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March 2014



THE TRANSFORMATION OF SPREP
A Story of Organisational Renewal

Located in Apia, on the tranquil island nation of Samoa, is SPREP's four hectare campus. Almost befitting its very purpose, the campus occupies a good portion of the former government forest research centre in which a myriad of beautiful trees, plants, small creatures and a staff of 90 people co-exist. Taking a leadership and coordination role of the South Pacific region's environmental agenda, SPREP's mandate is clear. It exists 'to promote cooperation in the Pacific region and provide assistance in order to protect and improve its environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations'.

In partnership with its 21 Pacific island country and territory members and five metropolitan country members that span the Pacific region and the globe, SPREP provides knowledge and practical support in the areas of climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem management, waste management and pollution control, and environmental monitoring and governance. These are the four strategic pillars that also serve as parameters for SPREP's renewed focus on remaining relevant and essential to the environmental needs of a region whose waters cover one third of the earth's surface.

Established in 1972, SPREP has helped its member nations to define and implement sustainable development objectives and the protection of the vital resources and fragile ecosystems which support peoples' livelihoods. With a population of over 10.5 million in the Pacific region, SPREP understands that its role is critical in determining the future of the Pacific region. And its role and impact on the Pacific region has been significant, as citizens from its member nations become increasingly aware of how their daily lives are so intricately tied to the environment. Whether it be SPREP partnering with the Catholic Women's League in Fiji to teach local women to better manage household waste, or helping mobilize 2000 volunteers in Noumea to clean various sites, or training 20 waste champions in Fakaofo to support a recycling program between Samoa and Tokelau – SPREP is focused on turning policies and research into practical solutions for real people who matter most.

The scope of this case study will be focused primarily on the strategies and tactics that SPREP employed to improve its performance against key indicators, as driven by a concerted change management programme that followed two independent reviews in 2008 and 2009.

A Call to Action

Following his appointment as SPREP's Director General in October 2009, David Sheppard met with key stakeholders and, through his induction period, learned that some member nations were at a critical point of determining whether SPREP had become detached from its original mandate, thereby rendering its leadership role to be far less influential than what others expected and needed from the region's collective voice on environmental matters. In fact, one major stakeholder used the analogy of a dying patient to express his sentiment about SPREP to Sheppard – "do not resuscitate," a theme that resonated with others. And while the sentiment about SPREP varied, ranging from the positive to some tangible negatives, most stakeholders encouraged Sheppard to leverage his tenure as a 'call to action' in order to address a number of immediate and pressing problems that, left unaddressed, would certainly result in the organisation's demise.

Sheppard reflects back on his early days and the mandate he and Deputy Director General Kosi Latu, who had been appointed in 2008, received from the SPREP Council.

> *"Our mandate was not to 'make the patient comfortable pending death,' as some had advised, but rather our mandate was to take an aggressive stance to bring the patient back from what had become a slow and painful demise."*

On top of what Sheppard was learning through his own induction, two key reports within the previous year verified what the Secretariat and its member nations had already come to know as their disappointing reality – SPREP was losing its way, key stakeholders were questioning its relevance, and other organisations were poised to compete for limited funding and potentially provide a better service. The first report, presented in June 2008, came from an Independent Corporate Review (ICR) of SPREP conducted earlier that year. The second report by the European Commission, while narrower in scope and less consequential than the ICR, followed a year later in July 2009. When viewed in tandem and given the clear overlap on some important factors, both reports together painted a comprehensive picture that warranted a call to action.

While the independent assessments shed light on a number of positive attributes about SPREP, it was clear that the overall health of the organisation was deteriorating and, without immediate intervention, was in jeopardy of crashing on the downside of a once-successful growth curve. Most of Sheppard's and Latu's more immediate and pressing challenges are summarized briefly in the key findings from both reports.

2008 Independent Corporate Review (ICR)

The 2008 Independent Corporate Review was commissioned by SPREP as a requirement of the funding agreement in place then by AusAID. The ICR represented the wide range of views and opinions of stakeholders such as government officials, representatives of local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community groups, donor agencies and organisations, and regional and international inter-governmental agencies and institutions. As illustrated in Appendix 8, the ICR identified many issues and problems, both internal and external to SPREP.

The gist of the ICR was that SPREP was an organisation showing some lead indicators that, if left unaddressed or ignored, would eventually ensure it became irrelevant and its mission terminated. The review focused on the entirety of SPREP, both the secretariat [external facing in relation to its governance and member nations] and the organisation [a comprehensive assessment of internal structure, policies, culture and leadership].

Summed up in seven key findings, the ICR concluded that SPREP:

1. lacked proactivity and agility to meet members' needs, thereby eroding its credibility
2. lacked clarity around strategic and core priorities
3. was imbalanced between core and project funding and budgets, creating possible conflicts of interest when determining priorities
4. was not proving to be a strong partner, either with member nations or other key stakeholders, who were looking to SPREP to play a key coordination role in the region

> *"While many considered it was a highly relevant, productive and effective organisation in its early years, many of SPREP's stakeholders now see it as largely irrelevant and marginalized. They have lost confidence in SPREP".*
>
> ICR OF SPREP 2008, page 5

5. lacked rigorous internal policies and procedures, which led to inefficient and ineffective delivery of services, poor recruitment and staffing practices, and lack of accountability
6. would have to explore the 'mentality' that resulted in little or no effort to address a number of these same concerns that were raised nearly a decade earlier in a previous independent review
7. would ultimately have to determine whether it has both the will and capability to reset the organisational culture, which was clearly driving self-destructive attitudes and behaviours

2009 European Commission Institutional Assessment

The EC assessment, conducted by Ernst & Young against internationally accepted standards and benchmarks, was initiated by SPREP to determine suitability of its own financial systems in its contracts with the EU, the objective being to achieve EU standards. The assessment was based around four pillars, as shown here with a brief summation of their findings.

2009 EC Assessment

	1 Accounting Standards	2 Auditing Standards	3 Internal Control Standards	4 Procurement Standards
FINDING	Does not fully comply	Partially complies	Partially complies	Partially complies
GRADE	Needs improvement	Needs improvement	Ineffective	Needs improvement
	While there were numerous issues with SPREP's accounting, two stood out as prominent. The first was that SPREP was using various financial methods to prepare their financial statements. The second was that 'SPREP does not present a clear and complete set of financial statements.'	Similar to the accounting standards, there were two key issues that stood out among many. Firstly, other than an overall high level assessment, there were no internal audits performed to assess SPREP's compliance with control framework requirements. The second issue was that there were no performance audits performed to assess efficiency and effectiveness of SPREP activities.	Four issues were highlighted under this pillar. The first was that there was no specific code of conduct for the staff of SPREP. The second was that SPREP did not have a formal staff development framework in place. The third aspect highlighted the lack of discipline and rigour around long-term strategic planning. The fourth issue was SPREP having no formal state of internal control, preventing an annual declaration on its assessment of internal control.	Three issues were highlighted under this pillar. The first was in regards to the Financial Procedures Manual not mentioning what documents have to be published and/or provided with the invitation to tender. The second issue focused on inadequate guidelines for the evaluation process, resulting in no obligation on the part of vendors to report outcomes in writing. The third issue was that there were no measures to ensure equal and impartial treatment of the candidates.

Of the 50 evaluation criteria applicable to SPREP in the EC report, over one-third of SPREP's processes, policies or systems were deemed 'ineffective' or 'needing improvement.' In many cases, no formal processes or procedures existed, which meant there were regular inconsistencies in monitoring and tracking performance, which prevented senior management from being able to confidently aggregate results from specific projects to SPREP's overall performance.

> *"SPREP receives a large portion of its funds in non-US$ currency, yet reports in US$ and has multiple payments to be made in US$. When the receiving fund currency drops in value against the US$, this will cause problems to SPREP's cash position".*
>
> EC REPORT 2009, page 6

A major concern in the report was the poor rigour around financial accounting and auditing practices, which was reflecting itself in a growing lack of confidence among donors and member nations. This quote from the EC report is but one example of the myriad of practices that warranted immediate attention.

Out of Adversity Comes Opportunity

Although the ICR and EC findings validated what Sheppard and Latu had come to realize was a rather sobering starting point in their leadership of SPREP, there were still reasons to be optimistic about the organisation's potential. The EC report had noted that, even prior to Sheppard joining, Latu and the management team had already started to address a number of issues raised in the ICR, noting that 'a climate of reform has entered SPREP.' And even while trust and confidence among member nations had been eroding, most still believed that SPREP's mandate was highly relevant and there should be an independent regional environmental agency providing an oversight and coordination role. Not many had given up entirely on SPREP being able to improve both its capability and capacity to deliver more effective outcomes. And even though the collective impact of the ICR and EC reports were a major blow to SPREP's psyche and reputation, there were important exceptions noted by the reviewers, especially related to the technical and policy-relevant advice and other assistance provided by staff within the Secretariat.

SPREP was also still noteworthy for both the calibre of its professional staff and the quality of its deliverables, although lack of capacity had begun to take its toll in recent years. In the ICR, It was noted that 'SPREP has served as a valuable forum for regional issues, collective action and responses, and exchange of views and expertise. There are instances where SPREP has had a significant impact on the environment of the Pacific. The preparation of the National Environmental Management Strategies laid the foundation for follow up initiatives, the beneficial impacts of which are still being realized today.'

Those glimmers of hope were founded in some of the successes rooted in SPREP's conception and its early years. An important question facing Sheppard and Latu was, how could an organisation go from being so highly regarded to one where some of its members were now questioning its relevance? An even more important question facing SPREP's senior management team was how to rebuild SPREP, from the inside out, and do so quickly enough to stem the tide of negative sentiment that was beginning to tarnish the organisation's credibility. This was truly a step-up opportunity which would require, above all else, strong leadership.

