



Advancing
Integration
series



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

A spotlight on Kiribati

Australia's integrated approach: matching
global climate change commitments with
immediate needs and capacity

Maylee Thavat

Preface: Advancing Integration

Donors supporting developing countries in the pursuit of sustainable development know that not all risks and eventualities can be predicted, managed and accounted for. Yet it is important to try and reduce these risks by understanding: the complexity of the context in which aid dollars are spent; and the routes to achieving better development outcomes, by adding value to what is already being done by partner governments.

In 2012, Australian aid* and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

established a partnership to strengthen the way natural hazards, environment and climate change risks are considered in development programmes and decision-making processes. Tools, guidance and new evidence was generated to improve integration of disasters, environment and climate change adaptation and mitigation (DEC) in aid programming. The Advancing Integration programme (2012–2014) began with an assessment of *Existing knowledge* and consideration of *How to measure*

progress. This draws on the latest evidence on how best to integrate DEC and provides staff managing overseas aid programmes with guidelines on how to identify opportunities for making further progress on integration.

Policy priorities and programme strategies are set within a complex web of relationships between donor headquarters, donor country offices and recipient country governments. Development priorities are identified in country programmes; and it is here that the opportunities and barriers to DEC

A map of our journey

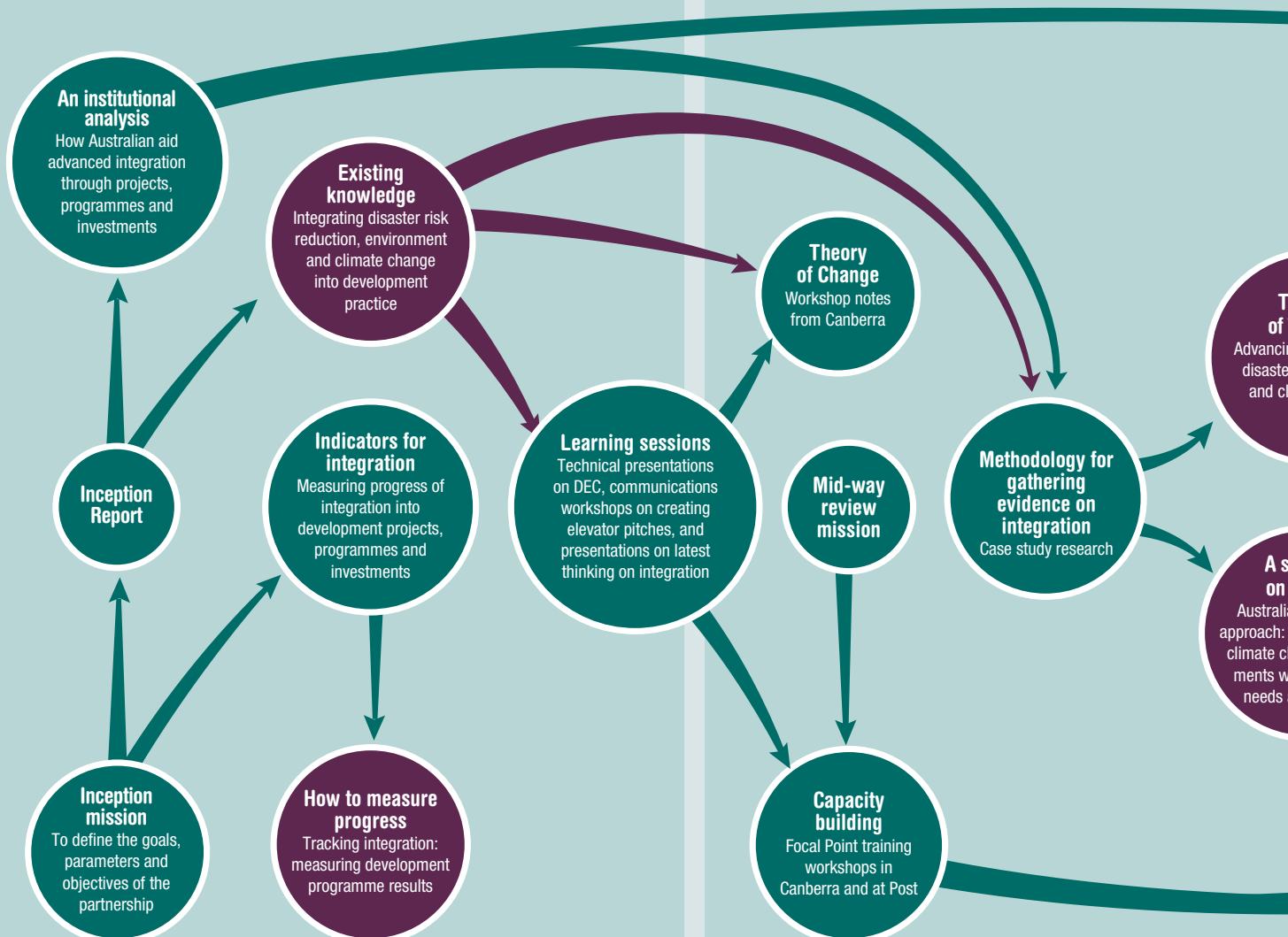
Integrated approaches to development: disaster risk reduction, environment and climate change adaptation and mitigation (DEC integration)

