

Establishing the Pacific Land Resource Centre - a concept note

Land Resources Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community
(SPC LRD)

Introduction

The Pacific community is information and knowledge hungry. There is a need for clear and readily accessible data and information on crops, climate, land, resources, animals, and everything else related to agriculture, food security and climate change. Human expertise and skills in these areas, as well as the exchange of knowledge, are fragmented. With its wide geographic spread and great variety, it is a hard task to get all relevant information on the Pacific land resources in just one place, and exchange knowledge there where it is most needed. The Pacific Land Resource Centre (P-LRC), as a function of the Land Resources Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC LRD), will be trying to do just that.

What is the objective of the P-LRC?

The P-LRC will contribute to climate change resilience, economic and sustainable development, food security and biosafety by enhancing the knowledge capacities of the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) by providing and improving “information accessibility and availability” and “knowledge capabilities” in the Pacific. Its value proposition is combining three levels of information availability and knowledge exchange capacities:

1. Capacity strengthening of the SPC LRD beneficiaries through exchange of knowledge, facilitated via a series of intermediary organisations, such as the extension and advisory services, farmers organisations, and national PPOs, to facilitate access to markets and regional trade.
2. Empowerment of the SPC LRD beneficiaries through making information available, rather than just data, through analysis of existing data and information, which are then processed into information products and disseminated through various channels.
3. Supporting regional, national and sectoral policies and strategies. Offering the comparative advantage of having an overview of Land Resource Management and Agricultural production in the region, and access to a wider range of information from different sectors and countries, to be able to advise on the appropriate packaging of information products and services. This relies on the other two functionalities, and adopts a strategic function that guides the others.

Defining knowledge and information

It is important to first distinguish what we are talking about. ‘Knowledge’ and ‘information’ are often used interchangeably, while they actually mean two partly different things. By knowledge we mean experience, skills and attitude of people (also referred to as tacit knowledge) *combined with information* (also referred to as explicit knowledge). So information is the part of knowledge that can be captured into documents, libraries etc., while not all knowledge can or needs to be captured. Knowledge can, however, often be exchanged and learned by means of interaction.

That is why the P-LRC will not only provide beneficiaries with access to information, but also with different exchange and learning methods. The centre will have an active role in connecting people, supporting collaborative learning and knowledge exchange. It will be transforming tacit knowledge into explicit forms, documenting best practice and lessons learned. It will focus on exchange of knowledge through a variety of approaches. This will make the P-LRC well placed to meet the needs of farmers, rural communities and information intermediaries.¹

Beneficiaries & Clients

Who will benefit from the centre?

The ultimate beneficiary of the P-LRC will be the entire Pacific community. But more specifically, vulnerable groups should benefit the most from the existence of the P-LRC: peasant farmers (subsistence as well as small commercial) and other poor households. However, they will mostly not be in contact with the centre itself, but rather through intermediaries such as extensionists, farmer organisations, governmental institutions, and NGOs. These intermediary groups will be the direct clients of the centre.

How will they benefit?

The main proposition of the P-LRC is to make all relevant information and knowledge on agricultural practice, land use, climate change etc. easily accessible and available to those who need to make use of it. Currently, extensionists, NGOs, government agricultural and climate agencies, have access to parts of it, but a clear overview and easy access to information is lacking. Relevant knowledge exchange through interaction might reach them, but in a scattered manner and not always at the right time and place. The P-LRC will provide them access and interactions when and where they need it.

Functions of the P-LRC - What will the centre do?

The centre will provide the direct clients with knowledge exchange and information on subjects that are currently also the main focus of the Land Resources Division (LRD) of the Secretariat of the Pacific

¹ Also see “The future of agriculture knowledge resource centres: lessons for ACP regions.”

Community (SPC). To reach its direct clients and ultimate beneficiaries, the P-LRC will offer several services:

- **Capturing, organizing, disseminating and brokering information:** One of the centre's main responsibilities will be the 'packaging' of information, meaning that it will be collecting and capturing relevant explicit information, organizing this and disseminate it. So the P-LRC will be offering clear-cut and tailor-made 'packages' of information to clients, for main subjects and per country. In that way, the centre will hold the Pacific's main knowledge on land issues, and ensure it reaches the right people in the right way.
- **Easy access to information online:** visitors to the centre's web portal can navigate through the information per country and per subject to easily find relevant (and packaged) information. A decision tree can also be envisaged, with principle questions which will lead visitors to relevant information.
- **Knowledge exchange and capacity strengthening:** The P-LRC can offer learning opportunities and host such facilities in addition to offering long-term support and guidance (online, web2, face-to-face or through phone) to clients. Access to information alone is simply not good enough: in many cases, there is a gap in local and regional capacity to support farmers. Where needed, people from the P-LRC can support local and regional extension. Knowledge transfer is always a two-way exchange: the P-LRC will also internalize local lessons to improve its own services, knowledge exchange as well as information availability.
- **Foresights and forecasting:** People at the centre understand and anticipate their clients' needs, and customize their services and knowledge to them. Based on the knowledge they have and gain, they are able to make foresights and forecasts on relevant issues, so that knowledge is available timely or even beforehand when needed. The P-LRC will have knowledge exchange serviced and information available at the ready to assist in the case of disaster recovery.