SPREP'S Conception and Early Years

A Signal to the Global Community



With the Pacific Ocean covering nearly one third of the earth's surface, the importance of the environment to the Pacific region and its people is of critical importance. For all island nations, the quality of life is intricately connected to the long-term viability of natural resources and ecosystems that are as voluminous as they are diverse. There is a growing recognition of the critical need to link the development aspirations of island nations with protection and management of the vital resources and fragile ecosystems central to peoples' livelihoods and wellbeing. As a result, regional stakeholders began to acknowledge that, given the reality of economic expansion in the Pacific region, governments and various environmental entities would have to take the path of protection and sustainable development of the environment.

Pacific nations understood economies of scale with respect to oversight and coordination. It didn't make sense that individual island nations would go it alone, therefore generating keen interest in an organisation that could not only play a caretaking role, but could also assume a leadership role within the Pacific region. From the days of its conception in 1969 all the way through to today, SPREP would be bigger than just an organisation. For some, SPREP would be the Pacific region's tangible signal to the global community that it had formally entered both the public and scientific dialogue about the environment and sustainable development. SPREP would give the Pacific region real clout and influence on the global stage pertinent to the environment.

SPREP's Formative Years

The origins of SPREP can be traced back to 1969 during a regional conference on the conservation of nature. It was at that conference that a recommendation was made to recruit a 'regional ecological advisor' who turned out to be Arthur Dahl, a coral reef expert. Dahl represented a 'team of one' as the original face of what would become the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme in 1982, eventually renamed the 'Secretariat' in 2004 to reflect its broader membership of nations beyond the South Pacific. Originally based in Noumea, SPREP relocated to Samoa in 1992, where its formal charter was ratified in 1993. SPREP facilities are based on a four hectare campus in Apia that was part of the former government research centre, a seemingly fitting location for the staff of 90 who devote their livelihoods to environmental awareness.

SPREP has lived an interesting existence of an attractive orphan who has had a few adoptive parents make a play for it over the years. Originally housed within the South Pacific Commission's (SPC) headquarters, some presumed SPREP fell under SPC's broad mission and, in fact, was considered one of its core programs. However, SPREP initially reported to a group of four 'parents*,' including the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), both which expressed interest in folding SPREP under their respective wings. It was in June 1993, after SPREP had moved to Samoa the previous year, that sponsoring nations hammered out a clear mandate in what became the SPREP Agreement, establishing it as an autonomous regional organisation.

The possibility of adoption surfaced again in 2008, this time with SPREP as the potential parent, when a proposal was floated that would have SPREP absorb major program elements from the South Pacific Applied GeoScience Commission (SOPAC). That merger would eventually stall, but exemplified the ongoing dilemma that SPREP has faced since its conception in 1969. It would have to be crystal clear about its vision and mandate, especially with other key global and regional competitors who were vying for limited funding and recognition. More importantly, SPREP would have to learn to manage itself with a keener eye toward putting the right 'hardware and software' in place, which included everything from strategic planning to building the right organisational structure and capabilities to deliver on its promises to the member nations.

SPREP'S Mandate and Vision

SPREP has tried to hold firm to its mandate as defined in the 1993 SPREP Agreement: "To promote cooperation in the Pacific region and provide assistance in order to protect and improve its environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations".

As it pertains to the Pacific environment, SPREP's vision is to "sustain our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures".

While SPREP's mandate and vision have remained untouched on paper, there have been mixed reviews as to how they played out in practical application around SPREP's brand and reputation in the formative years. Words in the mandate such as 'promote cooperation' and 'provide assistance' and 'ensure sustainable development' can lead to broad and often unrealistic expectations on the part of sponsors and member nations regarding the leadership role they envisioned SPREP would play. In its first decade after signing the SPREP Agreement in 1993, SPREP was not particularly adept at proactively defining the issues, nor creating the forums or facilitating networking among member nations.

** The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was the fourth.*

The caretaking and coordinating component of its mandate was not turning out to be one of SPREP's core competencies and that would eventually catch up with them a few years later, as summarised in the 2008 ICR report. Member nations found themselves having to pursue SPREP, rather than the other way around, for information or to learn more about what it offered. Rather than positioning itself as open and transparent, sponsors and member nations found SPREP to be closed, guarded and difficult to partner with. This was neither good footing nor smart strategy for an organisation that relies completely on making itself compelling to current and potential donors.

As funding is SPREP's lifeline, major projects with the most dollars under its two major programs of work – Island Ecosystems and Pacific Futures – would often cause SPREP to lose sight of its mandate to play a macro level integrative role in setting the regional environmental agenda. Some believed that SPREP's mandate as a regional coordinator was compromised at times by the allure of funders who were more interested in promoting their own agendas.

The potential for conflict of interest scenarios [local agendas v. regional mandate] meant that SPREP would have to keep its charter at the forefront of decisions when seeking potential funding sponsors. Having more stringent criteria for determining funding sources also meant that SPREP would be able to test the strength and ongoing relevance of its mandate as the years passed by. In a resounding way, the SPREP mandate has held strong for over two decades – its member nations steadfast behind the idea that an umbrella organisation that gives the region clout on the global stage regarding key environmental issues is still very much needed.

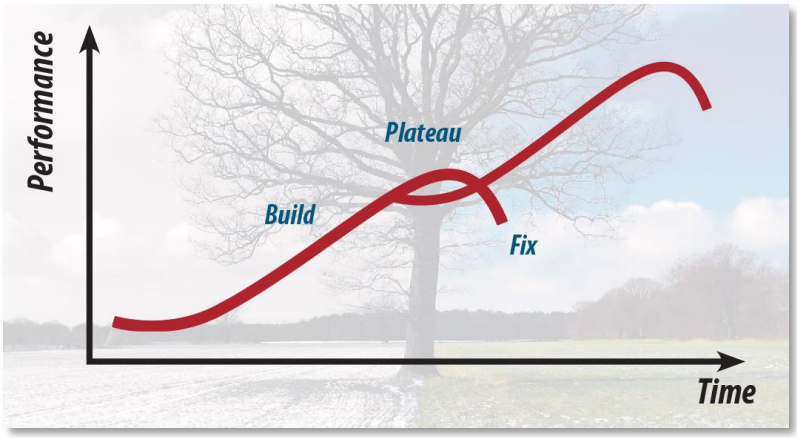
In its formative years and into the second decade, SPREP built an internal infrastructure and an organisational culture began to take shape and have impact on the way the SPREP teams related to each other, and to the outside world. Prior to Sheppard joining, the core infrastructure of SPREP was built around the two aforementioned major programs of work. The problem was that the organisation operated as two programs rather than as one entity, which meant there were all kinds of issues associated with mixed messages from senior managers, inadequate resourcing, ongoing capacity issues and an unsophisticated set of operating policies and procedures.

Latu recalls from his first year, prior to Sheppard's appointment, when he was serving as Acting Director General:

> *"There was little sense of one SPREP team where everyone was focused on doing well for the greater good of the organisation. People's loyalties were often driven by the biggest projects, or which division they worked for. It was real clear that we had some work to do to bring the whole team together."*

The Warning Signs on the Sigmoid Curve

The sigmoid curve is an algebraic function that demonstrates how growth curves, left unchecked with no adjustments, will eventually plateau and decline. The ICR and EC findings validated the premise behind the sigmoid curve, reflecting SPREP's lack of proactivity in changing its strategic and operational model to keep pace with the ever increasing focus on regional and global environmental issues. When SPREP was conceived as a one-man operation in 1972, the environment was not a priority in the region's psyche. Environmental issues had clearly become more front-and-centre over the past two decades. And while SPREP had historically played a positive role in raising environmental awareness in and beyond the region, it was starting to fall behind in its leadership role.



The growing focus on environmental issues in the Pacific meant that SPREP would need to update and be more definitive about its strategic priorities, which would help delineate what was in scope and, more importantly, what didn't fit within SPREP's mandate. There had already been signs of scope and mission creep, as evidenced by some projects that were clearly outside the parameters of either of the two major programs of work. SPREP would have to be more definitive about the major environmental levers that would drive sustainability in the region.

One sure sign of an organisation's performance beginning to plateau, and a precursor to decline, is a decreased focus on what it considers to be its core customer base. In SPREP's case, the customer base was a combination of member nations and funding sponsors. As indicated earlier, SPREP was not positioning itself proactively in a partnership model with current and potential funders. On top of this, member nations – in particular, Australia and New Zealand – were beginning to signal to SPREP their dissatisfaction, which included the real and worrisome prospect of reduced funding.

Proactivity is tantamount to leadership. That includes defining the agenda, educating key stakeholders at the highest level, building networks which enhance trust, and coordinating actions. SPREP was viewed by many as falling short on these indicators, particularly the ability to build strong and lasting partnerships. And while SPREP was still attracting major funding, which speaks to the paradox of the sigmoid curve, it soon became clear that SPREP would need to seriously review and update its overall operating model, both with respect to the Secretariat as well as the SPREP organisation, or face the inevitability of decline.

Time to Resuscitate

In October 2009, as Sheppard was appointed as SPREP's fourth Director General, he and Latu knew they would have to disrupt many aspects of what had become 'status quo' in order to revitalize the organisation. In order to reposition SPREP for sustained relevance and growth, they would have to embark on a change journey that would require more deliberate choices about how the organisation would operate. The next chapter in SPREP's 40 year history was about to begin.

Transforming SPREP

Jumping to a New Curve

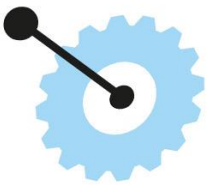
In the realm of change management, it's truly a perplexing paradox that an organisation should be worried when growth seems to be unstoppable. The premise of the sigmoid curve is that the biggest impediment to sustained growth, left unchecked, are the assumptions that were rooted to the original plans, in SPREP's case, dating back a few decades. While its mandate still held firm, the ICR and EC reports – coupled with the sense from those on the ground who believed that SPREP had become complacent – were firm evidence that growth was stalling. There were enough lead and lag indicators signalling it was time to drive some major change if SPREP was to survive. Long-standing management team member, Stuart Chape (who leads Biodiversity & Ecosystem Management and authored a 2006 White Paper entitled *The SPREP Challenge*) noted in an interview:

> *"The organisation was moribund leading up to and especially in the aftermath of the internal corporate review in 2006 and the ICR. We knew we couldn't continue to grow in that same mind set and we needed to shake things up and get ourselves reconnected and refocused in consultation with our member countries."*

Two scenarios are likely to motivate change. One is the prototypical 'burning platform' where people are repelled away from a current reality that is clearly working against the organisation's best interests. While the lead and lag indicators were beginning to signal concerns, arguably SPREP was still doing well by its most important metric – continued funding support. On the sigmoid curve, the most dangerous place to be is at a plateau point, where performance begins to oscillate, but delay factors mask the smoke from the burning platform. In SPREP's case, the ICR and EC reports were the first real '*got everybody's attention*' indicators of smoke.

