

**Climate Variability and Change and Human Health in the  
Pacific Islands: The Cook Islands and Fiji—Phase III  
Dissemination Meeting (APN 2002-13)**

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## **APN funding**

US\$ 22,000

## **Participating countries**

Participants from the following countries were funded: Cook Islands, Fiji, and USA.

## **Brief introduction and background**

This project consists of three phases. Phase I was a scoping meeting held in Fiji, in July 2001 funded by APN (APN 2001-02). Phase II is a larger assessment activity, funded by NOAA/Office of Global Programs. Phase III is a dissemination workshop for which the current APN grant will be used. The goals of the project are to develop the following:

- A better understanding of the relationship between local level climate variability;
- Refine a set of analytical techniques for assessing the impact of seasonal to inter-annual climate variability on important diseases in the Pacific Islands region;
- Demonstrate how these techniques can be used to allow climate forecasts to be used to reduce the risk of these diseases; and
- Provide an understanding of the impact of seasonal to inter-annual climate variability that can be applied to the impact of longer-term climate change to the Pacific Islands and other parts of the world.

## **Outline of activities conducted**

Funding from the Office of Global Programs for the research phase was originally promised for August 2001, the anticipated start of Phase II. Funding was not actually approved until May 2002 and funds were only available in November 2002. This delayed the compilation of data and the loss of the post-doc originally hired to do the statistical analysis. Funds were advanced by the East-West Center for student assistants in the Cook Islands and Fiji and data compilation commenced July 2002. A student assistant was hired in Honolulu in September 2002 and some graphical analysis was done. A search is now underway for a graduate assistant to assist a senior UH faculty member who has volunteered his services with the statistical analysis.

## **Outcomes and products**

Insufficient health data for the Cook Islands was available to conduct even a rudimentary analysis. Very rich climate and health data sets are available for 15 areas of Fiji. Graphical analysis showed some patterns for several diseases in relation to both monthly rainfall and mean maximum monthly temperature but was insufficient to draw any conclusions.

Students in the Cook Islands and at the Fiji School of Medicine have gained good practical experience at compiling health and climate data. Data gathering in the Cook Islands proved very frustrating because of the lack of complete data sets from any island,

although the project team was assured that the data were available and just needed to be compiled.

The project leaders have met with team members in Fiji in conjunction with other travel and adjustments have been made in the original project schedule.

**Future directions and follow-up work**

The statistical analysis must be completed by May. The date of the dissemination workshop has now been tentatively scheduled for June, 2003.