FIRST

Investigate and learn from past experience to make the most of existing knowledge and define how to measure integration

SECOND

Challenge existing knowledge through grounded research and



integration need to be considered. Original research was thus undertaken in a number of locations, including: *The case of Vanuatu* and *The case of Viet Nam*, as well as secondary research putting *A spotlight on South Asia* and *A spotlight on Kiribati*. Together, this material helped to ground and inform a set of products (see map of our journey) which reflect the reality of aid programming in a range of different, complex contexts.

A set of tailor-made tools and guidance notes have been created to enable staff managing Australian aid to strengthen DEC integration and

improve the sustainability and effectiveness of development programmes.

A how-to handbook for integration, for example, guides staff through assessment, analysis and action, and includes a directory of tools for further resources.

As the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) harness opportunities to integrate DEC in the future, the journey and progress made over the duration of the partnership will provide valuable insights into the lessons and challenges of integration for like-minded donor governments. A

synthesis report of *Reflections and lessons* provides useful insights for others searching for a more systematic way to incorporate disasters, environment and climate change issues in their work.

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*Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) was the Australian Government's implementing agency at the time the programmes were reviewed and since 1 November 2013 is incorporated with the DFAT.



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Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| AusAID | Australian Agency for International Development |
| DEC | Disaster risk reduction, environment and climate change adaptation and mitigation |
| DFAT | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| ICCAI | International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative |
| KAP | Kiribati Adaptation Programme |
| KJIP | Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan |
| NAPA | National Adaptation Programme of Action |
| NCCC | National Communication on Climate Change |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| ODI | Overseas Development Institute |
| PCCSP | Pacific Climate Change Science Programme |
| SPREP | Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme |

Abstract

Kiribati's unique context makes it exceptionally vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Recognising this, the Government and its development partners – namely Australia – have taken great strides towards creating an effective and comprehensive policy architecture for dealing with climate and disaster risk. This paper begins by exploring the impact of disaster, environment and climate (DEC) related risks on the country's natural resource base. The institutional pathways to embedded DEC into national policies are then highlighted, followed by an account of the role of Australian aid in this endeavour. This paper does not attempt to provide a comprehensive guide to all DEC related activities in Kiribati; it uses illustrations from Australian aid supported programmes to show the breath of work ongoing on DEC integration in the country. Finally, lessons from Australian aid – both in-country and from the thematic and country teams based in Canberra – are shared with the aim of encouraging others across the aid programme to adopt similar approaches to DEC integration.



1 Introduction

Climate change is a long-term challenge that requires a global solution. It also requires appropriate action at a country level, to ensure global commitments translate into action on the ground for affected communities. The case of Kiribati highlights how Australian aid programmes matched global climate change funding commitments – made in international climate talks at Copenhagen in 2009 – with support to programming, national policy formulation, and building institutional capacity of the government. In doing so, Australian aid was institutionally responsive to the country context and able to pursue an integrated approach to DEC.

First we look at Kiribati's unique context, its vulnerability to climate change and the likely impact on the country's natural resources. Next, policy and institutional progress made in tackling climate change is explored, which includes the development of several national plans of action targeting climate and disaster risk. As a key donor, Australia has helped support the country's integrated approach to DEC, through various initiatives which are highlighted in section 4. Finally, lessons from Australian aid – both in-country and from the thematic and country teams based in Canberra – are shared with the aim of encouraging others across the aid programme to adopt similar approaches to DEC integration.