The other scenario that motivates change is to create a compelling vision for why the organisation should do things differently. To create a compelling vision, SPREP would have to commit sufficient time and focus on the future, where everyone is expected to think about how to keep pace, remain nimble, externally focused and proactive, so as to avoid a burning platform. This was Sheppard's leadership challenge in 2009; he would have to build a strong management team to lead SPREP from a dangerous point of plateau and stagnation on one curve, and start a purposeful change management program that would position the organisation for sustained growth on a new curve.

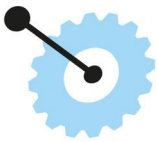
The Six Levers of Change



As he restructured from two major programs to four divisions and a corporate function, Sheppard assembled a senior management team that grew from four to the current nine and has been intact since 2011. Together, the team has been responsible for gaining significant traction and progress on six major levers of change, depicted below, followed by specifics associated with each.

Change Lever 1	Increase the focus on Pacific Island members and deliver practical benefits
Change Lever 2	Build stronger partnerships
Change Lever 3	Overhaul processes and systems

Change Lever 4	Greater reliance on rigorous empirically based information
Change Lever 5	Sharper focus on what we deliver
Change Lever 6	Build an engaging organisational culture that delivers



Lever 1: Increase the focus on Pacific Island members and deliver practical benefits

The Issues

Among the issues identified as troublesome by member nations, the sense that SPREP's focus had begun to creep beyond its stated mandate was most obvious through its increased participation at international forums, which strained its resources and diluted its attention on regional priorities. For an organisation where internal staff travel to member nations to work on projects, broadening their travel beyond the Pacific region meant that more staff were away for longer periods of time, further straining available resources to take on new work.

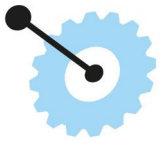
With competitors swirling about, SPREP also had to change the perception that it was 'all talk and little action.' Complaints from member nations had begun to load on the theme of SPREP being unable to deliver practical benefits, preferring instead to play a legislative or policy role. Through their teams, the senior management team was going to have to reshape the public and potential funders' perceptions to remove any doubt that SPREP knew how to get its hands dirty around practical work that had tangible benefits.

Actions Taken and Results

By more than doubling its financial and technical support to Pacific Island countries and territories since 2009, SPREP has helped bolster the capability of these nations to manage solid and hazardous waste, address marine pollution, protect important species and ecosystems, and respond to the ever-growing impact of climate change.

As a direct consequence of this concerted effort, SPREP has begun to build a track record where its purpose and delivery have evolved to being recognized for practical 'on the ground' projects, examples being a number of well-received initiatives that were part of the 2012 Clean Pacific Campaign. Being able to provide funders with more accurate accounting of their investments also helped reshape SPREP's reputation as having more balanced capability between policy and implementation.

In an effort to aggregate its attention and resources to regional priorities, SPREP has purposefully shifted back from an international focus, as manifested by its more selective focus on international environment conventions [with a sharper focus on two conventions, dealing with biodiversity (CBD) and Climate Change (UNFCCC)]. And working smarter to amplify its impact, SPREP has also begun to leverage UN resources in the Pacific region, including having some Convention Secretariats (Ramsar and CMS) base their staff at SPREP.



Lever 2: Build stronger partnerships

The Issues

The void in strong partnerships with key stakeholders had tangible negative consequences on the viability of SPREP as an organisation. These aspects included member nations and donors questioning SPREP's relevance, not viewing it as being proactive enough in building strong networks and helping to shape the regional debate and positioning on issues. There was a sense that SPREP was too passive; that it would simply wait for member nations to come to them with a list of their priorities. This perpetuated a reactive relationship which only worsened with growing concerns over poor performance, lack of accountability and poor alignment. With numerous parallel initiatives being undertaken by both SPREP and its members, SPREP was hard pressed to position itself as 'strategic' from a leadership vantage. Its efforts appeared to be more frenetic around activities, as opposed to a well-coordinated plan that would engender greater confidence in SPREP as a proactive partner.

Actions Taken and Results

There has been a transformation in key stakeholders' views on the quality of partnership and collaboration with them. SPREP is now perceived as being more proactive in helping member nations identify their needs and priorities, as well as coordinating and sharing information among them.

The agenda of the annual SPREP meeting is now shaped in conjunction with member nations, giving them a greater voice in defining more substantive issues. Through frequent updates, smarter use of their website and with Sheppard having visited 24 of the 26 member nations, SPREP is far more attuned to and communicative with its members.

Specifically, stakeholders speak to three attributes that have made the biggest difference in the quality of their partnerships with SPREP: (1) willingness to explore and listen to member nations' needs; (2) providing a framework that helps aggregate those specific needs into regional priorities; and (3) providing more tangible hands-on support and counsel to support member nations' efforts to implement various environmental programs. Helene Jacot Des Combes, Lecturer at the University of the South Pacific, commenting on SPREP becoming a Regional Implementing Entity under the Adaptation Fund of the UNFCCC, captured the essence of a renewed spirit of partnership:

> *"This achievement is a good move for SPREP because it establishes and grows deeper partnerships with national governments and other local agencies. This allows SPREP to provide direct support [funding] to countries in the Pacific region who may have limited financial and administrative capacity. It has also made SPREP more transparent and accountable in what they do, how they function, and emphasised the need for tangible outcomes for their members."*

The true test of SPREP re-establishing a sense of relevance and credibility as a strong partner came through increased funding and sponsorship from member nations. Its budget increased from USD8 million in 2008 to USD19 million in 2013. The increasing budget has been allocated to practical programmes in Pacific Island countries and territories, not toward building up a 'SPREP empire' in Samoa. In fact, salary costs as a percentage of the total SPREP budget dropped, from 45% in 2008 to 27% in 2013, reflecting the fact that extra funding for SPREP is going directly to programmes in Pacific member countries.

Additionally, the governments of New Zealand and Australia have both committed to multi-year funding for SPREP, reflective of their increased confidence, thereby enabling the organisation to plan and prioritise further ahead.



Lever 3: Overhaul processes and systems

The Issues

It was clear from the 2008 and 2009 independent assessments that SPREP would have to bring many of its internal processes in line with best practice or regulatory benchmarks, most pertinent to financial accounting and reporting, audits to ensure compliance and to mitigate risks, procurement practices, and people policies focused on attracting and retaining the best talent to work for SPREP.

Not only did the lack of rigour around what would be considered the basic 'hardware' of sound management practices hamper SPREP's ability to deliver, it also put the organisation at serious risk of complaints from employees and suppliers who rightfully might question whether objective criteria were in place to help guide important decisions in their respective relationships with SPREP.

With over one-third of essential processes and systems deemed inadequate or non-existent, SPREP could no longer maintain a 'head in the sand' approach to these ongoing internal problems, especially after it was noted in the ICR that many of the recommendations from an independent review in 2000 had gone largely ignored. And to no one's surprise, many of the issues from that review had grown larger in the interim period.

Actions Taken and Results

While the process of developing and implementing internal policies and procedures is still ongoing, what SPREP has achieved to date has been substantial and a credit to the senior management team and SPREP as a wider organisation.

The people at SPREP have been able to, for all intents and purposes, start from a blank sheet and develop a number of strong, robust, and internationally recognised policies and procedures. This has allowed SPREP to become compliant in many assessment areas that were either non-compliant and/or simply did not exist. These range from the full adoption of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) since the financial statements of 2010, the development of SPREP's organisational values and code of conduct (2010), and a performance development system (2010).

Not only has the development of the internal policies and procedures framework allowed for more stringent standards by which to monitor progress, they have also meant that SPREP has become more transparent (e.g., with funding), more timely with regular publications, and have lifted the standard for accountability in managing its brand and reputation with key stakeholders. Significantly SPREP was able to pass the EU Audit in 2011, after failing it previously in 2009, and also gain recognition as a Regional Implementing Entity under the Adaptation Fund in 2013, making it one of only three such agencies in the world.



Lever 4: Greater reliance on rigorous empirically based information

The Issues

'Junk in, junk out' is the expression often used to describe the relationship between input and output. For organisations like SPREP, perceived credibility is everything, as it goes to the very core of its expertise and whether or not stakeholders are willing to be influenced by that expertise. Without perceived credibility, the fundamental building block of trust is weak, and this has direct bearing on whether business partners [e.g., members and donors] are willing to invest. That's just sound business judgment for organisations in both the public and private sectors.

SPREP's strategic priorities are very high profile and often politically loaded, which begs a certain degree of scrutiny over the substance that sits under the advocacy. Examples would be SPREP's positioning on adaptation programs or advice on climate change. Needless to say, the consequences of bad data around these and other major issues is potentially crippling for SPREP, as all it takes is one high visibility project that is founded on weak substance and the organisation's brand could go into a serious spiral.

Actions Taken and Results

SPREP regards this lever as 'needed to play' in a strategic sense – it's imperative that they're proactive around high quality standards and rigour, both in the research that SPREP does internally and in their reliance upon external research partners. This is even more imperative when there are competitors angling for any particular vulnerability. So the senior management team has been proactive and explicit about greater reliance on rigorous, empirically-based information and have established and sustained strong partnerships with universities in New Zealand, Australia and the U.S. [to include the University of Maryland, Griffith University in Queensland and the University of the South Pacific in Fiji].



