

Draft Concept for consider for USAID Pacific – American Climate Fund (PACAM) grant

CORAL TRIANGLE ADAPTATION HELP DESK

DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

The Coral Triangle's marine and coastal ecosystems, people and industries are highly susceptible to climate change. Under the current trajectory, the ability of the Coral Triangle's coastal environments to provide food for its local people could decline by 80% by 2100. Without action on global climate change and major investments in adaptation, an estimated 100 million people will be severely impacted. Coral Triangle countries, NGOs and civil society are keen to develop adaptation projects to build the resilience of communities and ecosystems to climate change impacts but are facing a number of barriers and unfilled needs among those who desire to undertake adaptation efforts such as:

1. Not finding information or assistance to develop adaptation projects effectively
2. Lack of knowledge on how to interpret information and tools when they find it
3. Lack of awareness that there are adaptation methodologies they could be employing, and either reinvent the wheel or take no action because they don't know of methodologies

This need to help potential adaptation practitioners in the Coral Triangle region access and use information has received increasing attention, but difficulties remain.

- The absence of a centralized repository of relevant information means that most practitioners are either unaware of the existence of relevant climate science output, or know that it exists but have no idea how to find it.
- Most managers and planners turn first to trusted individuals and only secondarily to the published literature when looking for scientific information, yet most scientists and academicians rely heavily on the published literature and professional conferences to share and evaluate each other's work.
- The limited connection between academics and practitioners means that not only are practitioners often unaware of information produced by academics, but academics often lack information about the contexts in which practitioners work.
- Adaptation practitioners often need to access or integrate a wide array of information from a variety of fields and sectors—law, ecology, social and climatic sciences, engineering, planning—but many of the existing tools and guidance address only a limited number of sectors.

The bottom line is that most newcomers to adaptation, as well as experienced practitioners advancing into subsequent stages of adaptation, still need someone or something that can address the concerns and questions particular to their situation in an interactive manner. And since adaptation is a very young field, sharing lessons learned and creating community support and discussion around complex questions that arise concerning jurisdictional authority, financing options, or even likely climate impacts is essential to growing the field.

Presently, many coastal communities in the Coral Triangle are already experiencing the impacts of climate change from severe storms and coastal inundation threatening the health and safety of coastal communities and coastal and marine resources. Many coastal communities have begun planning yet there seems to be some barriers developing associated climate adaptation projects that address local action strategy plans. To meet these needs a consortium of adaptation experts is proposing the creation of a *Coral Triangle Adaptation Help Desk* (CTAHD) for Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The CTAHD would serve as a pilot program for the Coral Triangle Climate Change Adaptation Technical Working Group (CCA TWG) priority focus for 2013-2019 in developing a networked National Centres of Excellence on Climate Change Adaptation. The “Help Desk” pilot program would serve as a cross-organizational bureau for Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands by providing on-demand adaptation help and personalized support and guidance that practitioners cannot find by simply searching the web or consulting a guide book. By having a team of experts on tap we aim to address the specific knowledge and practice-related needs presented, be that a need for existing adaptation methodologies, specific adaptation-related data, connection with others who have dealt with similar adaptation issues, or a targeted diagnosis and treatment plan for making existing work or programs climate-smart.

The need for such a catalytic entity in the Coral Triangle region has never been timelier. While climate change continues unabated, planners, policy-makers, and others make decisions daily that affect the vulnerability of human and natural communities to climate change. With the current economic situation and challenges in applying adaptation “best practices,” however, climate change is often put aside as beyond current means to address. The longer we wait to reduce our vulnerability to these changes, the greater the risk of expensive and potentially irreversible loss. By providing a central hub for adaptation questions and problems, the Help Desk can identify existing or emerging best practices as well as areas of greatest need, and leverage resources to magnify best practices and fill unmet needs.

