

START news

Climate Change, A New Challenge for Development Cooperation, Brussels, Belgium

START was invited to participate in a conference hosted by the Belgian Development Cooperation Office in March 2008 to exchange ideas and put forward proposals for taking climate change risks into account in development assistance. Neil Leary of the International START Secretariat gave a presentation on lessons from AIACC and other START activities concerning adaptation and development. The conference, also attended by START acting Director Hassan Virji, was opened by H.R.H. Princess Astrid of Belgium and chaired by Professor Jean-Pascal Ypersele, Université Catholique de Louvain. Professor Ypersele is preparing recommendations from the conference for presentation to and consideration by the Belgian Development Cooperation Office.

Linking Knowledge with Action for Sustainable Development, Washington, DC

Clark Seipt of the International START Secretariat was invited to present a poster session about the survey and needs assessment program to initiate the African Climate Change Fellowship Program at the Arthur M. Sackler Colloquium of the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC in April 2008.

(<http://www.nasonline.org>)

TWAS-ROLAC 3rd Young Scientist Prize for Agricultural Sciences

Dr. Francisco Meza, a former START Young Scientist Awardee from the Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile in Santiago, Chile was given the 3rd Young Scientist Prize for Agricultural Sciences from the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

(www.rio.twas.org)

Completed PhD Theses

In 2002, the International START Secretariat and the Pan African START Secretariat (PASS) initiated a fellowship program for outstanding young African scientists engaged in global environmental change research at African institutions of higher learning leading to a doctoral dissertation and a PhD degree. These fellowships were supported by a grant from the Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD).

To date, 17 Fellows have completed their work and have been awarded their degrees. There are 21 individuals who continue to conduct research and summaries in preparation for completing their dissertations.

For further information check the website: www.start.org

Pacific Islanders join 'Many Strong Voices' against climate change

By *Ilan Kelman, Jennifer West, Lars Otto Næss, and Grete K. Hovelsrud*

Within the wide range of environmental changes that have affected Pacific islands over past centuries, contemporary climate change is starting to take its toll. New and creative efforts are continuing to determine how to deal with this long-term disaster and its spin-off effects.

One such project, 'Many Strong Voices' (<http://www.manystrongvoices.org>), joins coastal communities from around the arctic and from the 51 Small Island Developing States (SIDS, www.sidsnet.org), including the Pacific SIDS, in recognition of the similar vulnerabilities to climate change which both regions experience.

'Many Strong Voices' launched in December 2005 by the United Nations Environment Programme, brings together arctic and SIDS participants to share and enhance knowledge and expertise about, and to collaboratively devise strategic solutions to, climate change challenges. Those involved include international organisations, government agencies, non-government organisations, indigenous peoples' organisations, research institutes, communities, and individuals that depend on natural resources to earn a living out of a subsistence lifestyle.



Atolls in the Fiji Islands are among the sensitive areas vulnerable to climate change. (Photo source: I. Kelman)

The aims are to:

- Assist in strengthening these regions' role in negotiations on greenhouse gases and on climate change adaptation.
- Design a comprehensive climate change vulnerability and adaptation assessment across the SIDS.
- Raise awareness about the effects of climate change on vulnerable regions.
- Increase understanding of needs and solutions
- Motivate action on addressing and preventing climate change's adverse impacts.

One prominent strand is designing an assessment programme that will explore



A seawall in Tonga Islands damaged from wave force impact. (Photo source: I. Kelman)

climate change vulnerability and adaptation across the SIDS. An assessment design document is being compiled at CICERO, a Norwegian research institute, with financial assistance from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with input from SIDS partners. The document maps the state of knowledge on climate change impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation studies in the SIDS, identifies gaps, and proposes a regional assessment that addresses the gaps.

The focus is on catalysing local action.

collaboration with regional and local partners.

One important theme has been recognising that climate change is just one challenge and opportunity amongst many others facing the SIDS, amongst other islands and coastal regions. Other ongoing concerns include rapid rural-to-urban migration, the potential loss of languages and cultures through emigration, population growth, gender and minority inequities, erosion of local knowledge and experiences, manipulation by richer governments and corporations, and unsustainable natural resource extraction.

These multiple factors must be considered simultaneously to ensure that tackling one problem, such as climate change, does not create or exacerbate other problems emerging from the myriad of social and environmental challenges which islanders have dealt with over the past millennia. Additionally, future perspectives must be balanced with historical understanding. For instance, approximately six hundred years ago, climate and sea level changes severely affected many Pacific island communities. What lessons from that experience could be applied today, for the Pacific, for all SIDS, and for their arctic partners?

'Many Strong Voices' provides the grounding, inspiration, impetus, and opportunity to build and maintain community-based processes that contribute to enhanced ability and actions to reduce vulnerability and to contribute to sustainability. With such comprehensiveness, cooperation, and exchange, 'Many Strong Voices' - involving many strong Pacific voices - will be heard, locally and globally, leading to positive action for positive change.

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