Lever 5: Sharper focus on what we deliver

The Issues

Pertinent to 'what we do,' one of the main issues with SPREP was around their strategic plan and core priorities. In particular, the ICR noted that '…SPREP cannot do everything that falls under the environmental umbrella, particularly given its limited resources.' This acknowledgement is important because it has led SPREP, as an organisation, to try and provide a wide range of services that have not been necessary to the member nations. Moreover, it has meant that SPREP's offerings had drifted away from being aligned with an overall strategic programme. As a result, the ability to prioritise based on the needs of members was limited. Rather, the needs and priorities were often driven by the sense of urgency from donors or around particular projects.

As previously mentioned, in addition to the lack of strategic clarity impacting on SPREP's operational delivery, it also meant that member nations had to invest time and resources to gain an understanding of what SPREP does. SPREP appeared to be at a loss for managing its external brand and reputation.

Actions Taken and Results

Based upon the most extensive consultation process with members and partners in SPREP's history, the SPREP Strategic plan was adopted by the 2010 SPREP Meeting. A number of themes emerged around the future needs of members, and the role SPREP could play in that process.

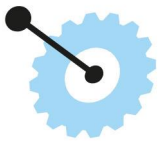
As outlined in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, four of those key themes included:

1. SPREP needs to increase its delivery of national level activities
2. SPREP needs to continue to work at the regional level but also ensure that this is clearly where SPREP can add value
3. SPREP needs to increase its attention on waste management and pollution, while continuing to focus on the core areas of climate change and biodiversity
4. The Secretariat needs to increase its practical engagement with Members

Based upon the consultative process in 2010, four strategic priorities emerged. They are:

1. Climate Change
2. Biodiversity and Ecosystems Management
3. Waste Management and Pollution Control
4. Environmental Monitoring and Governance

By developing these four strategic priorities, SPREP has been able to mitigate many of the issues which were plaguing the organisation. While there remains the tendency to always try to do more for member nations, the four strategic priorities have made it clear that SPREP cannot do everything that falls under the environment umbrella, and that having a clearer focus has allowed the organisation to provide higher quality and more directly targeted assistance where needed.



Lever 6: Build an engaging organisational culture that delivers

The Issues

The 2009 staff satisfaction survey highlighted that 21% of SPREP staff rated their morale as "high" or "very high". Naturally, the low staff morale and level of satisfaction within SPREP would influence and, in some cases, be influenced by the culture that underpins the organisation. One of the key drivers of low employee engagement scores is poor leadership and management practices. Because of the firm lines that had been drawn between the two major work programs, the organisation was operating in functional silos. This perpetuated a sense of patch protection and rivalry cultures with people inclined to identify themselves around particular projects rather than identifying with or looking after the greater good of SPREP as a whole. And because of the aforementioned problems with internal policies and procedures, this led to inconsistencies in management decisions.

While espousing openness, the SPREP culture felt closed with clear walls and boundaries between divisions. Transparency between management and staff was limited, key issues from staff were not addressed, and there was a strong feeling that leaders were not leading.

Actions Taken and Results

With the new management team on board and quickly calibrating around the major levers of the change program – which included a concerted effort to keep staff more informed and working on solutions together – there were some rather immediate and direct positive benefits. One of the positive aspects relates to a more inclusive working approach between management and staff. For example, both the 2012 and 2013 staff satisfaction surveys highlight that transparency has been a key factor that has enabled better communication between staff and management. As a result, staff feel more engaged and listened to when voicing opinions and making recommendations.

The 2013 staff satisfaction survey highlighted that 61% of SPREP staff rated their morale as "high" or "very high", compared with the 21% noted in 2009. A focus on attracting and retaining the highest calibre of staff also resulted in staff retention rates increasing from 76% in 2008 to 93% in 2012.

The work on building sustainable policies and procedures is also having a direct influence on the culture of SPREP. Improvements in staff remuneration and benefits, organisational values and a code of conduct, and opportunities to learn and develop have been key aspects to this concerted effort to lift SPREP's reputation as an employer of choice. SPREP is now, for the first time in its history, invested in training and capacity building of SPREP staff. And the efforts are making a positive difference. For example, employees now are required to complete a Performance Development Plan (PDP), which enables them to set development goals and specify plans that help them work toward these goals. In what staff believe is a tangible commitment to their development, this process has engendered a deeper engagement with and connection to the organisation, as exemplified in this quote from Michael Donoghue, who is the Threatened and Migratory Species Adviser:

"I feel an honour to wear the badge and to carry the shield of SPREP. Whether it's working here in the office or abroad, I feel a sense of pride"

All these aspects have resulted in a working environment which is more positive, constructive and a source of energy and pride. No longer is it solely the intrinsic motivation – the feel good factor from doing a good job – that ties people to SPREP, even when they weren't necessarily engaged in a positive way with the larger organisation. Over the past five years, there has been a heightened sense of pride, defined by some as 'spirit,' that SPREP employees feel about belonging to an organisation that others respect. In addition, the fact that staff can see where SPREP is going, now guided by its strategic goals, allows them to align and explain their own work against the bigger picture. This is called 'line of sight', which many change experts consider to be the strongest predictor of staff engagement.



In 2013, all staff participated in a two day Advance program which brought divisional teams together under the theme of 'One Va'a, One Team.' [*'Va'a' is the Samoan word for 'canoe'*.] The objective of the Advance was to help break down silos and enhance knowledge of all the important work going on across the organisation. In 2014, all staff participated in a follow up to the Advance, this time tasked with generating solutions to organisation-wide problems and challenges. In addition, SPREP also introduced a two day leadership and management training program for team leaders and individual contributors in key influence roles. With the senior management team also focused on beefing up its capability to be a more effective leadership team, SPREP is taking a direct and active stance to define the right leadership practices to help deliver its strategic aims.

The New Curve: Challenges and Opportunities

Traversing to a new sigmoid curve (and leaving one that is about to plateau) is not an easy leadership challenge to pull off. As indicated earlier, either a burning platform or a compelling vision will motivate an organisation to move forward, though the latter scenario is far more likely to invigorate and energise employees which, in turn, translates into positive experiences for the 'customer' – in SPREP's case, member nations and donors.

A compelling vision has three attributes. It is directional, which means there is a clear sense of where the organisation is headed, including the roads that we know will get us there and, more importantly, being very clear about the roads that will not. Secondly, a compelling vision is aspirational. There is a sense of stretch associated with moving to a new curve, which will require the organisation to modify both its thinking and its skills in order to meet a new set of challenges that come with growth. The third attribute of a compelling vision is its ability to inspire – that sense that the organisation's very purpose leads those affiliated with it feeling a sense of pride and a greater sense of ownership for success.

While SPREP had the early signals of smoke rising from a platform that was beginning to burn, it is clear that the attributes of a compelling vision put the real 'fire in the belly' of an organisation that was eager to re-establish itself as imperative to the Pacific region's development. By delineating the path forward through its four strategic priorities, SPREP's vision had a clear sense of direction, which meant the organisation could be clearer about 'what it is' and 'what it isn't.' There has certainly been aspiration associated with SPREP's journey to a new curve over the past five years. The organisation has had to improve the way it partners, as well as rebrand itself as being able to deliver practical 'on the ground' solutions that make a tangible difference to peoples' lives. And the inspirational component is clear, not only from employee engagement scores that reflect a far greater pride in the work they do, but as exemplified by this quote from Exsley Taloiburi, Climate Change Officer with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Fiji, who spoke of SPREP's impact:

> *"For people in the Pacific region, they are the ones directly facing the brunt of changes in the climate. They need support to implement projects that will have a direct impact at the grass roots level. And that's what SPREP has been doing. They have seen the needs of their members and have provided the necessary support. I've seen how they are changing both the environment and peoples' lives for the better. It's a good feeling to see how SPREP is making a difference."*

On a new growth curve, the biggest challenge for a leadership team is to ensure that the new mental models (who we are) and performance standards (how we deliver) are embedded deep into the organisation's psyche. To use the analogy of an iceberg, transformative solutions usually occur at the base of the iceberg rather than at the tip. That means that true transformation comes about when the organisation changes the way it thinks about itself. As SPREP's senior management team considers the organisation's future, they understand that their biggest challenge associated with sustained relevance and growth is complacency. This means not taking success for granted, but rather being particularly vigilant for signs that both the internal team and external benefactors are ready for further stretch. And even as Sheppard anticipates his own departure in 2015, he reflected on the organisation's capability to sustain momentum:

> *"SPREP's change management process has significantly improved our support and services to our Pacific island members over the last five years. However, the environmental challenges facing our region are immense and growing. A strong, dynamic and effective SPREP is essential for addressing these challenges in our region."*

Even as growth on the new sigmoid curve kicks in, the senior management team will want to keep their collective eye on five factors that will directly correlate with SPREP's ability to sustain momentum. Those five factors are highlighted below.

1. Continued focus on SPREP's strategic alignment and brand

The Challenge

One major advantage of being clear about strategy is that it enables an organisation to make choices. Those choices, of course, are aligned with the overall mandate, which in SPREP's case, has been broad enough in the past to allow for a myriad of projects under the umbrella of 'environmental awareness and protection.' The four strategic pillars have brought far greater clarity about the business SPREP is in. And yet, the SPREP team has to make sure it remains vigilant in a proactive sense around trends and patterns that suggest the environmental agenda is slowly but surely shifting, e.g., akin to the gradual and then accelerated momentum that climate change experienced over the past 15 years.

An ongoing challenge for SPREP is continuing to be clear about who it is and what its core business activities are. There is a momentum from the recent surge in funding that is obvious to both internal and external stakeholders, expressed by some as an alluring temptation to go for as much as SPREP possibly can in its current growth spurt. One stakeholder referred to this as 'trying to be all things for everyone.' Some are concerned that SPREP not fall prey to the temptation of chasing project funding and lose sight of its four strategic filters and the discipline required to make choices.