2. OUTPUTS

SCOPE

The *Coral Triangle Adaptation Help Desk* could include expertise from National government agencies; nonprofit organizations in the Coral Triangle region and adaptation specialists including: NGOs, regional organisations such as SPREP, University of the South Pacific, Fiji National University and University PNG, NOAA, EcoAdapt, and others. The *Coral Triangle Adaptation Help Desk* would support individuals and institutions engaged – or wanting to

engage – in adaptation efforts in the Coral Triangle region but will focus this pilot project support for Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

Our **goal** is to advance climate adaptation in the **Coral Triangle Region** by linking knowledge about the scientific, legal, policy and process dimensions of adaptation with practitioners in need of that knowledge. We will achieve this via the creation of a *Coral Triangle Adaptation Help Desk* that connects practitioners with experts and resources, becoming the “go to” place for adaptation support. By providing a grounded, credible, responsive community resource, the *Help Desk* will be a mechanism for responding to community needs and identifying priority information and process needs impeding further adaptation progress and will build on the extensive body of work already undertaken by the CTI-CFF through Regional Exchanges and development of tools and guides such as the ‘Climate Change Adaptation for Coral Triangle Communities: A Guide for Vulnerability Assessment and Local Early Action Plan’ and the ‘CTI-CFF Region-wide Early Action Plan for CCA’. The *Coral Triangle Adaptation Help Desk* could be accessed through the Coral Triangle Adaptation Marketplace, (CCAM) an online portal launched in 2014 which matches funds to priority projects in the region. The CCAM could be linked to the Centres of Excellence in PNG and SI.

By removing a common barrier to adaptation, i.e., the lack of contextual knowledge, the *Help Desk* will accelerate progress on all dimensions of adaptation. The **long-term outcome** of this acceleration will be the development of natural and human communities that are less vulnerable and more resilient to climate change and associated impacts.

Our objectives, in brief, are to:

1. Create a cross-organizational bureau of adaptation expertise that becomes the “go to” resource for meeting the adaptation needs of both experienced and novice adaptation practitioners.
2. Leverage *Help Desk* queries and requests to identify and address priority information and process needs impeding adaptation progress.
3. Leverage and magnify the knowledge, expertise and reach of the existing Adaptation Community of Practice to expand the adaptation universe.

STRATEGY AND ACTIONS

The long-term outcome for this project is for natural and human communities to be less vulnerable and more resilient to climate change and associated impacts. Achieving this outcome will require action on multiple fronts, one of which is linking knowledge about the scientific, legal, policy and process dimensions of adaptation with practitioners in need of that knowledge. To achieve this long-term outcome, two key changes that must occur: individuals and communities must feel supported and empowered to ask questions about climate adaptation and to take action with that information; and research, analysis, tools, policies, and programs must target the real needs of those interested in tackling adaptation.

The need for the first change comes from the reality that when confronted by large challenges they feel helpless to address, people commonly respond by avoiding the issue; by providing practical pathways to action, we hope to move people from apathy or avoidance to action. Our strategies to catalyze this change include:

- Providing people with contextualized data, tools, and information;
- Supporting and magnifying existing and developing communities of practice within the adaptation field; and
- Connecting individuals with other individuals or communities of practice to provide the personalized support that they need.

4. TECHNICAL MERIT

This proposal addresses PACAMs goal to support adaptation and reduce climate-related vulnerabilities in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. It builds on workshops that WWF ran in the two countries identifying the need for capacity building in the region and support and assistance in developing proposals for adaptation projects. It also supports PACAMs strategic objective 1 to improve natural resource and water resource management with support while developing, implementing, monitoring, and assessing the results of on-the-ground adaptation project.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

EcoAdapt was created by some of the earliest adaptation thinkers and practitioners. Our role in the development of the adaptation field has been innovating ideas, linking relevant resources to people, and raising awareness of the need and practice. Since 2008 this has been our exclusive focus, with a primary emphasis on North America. Projects particularly relevant to this proposal include leading adaptation and vulnerability workshops for diverse audiences; co-developing and running the Climate Adaptation Knowledge Exchange, including writing a monthly adaptation advice column; and our ongoing survey of adaptation action in North America. We work at local, regional, national and multinational scales with agencies and organizations across a range of sectors, but for *Help Desk* we recognized the need for a consortium to provide the range and depth of expertise that would be needed. Our primary partners on this project are the Georgetown Climate Center and the Climate Impacts Group, but we may also call on individuals throughout our professional networks should we receive questions requiring other expertise. We will rely on these same networks of organizations and individuals, including for example Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, academic partners, other NGOs, and professional societies, to help spread the word about the *Help Desk*. EcoAdapt has been funded by the MacArthur Foundation on three previous occasions: once to convene a day-long gathering of MacArthur climate adaptation grantees in 2008, once as co-PI on a climate vulnerability assessment of mountain gorillas in 2010, and once to coordinate a document synthesizing the state of adaptation in the United States in 2012.

OTHER PARTNERS