2 Kiribati country context

2.1 Significant existing and future disaster, environment and climate risks

Climate change in Kiribati is international headline news. The 33 islands of Kiribati (21 of which are inhabited) comprise a total land area of 726 km², with the majority less than three metres above sea level.¹ The islands illustrate the negative potential impact sea-level rise could pose to some countries, and serve as a harbinger of the wider climate change-related risks facing humanity, and developing small island states in particular. However, there are a number of more immediate environmental concerns currently faced by much of the population of Kiribati. For example, a high population density in South Tarawa (an area of just 16 km² where half of the country's 100,000 population live) has placed severe pressure on existing freshwater supplies. Although sea-level rise and associated pollution problems tend to make headline news, population pressures combined with the islands' delicate coral atoll ecologies immediately confront the country's sustainability. This sustainability is further threatened by climate change.

The impact of DEC risks are evident within the water and sanitation sectors. Thirty-two atolls and reef islands and one raised limestone island make up the islands of Kiribati. Fresh water is derived from two sources: rainwater or underground freshwater lenses. Imported bottled water and desalinated water are additional but relatively small sources. Even in conditions of normal rainfall, the country struggles to maintain freshwater supplies as fresh water is lost through inadequate rainwater harvesting and storage. In addition, existing sanitation systems are inadequate and severely degraded

and this means that existing fresh groundwater supplies are often and easily contaminated. Consequently, there is an extremely high incidence of water-borne disease, a major contributor to Kiribati's high rates of infant mortality (AusAID, 2012).

Climate change is set to further challenge water management problems already faced by the country. In November 2011, the Australian-funded Pacific Climate Change Science Programme (PCCSP) (Kiribati Meteorology Service and PCCSP, 2011) found that rainfall variability is likely to increase substantially due to climate change, with increased frequency and severity of extreme rainfall events, further challenging water management systems if not properly managed. An increase in ocean acidification is also projected, affecting coral reefs and fisheries by 2045, along with a projected sea-level rise of up to 15cm by 2030 and up to 60cm by 2090.² In short, climate change risks will interact with existing environmental problems and exacerbate development challenges and climatic disasters. Indeed, for Kiribati most disasters – such as flooding or storm surges, maritime disasters, prolonged drought, potential salt water intrusion of fresh groundwater resources and plagues or epidemics (e.g. water-borne diseases³) – are directly or in some way related to climate variability, climate change and sea-level rise (Republic of Kiribati, 2007). Indeed, one of the more common problems for the country is prolonged drought, which gradually increases salinity levels in freshwater lenses until heavy rainfall occurs, exacerbating health and sanitation issues as well as agricultural productivity. Tackling these issues as a small-island developing country with limited government capacity to absorb aid funds is the central challenge for Kiribati. Taking an integrated approach to the management of interrelated issues of disasters, environment and climate change has proven to be an efficient way to concurrently address these issues given the technical and resource constraints of the Kiribati government.

1 Excluding the raised limestone island of Banaba.

2 Under the higher emissions scenarios A2 (high) and A1B (medium).

3 Infant mortality rates due to diarrheal diseases in Kiribati are the highest among Pacific countries (World Bank, 2006).

3 Kiribati's institutional pathway to integrating DEC

For Kiribati, the institutional pathway and capacity to integrate DEC has evolved over time and has often required the assistance of donors. In September 1999, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Kiribati produced its first National Communication on Climate Change (NCCC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Government of Kiribati, 1999). This document outlined the country's vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change, especially in the sectors of water, coastal zones, agriculture and public health. It noted that planning for climate change is planning for sustainable development. Subsequently, in 2003 the Republic of Kiribati established two concurrent national adaptation processes to deal with the challenges of climate change: the Kiribati Adaptation Programme (KAP) and the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA).⁴ While KAP was established to deal with the long-term planning needs for climate change, the NAPA focused on the country's urgent and immediate adaptation needs, such as water resources adaptation, well improvement, coastal zone management and resilience enhancement (World Bank, 2011). Both programmes were integrated into the country's planning and budgeting frameworks.