Growth, while seen as the major measure of success in organisations, is also [paradoxically] a potential disabler. It's the dilemma associated with an organisation growing so fast that it crumbles under its own weight because it has not built sufficient capacity and, in some cases, the right capability to support that growth. SPREP will have to pace its growth with an eye on an infrastructure that is agile and adaptive. This is especially important with long-term projects, where there are inherent delays or 'ebb and flow' factors built into planning and resource requirements. This was pointed out by Bert Tolhurst, Head of Climate Change and Human Rights of the British High Commission in Fiji, who appropriately signalled a potential risk to SPREP's reputation, again going to the issue of perceived credibility:

> *"The truth will be in the pudding. It will be two to three years down the track where donors will see if their money is adding value or not. There is a lag between funding and the outcomes of projects. This will be the real testing time."*

SPREP's Opportunity

With the extensive consultation of its members, donors and staff, SPREP has the opportunity to realign with the 'core business' which can set the foundations for a clear strategic focus and concentration on key organisational priorities. By keeping a concerted focus on the core business, as defined by the strategic pillars, SPREP keeps itself positioned to make clear choices and priorities. Moreover, those strategic choices enable SPREP to do more forward planning around the structures, systems and processes that will support its growth. Having the necessary 'hardware and software' in place to support growth will ensure that SPREP can deliver on its promises, a precursor to continued funding.

2. Adaptable and responsive to members' and donors' changing needs

The Challenge

This challenge is related to the first in the sense that structure typically follows strategy. In this case, 'structure' is not just confined to organisational charts and reporting lines, but also takes into consideration whether SPREP's mental models for 'how' it delivers its services and programs are adaptable to the changing needs of its members and donors.

For example, in relation to the growth levers to build stronger partnerships and deliver more tangible outcomes, an important question arises as to whether a centralised campus in Samoa enables SPREP to be as attuned and responsive to constraints and opportunities that may be more apparent from a local perspective. And if trust is built through both the quality and quantity of a relationship, has SPREP been innovative enough in how it positions itself, literally, with members and donors within and beyond the Pacific region?

SPREP's Opportunity

Increasing the visibility of SPREP both locally at the grass roots level and at more of a high level would not only highlight a wide array of achievements, but would also draw attention to environmental protection and conservation throughout the Pacific – the reason SPREP exists.

In addition to communicating SPREP's role within the Pacific, there is a real desire from member nations to have SPREP branch out and build its presence throughout the Pacific by having staff positioned in different locations. In fact, SPREP appointed its first ever position outside of headquarters, with the appointment of a staff member in the Republic of the Marshall Islands in February 2014. This signals even more opportunity for SPREP to push through the traditional paradigm of 'bricks and mortar' and debate whether all staff have to be based in Samoa. Member nations say there is a void associated with people flying in and out around projects. There is a growing perception that having some 'boots on the ground' would help build both the presence and the quality of the relationships being sought by SPREP's members.

3. Reinforce a 'One SPREP' mentality and service model

The Challenge

While SPREP has made progress on its objective to present a more united face externally, it is truly a work in progress. There are linkages between people and functions, but there are very few meaningful interactions between divisions, although these are increasing. And while staff acknowledge that the nature of peoples' jobs, areas of work, and geographical constraints do create barriers between the respective divisions, these are often used as convenient excuses to justify not having to find more effective ways of working together internally. It falls into the 'not urgent' therefore 'not a priority' category.

As a result, concerns have been raised such as duplication of efforts, being focused on peoples' particular patches, and not utilising resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. Moreover, the current situation has the potential to weigh negatively on SPREP's ability to present a unified face to the external world, particularly in situations where the different divisions may each be in separate discussions with the same member country.

In addition to inter-departmental coordination, there are issues pertaining to the coordination between member nations, key stakeholders, and external agencies. This is having an impact on the ability for SPREP, as an organisation, to create respecting and trustful partners. While one reason for this is due to the contract based employment format at SPREP, it does not negate the fact that members and external stakeholders also share this sentiment.

In addition to relational issues, working in an effective and efficient manner is also an area of concern. For example there are several CROP agencies working on different facets of climate change to which there are many areas of overlapping work. As a result, the potential of missing important information and findings that others may have found, some of which may be of use by SPREP, is a concern.

SPREP's Opportunity

As evident in engagement surveys and interviews, SPREP staff have expressed an eagerness to work more collaboratively. There is a realisation that SPREP is now in a position to challenge itself (as an organisation) to look at different and broader ways of working together. This being said, making this happen in real time will require more conscious effort on the part of SPREP teams. An example some have suggested of working differently/effectively is that projects could be designed as a group [of departments] from the outset where resources and expertise may be pooled and presented to donors as 'one SPREP.' This would not only strengthen the design and delivery of SPREP programmes in Pacific Island countries and territories more effectively, but would also present SPREP as more cohesive and united as an organisation.

When trying to instil new mind sets and behaviours, one strategy that often gets quick traction is to build those expectations into the performance management and appraisal system, whereby staff are formally recognised, rewarded and promoted on their ability to demonstrate, in this case, a 'One SPREP' mentality. The senior management team may want to consider taking a stronger stance on the importance of internal collaboration, including their own ability to model these behaviours for their teams.

4. Attract, develop and retain high calibre staff

The Challenge

SPREP has undertaken significant effort to instil basic processes that will enable it to attract, develop and retain top level talent who can deliver high quality work. The satisfaction surveys illustrate how morale and staff perceptions of SPREP have improved steadily and significantly since 2009, largely attributable to increased focus on the basic elements of good employee relations. However, there are structural issues and underlying currents which should concern SPREP. One example is the effect of fixed term contracts. While people understand that term contracts are the standard, they nevertheless don't consider them optimal, as their impact can cause long-term problems, e.g., continuity of service issues, organisational memory loss, the inability to sustain momentum around organisational change, family relocation angst, and retention of talented people who are looking for more job security. The type of contracts also raise questions surrounding the rules and regulations pertaining to how expats, Pacific Islanders, and locals are viewed and the variation in benefits depending on which category they belong to. There is a perception, which translates into a recurrent theme on the annual survey, where local staff feel less valued, often inferred from disparity in compensation and recognition.

In addition to internal staff concerns, the short-term nature of the employee contract arrangements also has an impact on the quality of relationships between staff, member nations, and external partners. For example, as there is a continual turnover of SPREP staff, this has also meant that there is also a frequent handover of projects (no matter how far along a project may be). As a result, projects are often disrupted as effort is re-directed toward building new relationships, trust, and respect with incoming SPREP employees.

Following the clarity provided by the four strategic priorities, SPREP must be very deliberate about the organisational culture it believes best enables those strategies to be implemented. The 'One SPREP' mentality must be underpinned by a set of behaviours that exemplify strong leadership, particularly those that reinforce a heightened focus on collaboration, building strong teams, and working together to help SPREP become a high performing organisation.

SPREP's Opportunity

SPREP has made significant progress in defining a pathway for talented staff to build their skills and capability, both as leaders and technical experts, and to feel they are part of an organisation that values their contribution. SPREP must continue down this path with vigour, particularly since their external brand is so directly tied to the experiences that members and donors have with their staff. It will be important for the senior management team to continue to emphasise that leadership is expected at all levels in the organisation, which heightens the accountability that everyone should assume when it comes to stronger performance.

While there is momentum in the people arena, SPREP should continue to consolidate and implement its 'people' policies in areas such as recruitment, SPREP's code of conduct, and employee development plans. The ongoing effort and emphasis on everyone being accountable for the future of SPREP has, and will, continue to unify the organisation towards a common vision.

Having such a set of structured policies and procedures will also help with staff concerns regarding peoples' performance issues, organisational memory loss, organisational change issues, professional development opportunities, and retention issues. Taking a proactive approach would also signal to member nations and other stakeholders that SPREP is listening to them, and that there is an ongoing focus on building long-term relationships.

5. Continue to deliver tangible outcomes

The Challenge

Member nations and external stakeholders are largely pleased with the support and services SPREP offers, e.g., more frequent updates and reporting, conferences, and hosting forums. This being said, members have had concerns with some of their own constituents around tangible outcomes and how SPREP can move from not only providing technical analysis and reporting, to also providing tangible services. This is a paradox for SPREP in that what has led to their success could potentially constrain its growth if not carefully managed. That is, members and external stakeholders see the expertise and professionalism in what SPREP currently offers, but now they want and expect more. The change in expectation could, in the future, also become an issue with donors as they may start to find the gap between member expectations and SPREP's deliverables widening. They could then start to question whether their funds are meeting the changing needs of members.

SPREP's Opportunity

Over the years, SPREP has built a positive and credible reputation for the support and technical assistance they've delivered to their members. While SPREP has made inroads into focusing on delivering tangible outcomes, the organisation should continue down this path with even more vigour, especially with potential competitors ready to capitalise on any vulnerabilities. Initiatives such as the development of regional and national waste management strategies (which included pilot programmes within local communities), and the four year, eight million Euro PacWaste Project, are the type of examples which demonstrate how SPREP can follow through from technical analysis and reporting, to providing the much needed tangible support for their members. This is an exciting opportunity because it will not only require SPREP to engage with members and donors in new and different ways, but will also demonstrate to donors that SPREP's long-term viability is rooted in its ability to deliver.

What Other Organisations Can Learn From SPREP's Experience

Treat your business model as 'dynamic' rather than 'static'

There is a pervasive tendency in organisations to sign off on a strategic plan and then treat that plan as a static document rather than as a dynamic organism that, more times than not, will deviate from plan. An organisation's business model is only as robust as the assumptions that sit under it. It's imperative that leadership teams consider it part of their agenda to track and test the strength of those assumptions. In its earlier years, SPREP took its mandate and even its role as a given, not positioning itself as flexible and responsive in relation to its members' evolving needs. That inevitably sets the stage for an organisation's performance to decline, which then requires it to have to rebound, which is a different energy than when it is building. Over the past half-decade, SPREP has become far more adept at tracking itself as a dynamic entity. Committing itself to seeking more feedback and input, genuinely interested in trying to be a more proactive partner, SPREP now understands that it has to actively keep pace with a fast changing world.

