤ **Water benchmarking**

A Benchmarking Steering Committee meeting comprising of PWWA, Water Utilities, SOPAC and PIAC in April 2011 agreed on the processes and questionnaires to be used for data gathering and by July 2011, with the positive participation of more than 15 water utilities across the Pacific, the data collection was completed. PWWA with the assistance of PIAC consultants have started the analysis of data and are currently preparing the benchmarking report.

The response from Pacific water utilities has been very encouraging and the data gathering exercise illustrated constructive cooperation across the Pacific. The draft report is currently under preparation and will be completed by the end of August 2011. The report and the water benchmarking exercise will be discussed in a workshop to be held in conjunction with the annual PPWA benchmarking conference in Fiji at the end of September 2011.

## Activity in Focus –Kiribati: South Tarawa Sanitation Improvement Project

### *Tackling South Tarawa’s Sanitation Challenge*

Allison Woodruff, ADB

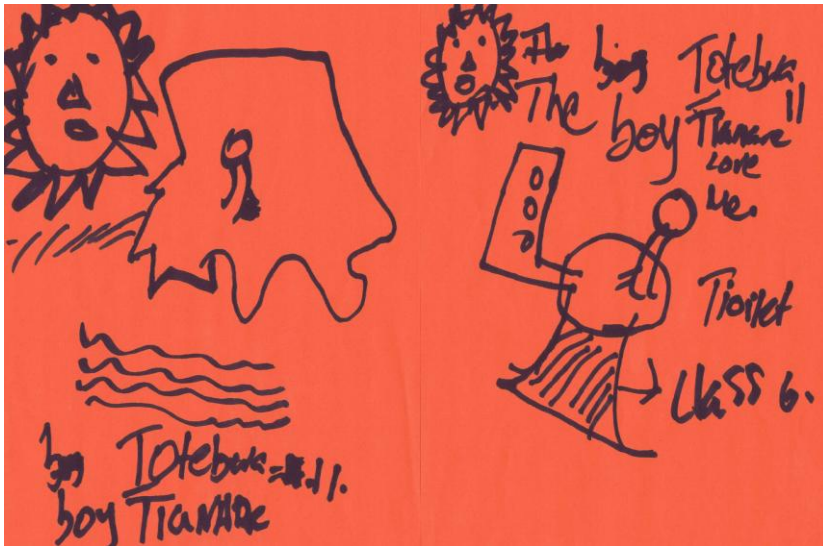
South Tarawa faces what has been called a ‘perfect storm’: a combination of overcrowding, rapid urbanization, lack of access to sanitation and safe water supplies, and overstretched social services. Aging sewerage systems, widespread open defecation, and leaking septic tanks and pit latrines have contributed to contamination of scarce freshwater resources and pollution of the surrounding marine environment.

The effects of poor sanitation on the health of South Tarawa’s 50,000 residents are apparent. Kiribati has one of the highest rates of infant mortality in the Pacific, which can in part be attributed to infantile diarrhea. Health officials report an average of 2-3 outbreaks of acute diarrheal disease in South Tarawa every year, which is directly linked to inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene. In 2009, almost 1 in 4 people were affected by diarrhoea or dysentery to the degree that required a visit to a health clinic.



*Children swimming next to causeway connecting Bairiki and Betio islets*

In partnership with Australia, which has provided co-financing coordinated through PRIF, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is working with the Government of Kiribati and other development partners to address South Tarawa’s sanitation challenge. With an associated investment plan, *Preparing the Tarawa Sanitation Improvement Project* is supporting the development of the South Tarawa Water Supply and Sanitation Roadmap for the period 2011-2030 to identify short- and medium-term investments for improving access to sanitation and water supply services. As part of this work, land use and zoning plans for South Tarawa are being prepared to assist the government in planning for the provision of adequate infrastructure services over the next 20 years.



Children drawing their existing and 'dream' toilets as part of community engagement exercise (photo courtesy of P.Dutton)

Since improving infrastructure alone will not address the current sanitation situation in South Tarawa, ADB's technical assistance activities are also supporting the development of a comprehensive community engagement and awareness plan. Running from April 2011 until March 2012, these activities intend to promote improved hygiene practices, such as hand washing, and discourage open defecation. A capacity strengthening program for the Ministry of Public Works and Utilities and Public Utilities Board is also being designed to support improved planning and delivery of water and sanitation services.

These activities are consistent with Kiribati's National Water Resources and National Sanitation Policies, and directly support the implementation of the Water, Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Program for South Tarawa, a whole-of-sector approach that was developed by the Government of Kiribati with the assistance of PIAC in 2010.

With further PRIF support, ADB plans to assist the Government of Kiribati to undertake priority investments in sanitation infrastructure, and to implement community engagement and awareness, and capacity building programs over an 8-year period beginning in 2012. Activities will be coordinated closely with the World Bank's Kiribati Adaptation Project III and New Zealand's Urban Development Program, which are also providing assistance to Kiribati's water, sanitation and solid waste management sector.