KAP (financed through grants from various bilateral and multilateral donors including Australia, Japan, the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility) is now in its third phase. It focuses on: a) improved government capacity in asset management and strategic planning in water and coastal engineering; b) increased community fresh water quality and storage capacity; c) protection for targeted coastal areas from storm waves and flooding, and; d) pathways for improved governance

and sustainable management of groundwater reserves and infrastructure (Office of the President, 2013). Meanwhile, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Australian aid programme are working on the South Tarawa Sanitation Improvement Sector Programme with the Public Utilities Board to meet the immediate sanitation needs. The NAPA has now been reformulated under Kiribati's newly released Climate Change Framework (2013) which also includes disaster risk management, previously addressed in separate legislation and planning processes.

The Office of the President has taken the lead in coordinating all climate change activities. Initially this was challenging given pre-existing institutional arrangements. For example, previously the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development retained much of the knowledge of environmental and social impacts of climate change and at times struggled with its multiple roles as advisors, regulators and enforcers (World Bank, 2011; Government of Kiribati, 2010). In addition, the country's NAPA and KAP were administered under different departments, and disaster risk management generally lagged behind climate and environment. For developed and developing countries alike the most challenging aspect of DEC integration remains the institutional arrangements required to coordinate all three areas. Recently, however, Kiribati has overcome many of these challenges by employing innovative participatory planning processes involving high levels of collaboration between all government departments, NGOs and civil society groups in the development of the Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan (KJIP) for disaster risk reduction and climate change

4 NAPAs were an agreement made under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, where it was agreed that Least Developed Countries such as Kiribati would be supported to develop adaptation plans. NAPAs were intended to help poor countries identify and prioritise their urgent adaptation needs and receive funding as a priority (SPREP, 2013).

adaptation. This joint implementation plan provides a ten-year integrated plan of fully costed activities aimed at dealing with combined climate and disaster risks. Participatory approaches have highlighted the depth of social and environmental knowledge across all sectors of Kiribati society. This local knowledge, along with scientific data on climate change, hazards and vulnerability are used together in holistic planning approaches. The success of this collaboration has seen the formalisation of the Kiribati National Expert Group on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, a representative group of expert stakeholders. In 2013, the Government of Kiribati finalised the KJIP. It will be presented to donors at the Development Partners Forum in 2014.

Given these recent efforts, Kiribati is now considered a leader among small island states in its efforts to prepare the country for the impacts of climate change in terms of awareness raising, engaging local and international advisors and participating in international and local forums and discussions (Government of Kiribati, 2010). Kiribati is proving itself an innovator among island nations, developing ideas and policies to support efforts to adapt to climate change and disaster risk. Climate change is now so firmly at the forefront of many of the country's policy agendas that development workers often note "you can't do anything in Kiribati without thinking about climate change".

4 Australian support to Kiribati's integrated DEC approach

Australia is a key donor and has helped support Kiribati in its journey towards integrating climate change, environment and disaster risk management into its development approach. In 2008, the International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative (ICCAI)⁵ was established to assist vulnerable countries, especially small-island developing states and least developed countries (Kiribati is under both of these classifications), to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Matching large-scale climate funds with the capacity of small island states to absorb them has been an ongoing issue in the Pacific. In Kiribati, the Initiative's objectives were matched with assistance as follows:

- Initiative objective 1: Establish a sound policy, scientific and analytical basis for long-term Australian action to help partner countries adapt to the impacts of climate change.
 - Kiribati action: Climate change projections and downscaled data provided on Kiribati as part of the Pacific Climate Change Science Programme.
- Initiative objective 2: Increase understanding in partner countries of the impacts of climate change on their natural and socio-economic systems.
 - Kiribati action: Australia is funding a technical assessment of the vulnerability of the Bonriki freshwater reserve to wave overtopping and saline intrusion under future climate scenarios.
- Initiative objective 3: Enhance partner country capacity to assess key climate vulnerabilities and risks, formulate appropriate adaptation strategies and plans to mainstream adaptation into decision-making, and identify and help finance priority adaptation measures to increase partner country resilience.
 - Kiribati actions: Support to the government-led Kiribati Adaptation Programme, a programme aimed at reducing Kiribati's vulnerability to

climate change, climate variability and sea-level rise by raising awareness of climate change, assessing and protecting available water resources and managing inundation. In addition, provision of funds to a government-led programme on adaptation has helped to open dialogue between Australia and Kiribati on the need to improve the Government of Kiribati's public financial management and procurement practices.

This initial work enabled additional programming of ICCAI funding for the ADB's sanitation work in South Tarawa, and supported the rehabilitation of roads to standards that take account of projected climate impacts. However, integrated approaches to disasters, environment and climate change are not limited to environment-related sectors such as water and infrastructure, but are applicable to all components of Australia's aid programme to Kiribati.