Know where you are on the sigmoid curve

It is important that every organisation understand the ramifications of its current position on the sigmoid curve. At the beginning of a growth curve, much work has to be done to make sure the new ways of thinking and performing are clear, directly tied to the vision, and are explicitly reinforced. When growth takes traction and the new ways of thinking and performing start to become 'business as usual,' it will be important to reinforce a mind-set of continuous improvement, where the organisation is adept at knowing which aspects of its operational model need to be updated in response to external feedback and shifting requirements. At the plateau point – the most dangerous point on the curve – complacency will begin to overtake the organisation, even before lag indicators verify that performance has begun to dip, and a slow decline will gradually increase with momentum, which will then put the organisation into a reactive 'scramble back' mode, not a healthy place from which to initiate change. In 2009, SPREP was at this precarious plateau point on its own growth curve. Fortunately it was able to shake itself awake, evolve out from the fog of complacency, and turn its performance around. Being able to focus on a strong and compelling vision for the future certainly helped.

Be clear about strategic intent and drive everything else from those aims

An organisation's strategic intent signals the road map it intends to use to navigate toward its vision. Leading with strategic intent is important because it enables the organisation to focus, plan and prioritise in relation to the journey ahead. There's also the added benefit of that focus, which is increased confidence on the part of staff and external partners that the organisation is clear about what it is, and what it is not. Well into its third decade, SPREP lacked strategic intent or focus because it's guiding mandate, historically, had been broad enough to foster 'mission or scope creep,' where priorities began to be driven more by the allure of specific high value projects rather than using strategic filters to guide those decisions. With the four strategic priorities in place at SPREP since 2010, the organisation is now more focused and deliberate in its choices, which means it has also been more proactive by adapting its structure, operating model and planning processes to support those choices.

Engaged and committed staff are your best ambassadors

There is an abundance of research that demonstrates the correlation between strong leadership, engaged employees, and delighted customers. In business literature, this correlation is referred to as the 'service profit value chain.' That value chain is especially pertinent to organisations like SPREP, where every interaction with a staff member really does count toward, or against, the public's perception of the brand. SPREP invested in that value chain with a more conscious effort to educate the staff, beyond their own teams, about the organisation's broader mandate and all the important work that stems from their efforts. The senior management team, by focusing on its own development in order to become a stronger team, sent a tangible message to their teams that development never ends. It makes it much easier for team members to stretch themselves professionally when their managers set the example. There is no coincidence that SPREP's improved staff engagement scores correlated with noticeable improvements in satisfaction scores from its members and, ultimately, a significant increase in funding. As the SPREP story exemplifies so well, the value chain really does add value to the organisation's bottom line.

Partnership is about two-way engagement

When members and donors began to question SPREP's relevance over a decade ago, the organisation was, perhaps for the first time, confronting the painful reality and lesson that one-way engagement in a partnership is not sustainable. SPREP would no longer be able to presume what its members' needs were, devoid of any systematic tools to enable better communication. Moving explicitly to a two-way engagement model and thereby positioning itself as willing to learn more about local requirements and constraints, SPREP began to re-shape their own mental model of what constituted a strong partnership. This included actively seeking feedback, not only in relation to the annual SPREP meeting, but also as a formal component of the Director General's appraisal. The most effective partnerships are those that have a strong foundation of trust. As SPREP learned, those elements that define trust – credibility, reliability, familiarity and transparency – have all been instrumental in the willingness of members and donors to reciprocate with the same, thereby strengthening key relationships. Through increased funding, some of which is now multi-year, SPREP's partners are signalling their strong approval of the way the organisation now chooses to engage with them.

Strong leadership is imperative

Leading organisational change requires forethought, vision and fortitude in order to be able to push through the malaise and natural resistance encountered when asking people to think or perform differently. Again, SPREP's challenge was building from a point on the curve where performance had begun to plateau, although it was harder for some to realise or accept that the organisation might be on the verge of decline. In this scenario, a strong vision is essential – it's the ability to keep the organisation focused on the benefits associated with, in SPREP's case, a more consultative leadership approach, internally and externally. In 2010, the senior management team began to spend more time in discussions with their teams about the need to change – building a case for change – that was largely predicated upon SPREP making itself more compelling, both as an employer and partner. This required a coordinated 'one team' effort, where staff and partners were asked to help shape that future.

Internally, this new way of incorporating the employee's voice into future-focused solutions required managers to move away from autocratic leadership, which some frankly preferred, and move toward a more inclusive model which takes longer to embed, but leads to higher levels of ownership and accountability for results. SPREP has begun to solidify a leadership philosophy and set of practices based on the principles of a learning organisation.

In a learning organisation, leadership is distributed rather than contained, which creates a different energy and set of expectations. Leaders are required to be more facilitative in the interest of getting peoples' hearts and minds more fully engaged around owning the vision. This approach also helps build a stronger and more sustainable culture, which means the change is not tied to one specific leader, but rather is distributed on the belief that leadership is less to do with rank and hierarchy and more to do with mind-set.

Lui Bell, the Personification of SPREP

While it is useful to have an awareness of SPREP's background, formative years, and the significant role it has played within the Pacific region, to really understand the 'heart and soul' of SPREP is key when trying to gain an appreciation for what makes the organisation resonate with so many of its stakeholders. There is no better personification of what SPREP stands for than the late Lui Bell, who passed away in November 2012 after joining the team seven years earlier as a Marine Species Officer. Those who were fortunate to know Lui could easily draw some clear parallels between his values and beliefs, and those of the organisation to which he devoted so much of his time and energy.



The first parallel between Lui and SPREP is the deep commitment to conservation. After joining SPREP in 2005, Lui progressed to the role of Marine Species Advisor, championing the road to conservation with his passion. Numerous and notable projects such as his work on turtle conservation, the development and implementation of multiple regional marine species action plans, and the ability to establish and maintain partnerships with key stakeholders were undertaken with an intrinsic passion for protecting the environment. Much like Lui, the team at SPREP has placed the conservation and protection of the environment as its foremost priority.

The second parallel between Lui and SPREP is around personality. The vibrancy of Lui's ability to relate to others, and willingness to help 'anyone and everyone' underpins much of what SPREP tries to achieve on a day-to-day basis. Among his many contributions, Lui is remembered for his assistance to poor people in Samoa, as well as helping Tongans who were stranded in Samoa to find ways to return home. SPREP too has followed his example by touching lives at a personal level, the numerous waste management programmes that came to life under the 2012 Clean Pacific Campaign indicative of such. For those who were fortunate enough to work with Lui, he provided the SPREP team a living example of service, dedication, professionalism and team spirit.

The third parallel between Lui and SPREP is the rich and enduring legacy imparted throughout the Pacific. In addition to Lui's vast achievements while alive, a scholarship in his remembrance was launched by SPREP in 2013. The Lui Bell Post-Graduate Scholarship for Marine Species Conservation was created as a tribute to Lui's tireless efforts to make a difference in others' lives. The scholarship is a gift to others that goes right to the heart of both Lui and those working at SPREP. That is, while providing direct assistance, it is critical to also impart the tools and knowledge necessary so that others become self-sufficient. In addition to providing a vehicle for students to further develop their education in the 'environmental' sphere, it also reinforces Lui's resounding challenge that "whoever you are, no matter your situation in life, you can and must play a role to conserve and protect your marine species and to respect them.'

Appendices

- Appendix 1: SPREP Staff and External Stakeholders Interviewed for Case Study
- Appendix 2: SPREP Timeline
- Appendix 3: SPREP Member Nations
- Appendix 4: SPREP Organisational structure
- Appendix 5: Income and Expenditure Statement
- Appendix 6: SPREP Organisational Values & Code of Conduct
- Appendix 7: SPREP Success Factors and Achievements
- Appendix 8: 2008 ICR Findings
- Appendix 9: 2013 Staff Satisfaction Survey

Key resources for the case study

- EU audit reports, 2008 & 2011
- 2008 Independent Corporate Review of SPREP
- SMT, internal staff and external stakeholder interviews*
- The SPREP Challenge 2006 document
- SPREP and SOPAC 2009 strategic assessment
- 2011-2015 strategic plans
- Annual reports
- Various financial reports
- Various media articles
- Various internal communications/reports
- Staff satisfaction surveys 2009-2013
- DG's SPREP assessments and updates 2010-2012
- DG's review of 2013 and priorities for 2014

* *interviewees are listed in Appendix 1*

Appendix 1:
SPREP Staff and External Stakeholders Interviewed for Case Study

INTERNAL	*EXTERNAL*
Tim Carruthers - Coastal & Marine Adviser **Stuart Chape -** Director Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management **Jope Davetanivalu -** Planning and Capacity Development Adviser **Seema Deo -** Communications & Outreach Adviser **Michael Donoghue -** Threatened and Migratory Species Adviser **Easter Galuvao -** Biodiversity Adviser **Mark Graham -** Environmental Monitoring & Reporting Adviser **David Haynes -** Director Waste Management and Pollution Control **Neville Koop -** Meteorology/Climatology Adviser (On secondment from the Commonwealth Secretariat) **Kosi Latu -** Deputy Director General **Simeamativa Leota-Vaai -** Human Resources Adviser **David Moverley -** Invasive Species Adviser **Taito Nakalevu -** Project Manager - Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change Project **Sefanaia Nawadra -** Director Environmental Monitoring and Governance **Netatua Pelesikoti -** Director Climate Change **Clark Peteru -** Legal Adviser **Selesitina Reti -** Internal Auditor **Esther Richards -** Solid Waste Management Adviser **Espen Ronneberg -** Climate Change Adviser **David Sheppard -** Director General **Anthony Talouli -** Pollution Adviser **Alofa Tuuau -** Finance & Administration Adviser **Sili'a Kilepoa-Ualesi -** Project Manager - Pacific Islands Greenhouse Gas Abatement through Renewable Energy Project **Miraneta Williams-Hazelman -** Information Resources Centre & Archives Manager	**Peter Adams** Leadership Mentor Pacific Leadership Programme **Jason Brenden** Regional Environment Officer for the Pacific US Embassy Suva (Fiji) **Helene Jacot Des Combes** Lecturer Pacific Center for Environment and Sustainable Development University of the South Pacific **Kay Kalim Kumaras** Deputy Secretary Sustainable Environment Programs Wing Department of Environment and Conservation Papua New Guinea **Vitolio Lui -** Former Deputy Director General **John Morley** Rep from Australian High Commission, Samoa **Tasha Shon** Assistant CEO Political/Protocol Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade **Jovilisi Suveinakama** General Manager (National Public Service) Office of the Council for the Ongoing Government of Tokelau **Sue Taei** Acting Executive Director Conservation International, Samoa **Exsley Taloiburi** Climate Change Coordinator Officer Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji **Bert Tolhurst** Head of Climate Change & Human Rights, British High Commission, Fiji **Andrew Yatilman** Director, Office of Environment & Emergency Management Federated States of Micronesia