What will the centre look like?

The name "Pacific Land Resources Centre" immediately calls into mind a physical 'centre'. But actually, there are several different components to the envisioned P-LRC.

- **A central 'centre':** the P-LRC will have a main physical presence on one or few of the larger islands. This is where most people will be working, information will be processed and disseminated, knowledge exchange will be organised, the websites and databases will be maintained, etc. This is also the place where many training sessions will probably take place, although these can also be at location.

- **Network of local hubs or country focal points:** depending on the situation, the P-LRC will either have a local (national) hub in a country or a country focal point in the centre itself. A local hub can be very small, but will at least offer visitors with good internet access, so that they are able to access the centre's online information. There will also be staff that can assist them with any questions, or point them to an expert at the P-LRC or elsewhere in the region.
- **Online presence:** the P-LRC will have a clear and easy to navigate web portal. Through this portal, visitors can access relevant (packaged) information and data on specific countries and subjects. It will also contain information on the centre, on trainings and other activities, and contact information of the centre, local hubs and country focal points. The web portal should also function as a one stop shop to information already to be found online.

Resources

The main services that the P-LRC offers are thus (packages of) information as well as knowledge exchange on issues related to land resources including coastal areas. The centre will have many sources of information and knowledge at its disposition to achieve this. It can potentially build upon the information as well as human resources available at (but not limited to):

- The Land Resources Division of SPC
- Other SPC divisions, e.g. the Geographic Sciences and Statistics divisions
- The SPC library
- Governmental agencies
- Universities
- NGOs
- others

The role of LRD

The P-LRC is initiated by and a service of SPC LRD. In the daily operation of the P-LRC, LRD will have a lead role. However, LRD cannot do so on its own. The P-LRC needs to be a collaborative action of SPC, regional knowledge institutes, Pacific governmental organisations, local and regional NGOs as well as international development organisations. Both in terms of human capacity, information availability and research, as well as funding, LRD will be actively looking for partners.

References

- Gwynn, Sara (2014) "The future of agriculture knowledge resource centres: lessons for ACP regions." CTA.
- Ratukalou, Inoke (2015) "Information Knowledge Management and the Pacific Land Resources Centre." SPC-LRD.
- Workshop on the Land Resources Centre, with SPC-LRD staff. Suva, March 26 2015.

On the next page a fragment on the "21st century Knowledge Resource Centre" is presented which could serve as "appetizer/example" for the P-LRC.

Annex: The 21st Century Knowledge Resource Centre

..... a 21st Century Knowledge Resource Centre is a holistic, dynamic and user-centred service that actively reaches out to individuals, organisations and communities—especially those that are hard to reach.

It understands and anticipates users' needs and customises services for them. It publicises and delivers information and knowledge where, when and how users want it. It helps users to reach their objectives or goals. It supports them with orientation, guides, advice and training.

It is run by knowledgeable and helpful staff who can communicate well with all users. It is welcoming and accessible and, if it is a physical space, it provides opening hours to suit its users, space, light, tables, chairs and well-maintained computers, printers, connectivity, software and audio-visual facilities.

It selects, catalogues and provides easy access to a wide range of high-quality, relevant, credible and timely data and information. It provides access to local information. When information is not immediately useful as presented, it adds value by sorting, packaging, reviewing or analysing.

It captures, organises and disseminates know-how, expertise and knowledge. It holds the individual, organisational and community memory. It supports collaborative learning and facilitates knowledge exchange, including sharing of best practice and lessons learned.

It refers users on if it does not have the data, information or knowledge required.

It engages its users and community in its planning and reviewing its work. It has a public statement of mission and the service it strives to provide. It uses resources effectively and efficiently. It is professionally run with strategy, budgets, accounts, and development plans. Its staff continually update their skills and knowledge. It monitors, benchmarks and assesses itself in line with what is important to those it serves.

It has strong leadership. It has a culture of internal and external collaboration and sharing, with incentives and rewards. It cooperates with other departments, KRCs, communities and organisations. It participates in consortia and networks. It advises local, national and regional bodies. It lobbies and advocates.

It helps individuals to do their jobs, keep up-to-date and save time and resources. It helps link them in to their community, and provides the opportunity to contribute.

It helps communities, including communities of practice, to network, collaborate, mentor and develop professional skills.

It helps organisations to work strategically, solve problems, learn lessons, diffuse best practice and innovate.

The KRC's active role in connecting people, supporting collaborative learning and knowledge exchange, transforming tacit knowledge into explicit forms, documenting best practice and lessons learned, and the active dissemination of knowledge extends its work beyond that of the digital library or information resource centre.

Fragment from: Gwynn, Sara (2014) *"The future of agriculture knowledge resource centres: lessons for ACP regions."* CTA, Executive Summary.