The Australia-Kiribati Partnership for Development (2009)⁶ focuses on four key areas: improving basic education; developing workforce skills; building economic growth; and managing and strengthening infrastructure in the country. For each of these areas climate change is cited as a key co-benefit that helps to underscore the justification of these activities.

5 ICCAI comprised \$328.2 million of a \$599 million dollar package of funds called "fast start". Fast start funds are funds committed by developed countries between 2010 and 2012 to help developing countries rapidly respond to the challenges of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

6 This partnership is an agreement between the respective governments of Australia and Kiribati to work in close cooperation to meet common challenges and to raise the standard of living for the people of Kiribati. This agreement is part of a suite of development partnerships between Australia and countries of the Pacific. Partnerships reflect the Australian government's commitments to the Port Moresby Declaration. The Declaration outlines the basis for closer cooperation and engagement with the Pacific region as well as core principles of mutual respect and responsibility for improved development outcomes. Partnership talks are held annually with each country to assist in setting shared goals and objectives (Government of Australia and Kiribati, 2009).

In terms of education, studies show direct links between greater formal education and increased capacity to adapt and deal with the risks of climate change (Wamsler et al., 2012; Anderson, 2012). As such, increased formal education can be considered as part and parcel of a country's climate change adaptation strategy. Indeed, the Kiribati Government believes education and workforce development is also a key activity underpinning the country's Migration with Dignity Policy,⁷ which has been adopted in the acknowledgement that climate change adaptation for Kiribati may ultimately mean migration:

While we require adaptation measures, our adaptation options are extremely limited, given the nature of our islands. We are a country of low-lying coral atolls with most islands rising no more than two metres above sea level. Adaptation measures of moving inland and to higher ground are impractical for us. We cannot move inland due to the narrowness of our islands, nor are there higher grounds to which we could escape from the rising seas (President Tong quoted by Maclellan, 2011).

Indeed, migration from the outer islands of Kiribati to South Tarawa has greatly increased population densities (World Bank, 2013) and worsened human development indicators and livelihoods overall (Locke, 2009). Acknowledging these pressures, Australia is supporting key educational institutions to upgrade their curricular to Australian standards in order to help people migrate with dignity and find quality employment overseas. Building the resilience of Kiribati's people and environment to withstand the impacts of disasters and climate change through improved education, greater economic growth opportunities or simply better health is not just good development practice, it is essential to meet future challenges. All of these measures will improve resilience.

⁷ Kiribati's policy is based on the Dhaka Principles for Migration with Dignity, a set of human rights-based principles established in order to enhance respect for the rights of migrant workers (Dhaka, 2013).

5 Pathways to DEC integration: lessons from Kiribati Post and Desk

Australia's additional funding for climate change known as Fast Start funds ended in June 2013. Strong country demand for climate change assistance from Kiribati is likely to continue. To date, a number of internal factors have helped to support a more integrated approach to disaster risk reduction, environment and climate change in Kiribati. Interviews with staff from Desk and Post during May 2013 revealed five key elements that have encouraged support for Kiribati's integrated approach.

5.1 Australia's special role as a key donor

In international climate change forums, Kiribati has become synonymous with the plight of small island developing states regarding climate change impacts. In many instances, Australian aid was mobilised to help support a number of small island developing states, including Kiribati, attend international fora. Concurrently, the analysis undertaken by Australia for Kiribati highlighted a deleterious trajectory given climate predictions, growing population pressures, deteriorating infrastructure and state fiscal position. Using this analysis and working with the World Bank and ADB, Australia leveraged its special bilateral relationship via deep policy engagement with the Kiribati Government and partners to support Kiribati's pathway towards greater resilience. Since the mid-2000s climate change has emerged as a programme-wide issue rather than a standalone problem.

Implications for other programme areas seeking to integrate DEC:

- Leverage relationships to build in-country and donor support for DEC integration and reinforce with research and analysis. Interpret and present information in a useful and easily understood format.

5.2 Staff continuity and awareness

Previously, the issues affecting Kiribati were not well known within the wider Pacific Division or the agency. Low levels of engagement with the country by the rest of the Division meant low levels of visibility and awareness. However, many of the staff now working with the Kiribati programme have been doing so for a long period of time. Staff at Post also proactively sought opportunities for Division staff to have experience working in Kiribati on short-term missions. This was achieved through filling short-term gaps in human resourcing at Kiribati Post, even for periods as short as two to three months. More recently, the Pacific Division has encouraged greater specialisation by staff so that people with Kiribati expertise and knowledge were redeployed in the Division and were thus able to contribute to the country programme and share their knowledge and expertise.