Appendix 2: SPREP Timeline

1969	From a recommendation at a regional conference on nature conservation, an ecological advisor named Arthur Dahl was hired and was the initial face of SPREP
1972	UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm; established UNEP Regional Seas Programme; SPREP started with a small program in SPC headquarters in Noumea
1970s	Challenges around deciding whether SPREP would fold into other organisations, or evolve its own mandate to warrant legitimate autonomy
1980s	Regional Ecosystems Survey of the South Pacific Area (1980); Conference on the Human Environment in the South Pacific (1982); SPREP gains momentum to become an independent organisation, eventually ratified in 1990 at the South Pacific Conference
1992	SPREP arrives in Samoa
1993	SPREP becomes an inter-governmental agency with the signing of the SPREP agreement on June 16
1996	Samoan government leased 10 acres of land with the lease being "as long as SPREP remains in Samoa"
2000	SPREP, with assistance from donors, constructed and moved into new premises in Vailima
2004	SPREP adopted the 2005 to 2009 action plan. 3 focus areas: 1. Natural resource management, 2. Pollution prevention, 3. Climate change, climate variability, sea level rise and stratospheric ozone depletion
2005	Previously named 'South Pacific Regional Environment Programme,' the word 'South' was replaced with 'Secretariat'
2008	Independent Corporate Review of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
2009	European Commission Europeaid Cooperation Office Final Report
2009 29 Sep	Samoan Tsunami
2010	Four strategic priorities for 2011-2015 that SPREP agreed to by members in the 2010 planning process: 1. Climate Change, 2. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management, 3. Waste Management and Pollution Control, 4. Environmental Monitoring and Governance
2011	European Commission Europeaid Cooperation Office Final Report
2014	Celebration of SPREP's 40th anniversary SPREP has approximately 90 Staff

