

SIDE EVENT 1: COMBINING THE SCIENCES FOR RISK MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Risk management for disasters and climate change in the Pacific has been extensively informed by both the physical¹ and social sciences over the years. Often, however, these disciplines have been applied quite separately; community level risk management actions often have a relatively higher participatory component while national level actions may have a higher scientific foundation. Some projects may require only one form of input. In other cases, projects that are founded solely on one form of science may run the risk of not being effective. Those that focus purely on physical science might lack the design content to make them relevant to the public while projects based purely on public perceptions and aspirations might lack scientific rigour.

In recent years, there has been an increase in projects that are specifically designed to combine both physical and social sciences to ensure balanced risk management. In this context, increasing attention has been given to social science inputs such as economic analysis, participatory community analysis and strategic communications.

With the process underway to develop an integrated regional strategy for disaster risk management and climate change, there is an opportunity to clarify the role of the social sciences vis à vis physical science and identify ways to best optimise risk management.

Purpose

The purpose in this side event is to:

- raise awareness of the role that the social and physical sciences can play in planning, programming and policy development;
- showcase examples of how social and physical sciences can combine to contribute to risk management;
- identify directions for how best to integrate social and physical science data for risk management; and
- provide an opportunity for practitioners in social and physical science to input to the development of the integrated regional strategy.

Discussion

Speakers will share their experience on issues such as:

- The contexts in which social science gets selected for inclusion in the identification of solutions and decision making
- What solutions are promoted using social science – and what difference its involvement makes to the ultimate response
- Where the inclusion of both social and physical science has been successful and where it has not

¹ Any of the sciences such as physics, chemistry, astronomy and geology that analyze the nature and properties of energy and nonliving matter (www.thefreedictionary.com/physical+science).

- What affects the success of bringing together the different disciplines? Ultimately, how should this be tackled – if at all – in the future?
- In what types of project it is most appropriate to make use of both social and natural science to ensure successful outcomes
- Any recommendations we might make for the future
- How we should reflect these issues in the regional integrated strategy.

Intended Outcomes

Key outcomes to be achieved through the session are:

- awareness of the role and limits of the different sciences in planning, programming and policy development;
- directions from practitioners and participants on how best to integrate social and physical science data for risk management; and
- guidance to the regional integrated strategy on how best to combine the social and physical sciences for optimal risk management.

Format

The session will take the form of (i) presentations from the scientific community on how different types of information are used to affect planning, programming and policy development (ii) questions and discussion.

Session Coordinators

Aaron Buncle, Climate Change Economist, SPREP, aaronb@sprep.org

Paula Holland, Manager Natural Resource Economics and Governance, SPC paulah@sopac.org

Confirmed speakers to date

Arthur Webb	SPC	Balance and science in coastal management
Ian Iercet	Vanuatu Public Works Dept	3D social modelling in the PACC
Sarb Johal	Massey University	Integrated Research on Disaster Risk

Confirmed moderator

Marita Manley, GIZ