

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION FOR THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) and Least Developed Country (LDC), the Solomon Islands is one of the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, with socio-economic challenges and a susceptibility to extreme climate further exacerbating these effects. These challenges also present constraints to the successful implementation of adaptation options. Low technical, institutional and human capacities, as well as a lack of financial resources, limit the number of strategies available for implementation.

Surveys were conducted at four locations in the Solomon Islands to investigate community perspectives and responses to climate change. The results demonstrate that encouraging community involvement in the decision making process is important as it is communities themselves who will need to physically adapt to the changes in climate. There exists a clear link between the level of community involvement and the long term sustainability of projects implemented.

The Solomon Islands context provided a clear example of how regions challenged by complex geographic, socio-economic and political issues may address climate change adaptation through a “no regrets” adaptation policy, where socio-economic issues are addressed with reference to current and future impacts of climate change. In addressing these concerns, governments are then able to increase the resilience and adaptive capacity of the people to better respond to future climate change impacts.

The urgent need for adaptation in the Solomon Islands also provides a different perspective on climate change compared with its close Australian neighbours. The need for immediate action in the Solomon Islands stresses the importance of planning adaptation to protect settlements and infrastructure before the impacts of climate change are exacerbated.

FURTHER RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS:

A more comprehensive study of the Solomon Islands would allow a broader number and range of communities to be surveyed, increasing the validity and depth of survey results. Fewer restrictions with regard to time and accessibility would allow further exploration of the more isolated communities and their perceived natural adaptive capacity.

A shift in the focus of this thesis study may consider the trigger points for the Solomon Islands provincial and national governments to take the next level of action. In doing so, further research into the appropriate adaptation strategies would provide results to facilitate government planning to address climate change impacts at a broader, national level.

Similar studies in the Pacific region would aid in supporting decision makers to identify the key vulnerabilities to climate change and assess appropriate adaptation strategies for SIDS.

Grant Holder: Stacey Atkinson, School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of New South Wales

Honours Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Ron Cox