Appendix 3: SPREP Member Nations


American Samoa


Australia


Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands


Cook Islands


Federated States of Micronesia


Fiji


France


French Polynesia


Guam


Kiribati


Marshall Islands


Nauru


New Caledonia


New Zealand


Niue


Palau


Papua New Guinea


Samoa


Solomon Islands


Tokelau


Tonga


Tuvalu

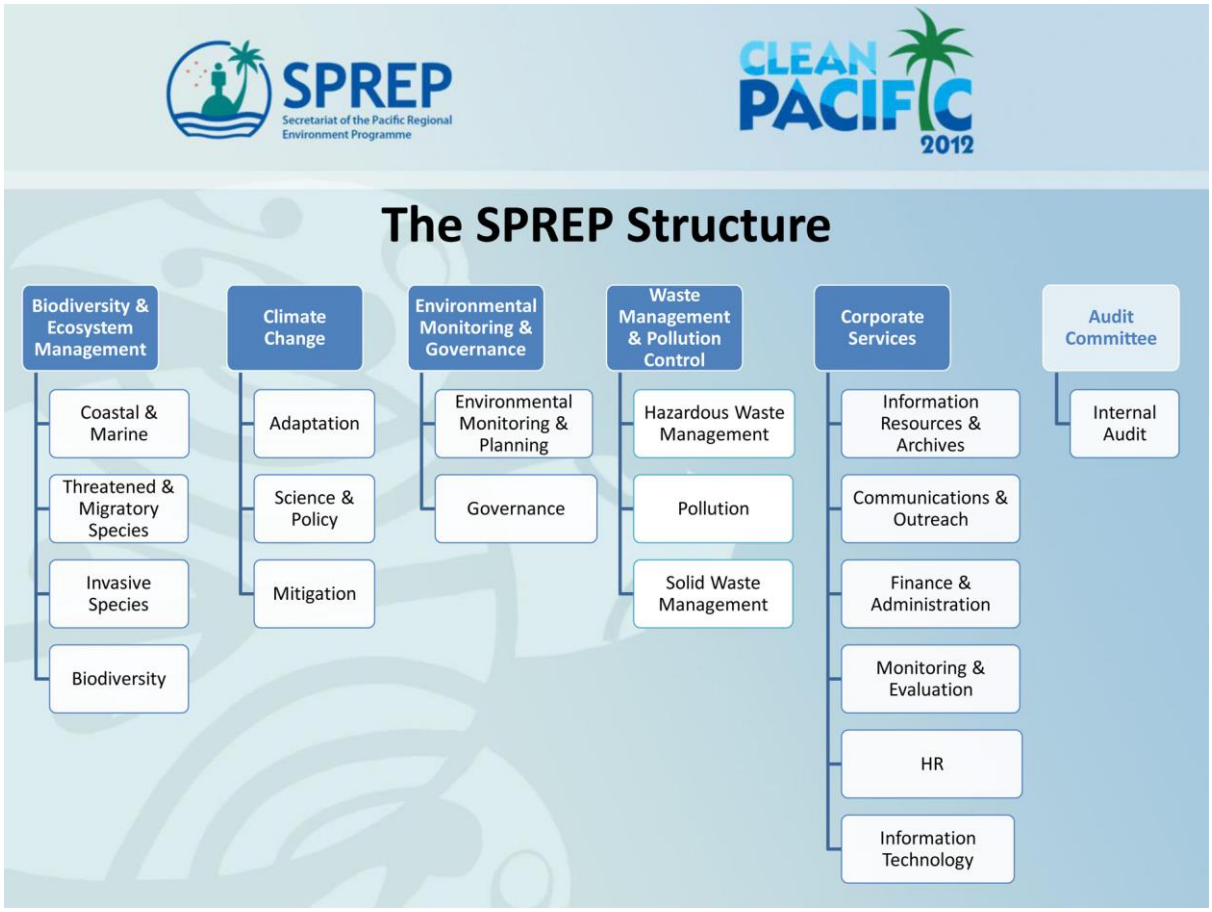

United Kingdom


United States of America


Vanuatu


Wallis and Futuna

Appendix 4: SPREP Organisational Structure

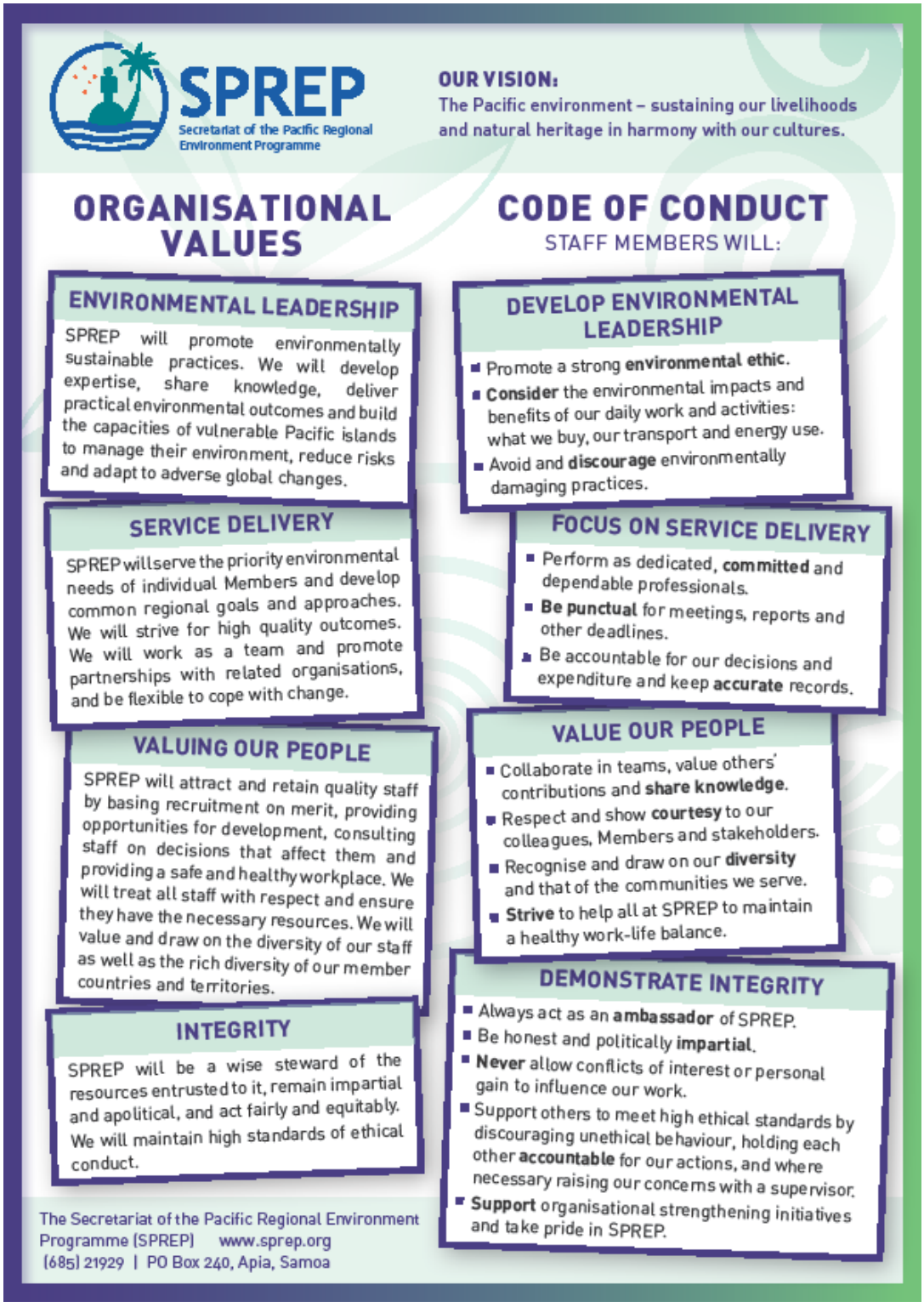


Appendix 5: Income and Expenditure Statement

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Income						
Member Contributions	917,496	947,510	1,143,826	939,739	880,258	880,734
Programme Management Charge	455,451	500,489	641,249	646,112	755,601	846,214
Programme/donor funds income	4,296,497	5,162,564	7,862,024	6,268,886	8,797,378	10,844,229
Interest	362,875	293,348	269,362			
Exchange gain	17,138	10,743	122,542			
Other Donor funds income				296,126	254,450	625,570
Amortisation of deferred income				112,986	108,234	87,575
Other income	35,364	103,258	261,145	161,768	96,416	147,874
TOTAL INCOME	**6,084,821**	**7,017,912**	**10,300,148**	**8,425,617**	**10,892,337**	**13,432,196**
Expenditure						
Programme Implementation	4,709,749	5,028,125	6,745,136			
Executive Management & Corporate Support	1,962,694	2,409,010	2,350,213	2,361,473	2,637,884	2,843,869
Island Ecosystem Programme				2,158,750	2,169,977	
Pacific Futures Programme				4,110,136	6,627,401	
Climate Change						5,741,736
Biodiversity & Ecosystem Management						3,200,767
Waste Management & Pollution Control						1,009,673
Environment Monitoring & Governance						892,053
Depreciation expense				174,114	155,818	134,093
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**6,672,443**	**7,437,135**	**9,095,349**	**8,804,473**	**11,591,080**	**13,822,191**
Profit/Loss	***(587,622)***	***(419,223)***	***1,204,799***	***(378,856)***	***(698,743)***	***(389,995)***

Source: SPREP annual reports

Appendix 6: SPREP Organisational Values & Code of Conduct



SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

OUR VISION:
The Pacific environment – sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.

ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP
SPREP will promote environmentally sustainable practices. We will develop expertise, share knowledge, deliver practical environmental outcomes and build the capacities of vulnerable Pacific islands to manage their environment, reduce risks and adapt to adverse global changes.

SERVICE DELIVERY
SPREP will serve the priority environmental needs of individual Members and develop common regional goals and approaches. We will strive for high quality outcomes. We will work as a team and promote partnerships with related organisations, and be flexible to cope with change.

VALUING OUR PEOPLE
SPREP will attract and retain quality staff by basing recruitment on merit, providing opportunities for development, consulting staff on decisions that affect them and providing a safe and healthy workplace. We will treat all staff with respect and ensure they have the necessary resources. We will value and draw on the diversity of our staff as well as the rich diversity of our member countries and territories.

INTEGRITY
SPREP will be a wise steward of the resources entrusted to it, remain impartial and apolitical, and act fairly and equitably. We will maintain high standards of ethical conduct.

CODE OF CONDUCT
STAFF MEMBERS WILL:

DEVELOP ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP
- Promote a strong **environmental ethic**.
- **Consider** the environmental impacts and benefits of our daily work and activities: what we buy, our transport and energy use.
- Avoid and **discourage** environmentally damaging practices.

FOCUS ON SERVICE DELIVERY
- Perform as dedicated, **committed** and dependable professionals.
- **Be punctual** for meetings, reports and other deadlines.
- Be accountable for our decisions and expenditure and keep **accurate** records.

VALUE OUR PEOPLE
- Collaborate in teams, value others' contributions and **share knowledge**.
- Respect and show **courtesy** to our colleagues, Members and stakeholders.
- Recognise and draw on our **diversity** and that of the communities we serve.
- **Strive** to help all at SPREP to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

DEMONSTRATE INTEGRITY
- Always act as an **ambassador** of SPREP.
- Be honest and politically **impartial**.
- **Never** allow conflicts of interest or personal gain to influence our work.
- Support others to meet high ethical standards by discouraging unethical behaviour, holding each other **accountable** for our actions, and where necessary raising our concerns with a supervisor.
- **Support** organisational strengthening initiatives and take pride in SPREP.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) www.sprep.org
(685) 21929 | PO Box 240, Apia, Samoa

Appendix 7: SPREP Success Factors and Achievements

The Pacific Islands Roundtable for Nature Conservation	A forum that brings together all organisations and donors active in nature conservation in the PICTs to help implement the Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands region.
Coordination of regional campaigns	To raise public awareness and increase action for the protection and sustainable management of the environment and natural resources. The Year of Action Against Waste, the Year of the Sea Turtle and the Year of the Coral Reef campaigns all involved Governments, NGOs, communities and the private sector,
Providing technical assistance	To PICs leading up to and during international meetings and negotiations, in particular the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).
Development of regional and national waste management strategies	Coupled with piloted local solutions such as composting organic and pig wastes, user-pay rubbish collection, local landfill management and disposal.
Support for the preparation National Environment Management Strategies (NEMS)	The catalyst for the development of national plans and strategies at a time when PICTs were just recognizing the need for immediate action to enable the sustainable management of their own and the region's environment and natural resources.
Initiating and coordinating a joint visit	With other regional and United Nations agencies to Tokelau to learn and to discuss their priorities and concerns and to plan how the visiting agencies and organisations might be able to help.
Building capacity of PICTs to better manage their environment and natural resources.	Although there are common constraints, such as small staff numbers, high staff turnover and limited resources, there is general agreement that PICT capacity has been greatly enhanced through the activities of SPREP.
Raising the awareness of political leaders	The importance of the environment and assisted in accessing funding for environment and conservation activities in PICTs.
Writing proposals	To GEF and other donor organisations.
The Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN)	A novel initiative in the Pacific region. PILN was established in 2005 when The Nature Conservancy joined with SPREP, the Cooperative Island Initiative on Invasive Species, IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group, National Park of American Samoa, CI, the Palau Office of Environmental Response and Coordination, USP, US Forest Service, and SPC. PILN's activities and agenda are determined by the individual and shared needs of the participants.

Source: 2008 ICR report and SPREP website

Appendix 8: 2008 ICR Findings

1 SPREP's lack of proactivity and agility has eroded its credibility	SPREP was no "longer the force it used to be in the international arena. It is no longer as effective at placing Pacific issues on the international agenda and is neither well prepared nor adequately informed of global issues to be able to provide much service to PICTs at international forums."
2 Lack of clarity around strategic and core priorities	SPREP's broad purpose and mandate have not provided a clear direction or focus for the Secretariat. Consequently, this has led to the Secretariat trying to provide a very comprehensive range of services, despite very limited funding or direction from its Members. Satisfaction levels from member nations has been steadily declining.
3 Inadequate and imbalanced funding	An inadequate core budget has been a perennial problem for SPREP. The result is a disconnect between core-funded programmes and donor-funded projects, which has created an over-reliance on donor funding not only to support, but also to at times direct, the work of the Secretariat.
4 Poor partnerships with member nations, key stakeholders	The Secretariat should play the key regional coordination role in relation to issues such as climate change and biodiversity, considering both the technical and political dimensions. To do so it needs to build stronger partnerships and operate to a tight core business model that is largely funded by its members.
5 Need for robust internal policies and procedures	There are inadequate policies and procedures in place at the Secretariat to ensure that core activities are planned and implemented as efficiently or effectively as possible. Greater transparency and accountability are required in processes such as recruitment, contract renewal, and funding/support decisions.
6 Not acting on previous ICR recommendations	The last ICR of SPREP in 2000 identified a range of issues that remain highly relevant and, in most cases, have not been addressed by the organisation. Careful thought and action are therefore needed if the current review is to bring about the improvements in SPREP that many stakeholders are asking for.
7 SPREP's organisational culture in trouble	Three key attributes of culture were captured: (1) disturbingly low morale of Secretariat staff, with adverse impacts on their productivity; (2) problems with staff recruitment and retention; and (3) an overall decline in the quality and relevance of services provide d to SPREP's member countries and territories.

Appendix 9: 2013 Staff Satisfaction Survey

Response Rate

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Internationally recruited staff	94%	79%	40%	42%	45%
Locally recruited staff	80%	57%	47%	48%	50%
Total	89%	71%	53%	52%	47%

Snapshot of Staff Morale

Overall	2013		2012		2011		2010		2009	
		Totals		Totals		Totals		Totals		Totals
Very High	18%	61%	20%	54%	13%	55%	37%	74%	13%	21%
High	43%		34%		42%		37%		8%	
Satisfactory		34%		36%		32%		22%		50%
Low	3%	5%	5%	5%	7%	13%	0%	0%	17%	30%
Very Low	2%		0%		6%		0%		13%	
No Comment		0%		5%		0%		4%		0%

Reasons for low satisfaction

- Poor leadership and management by whole management team
- No career path and not enough training for support stuff
- No joint strategic and operational meetings between programmes – operating in silos
- Key staff issues not addressed
- Inconsistencies in management decisions and interpretations of policies
- No staff motivation

Appendix 9: 2013 Staff Satisfaction Survey (cont'd)

Biggest Changes in Staff Satisfaction (for years 2009 and 2013)



low or very low satisfaction 2008	*high or very high satisfaction in 2013*
– No staff motivation – Key staff issues not addressed	✓ Happy, positive, friendly, professional staff, good teamwork ✓ Positive/Enabling work environment ✓ Values staff input/takes pride in its work/self-worth-advice taken by others
– No career path and not enough training for support staff	✓ Challenging and exciting work, opportunities to learn and develop, ability to contribute/influence direction
– Inconsistencies in management decisions and interpretations of policies – Long meetings with no concrete decisions – Poor leadership and management by whole management team – No joint strategic and operational meetings between programmes – operating in silos	✓ Great management support/transparent/good leadership
– Support staff salaries not where they're supposed to be – I've been doing extra responsibilities but have not been considered for HEDA – Some of my overtimes… my supervisor always rejects – SPREP professional salaries not in line with other CROP agencies – No benefit for long service	✓ Excellent terms and conditions/fair rewards

Source: 2009 and 2013 Staff Satisfaction Surveys