5.3 Workforce development

Internal improvements to the way staff are engaged in Kiribati and regionally (overseas-based staff) have been made, providing greater incentives for staff learning and development, thereby ensuring greater retention rates and access to regional expertise. This has enabled staff capacity to develop around particular issues such as climate change. This benefits both staff and the programme via increased capacity of staff to engage in depth in specific issues such as DEC while providing job satisfaction via specialised learning opportunities.

Implications for other programme areas seeking to integrate DEC:

- Encourage deeper levels of knowledge and specialisation by staff by supporting learning opportunities, staff continuity and knowledge sharing.

5.4 Support from advisors

Matching in-country needs with dedicated funding sources such as Fast Start climate funds can be difficult. Initially, staff faced challenges in matching ICCAI funds to climate change adaptation priorities in the Government of Kiribati's NAPA and development plans. Advisors from the Environment and Climate Change Section, as well as guidance sheets for education and health, assisted the programme to identify programming options.

Implications for other programme areas seeking to integrate DEC:

- Draw on existing internal resources to overcome difficult programming activities. A range of people, tools and guidance exists within DFAT to assist with DEC integration.

5.5 Senior executive and ministerial support

High-level senior executive and ministerial support has bolstered the Australian-Kiribati partnership and provided the visibility for Kiribati's vulnerability to climate change both internally and externally. During a visit to Kiribati, Australia's former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bob Carr, released a YouTube video highlighting the challenges

facing Kiribati and 'calling to action' (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2013) the United Nations Security Council, urging it to state that climate change is now a matter of global security.

Implication for other programme areas seeking to integrate DEC:

- Where possible provide senior executives and ministers with opportunities to promote DEC integration and highlight Australian support.

5.6 Long-term planning horizons

The acknowledgement that short-term planning timeframes are inadequate for the Pacific in addition to high-level support from an Australian aid Minister Counsellor enabled longer-term planning horizons of 20 to 25 years for the Kiribati programme. Although activities are designed in five-year blocks, the programme takes account of long-term timeframes across generations.

Implication for other programme areas seeking to integrate DEC:

- Build long-term DEC scenarios into short-term planning horizons to maintain sustainability of programmes.

6 Conclusion

In Kiribati, climate change risks interact with existing environmental problems and exacerbate development challenges and climatic disasters. As it is a cluster of low-lying atolls and reef islands that may experience inundation from sea-level rise, and has a growing population and fragile ecosystem, these risks cannot be ignored. The Government of Kiribati takes the risks very seriously, promoting the issue nationally through adaptation planning and internationally at global fora on climate change. At the country level, thinking through impacts of climate change must be at the forefront of development planning and viability assessments. While fresh water and sanitation issues are immediate and significant concerns, in the long term there will be an increasing need for every sector to directly address DEC issues as populations grow and disasters increase in frequency and severity. Kiribati can be considered the ‘canary in the coal mine’ in terms of DEC risks. This case study demonstrates that for Australian funded programmes initial effort must be put into:

- Establishing the analytical and scientific basis for understanding DEC impacts on natural and socio-economic systems.
- Understanding and building partner government capacity to assess and deal with these impacts.
- Working with stakeholders to formulate development policy responses and decision-making processes.

Once complete, this effort can help to integrate DEC into a range of complementary sectors. It can also help to consolidate and harmonise the work of other donors by ensuring that DEC risks and impacts are clearly understood by all stakeholders. Furthermore, an integrated approach to disaster risk reduction, environment and climate change can also help lessen the burden on developing countries with low capacity to deal with each subject matter on their own. Indeed, in this case the partner approach to DEC integration has helped to harmonise the efforts of other donors such as the World Bank and ADB. This harmonisation approach is especially pertinent for small island states to better coordinate DEC actions.

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EXTERNAL PRODUCTS

- 1. Existing knowledge**
Integrating disaster risk reduction, environment and climate change into development practice
Emily Wilkinson, Elizabeth Carabine, Katie Peters, Emily Brickell, Catherine Allinson, Lindsey Jones, Aditya Bahadur
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