

Climate Change Education in the South Pacific

South Pacific Countries who are members of the PC as agreed under the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (2017- 2030) encourages addressing climate change and disaster resilience collectively at a regional level. The main issue with climate change resilience education on a regional scale is that the program is interdisciplinary and shifts away from traditional education ideas of prediction and replication. This means that if an idea works in one area, the same idea will not work in another area unless it is catered towards that environment. Such challenges occur because the social, economic, geographic, and political characteristics of the targeted area for climate change resilience need to be taken into consideration. For the Climate Resilience Program, the localization of the program is becoming a challenge for local facilitators to adapt the regional standards into the students learning. This is mainly because smaller countries in the South Pacific do not have certain topics that are being discussed in the course. An example is the understanding of the National Climate Change Policy. To date, Fiji is the only country in the South Pacific that has a National Climate Change Policy, so when students from other countries discuss National Climate Change Policies, it is very difficult for them to understand and apply the knowledge locally. The review process of the Regional Climate Change Education in the South Pacific is currently being explored and discussed with various stakeholders.

With the review process in mind, the challenges of Regional Climate Change Education in the South Pacific and the concepts learnt during the Leadership Program. The application of the Theory of Change would be a great start to highlight the goals of including the local community and students in the review process for curriculum development.

Community involvement in Regional Climate Change Education in the South Pacific

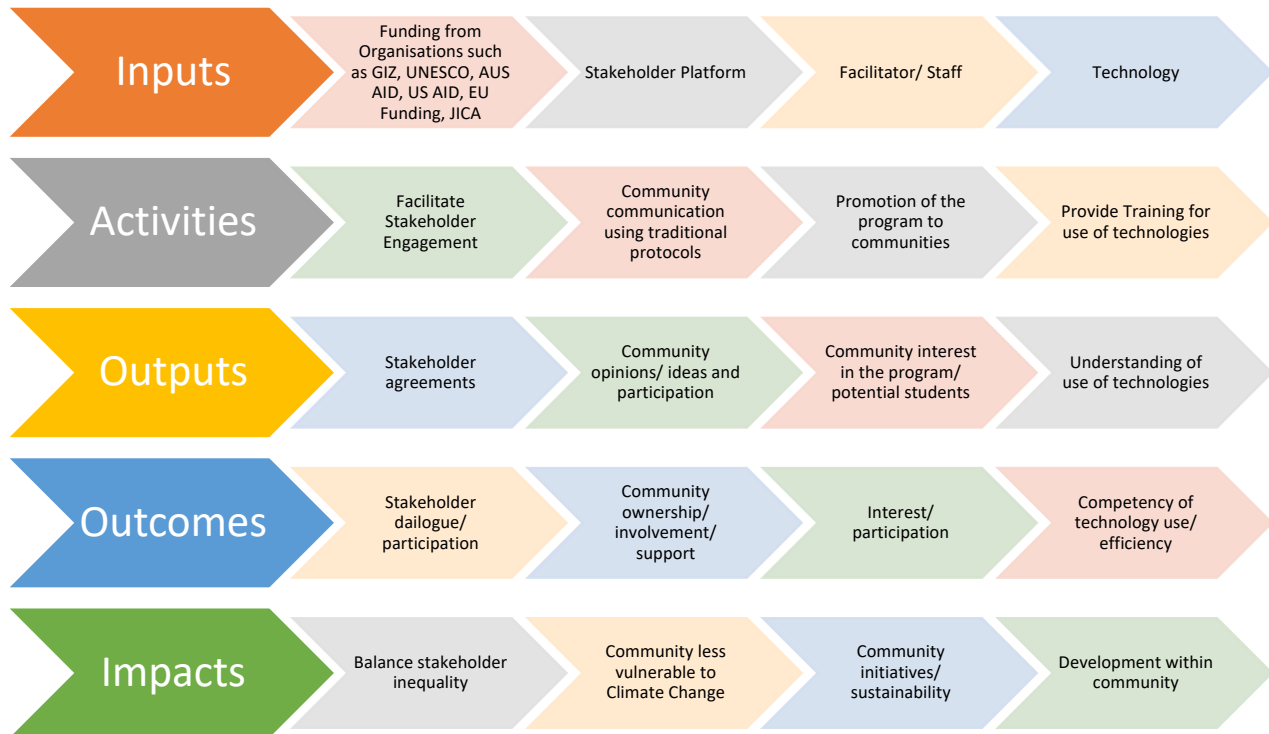


Figure 1: Theory of Change applied to the Regional Climate Change Education in the South Pacific

Short Term Goals

Duration: 1-1.5 years of the Project

As mentioned earlier that the review process is currently being done on the Regional Qualification for Climate Change Education in the South Pacific. Therefore, the short-term goal for this project would be the first 2 steps in the Theory of Change concept. The inputs of Funding Organisations have already been secured with from GIZ from Germany, UNESCO Small Grants Project, Australian Aid, and the EU. The funding is directed at ensuring the regional qualification is developed with the reviews of the pilot program, providing tuition subsidies for education at higher education institutions, supporting o community-initiated projects that are to be implemented through the regional program. However, the stakeholder platform for communication is being developed in 7 countries across the South Pacific that have agreed to implement the Regional Resilience program in their respective higher education institutions. It should be noted that each country will have its stakeholder platform for communication, but the facilitators will be the same group of people who will then report the outcomes of the meeting to the curriculum review committee. Members of the curriculum review committee are also involved in the

stakeholder discussions. At the same time as the stakeholder platform discussions, facilitator trainings and technology training will be held. The goal is to equip the facilitators with the skills to facilitate the classes which will be held mainly via satellite learning. The main reason for this is because the University of the South Pacific will be hosting most of the program from Fiji and the classes will be mainly online for the South Pacific Region. The role of the facilitator is to get the students to use the ideas taught to come up with a localized context of the theory/ practices introduced in the class. For example, communication using cultural protocols is different for each country and requires the students to share among themselves or find out how it is done within their community to ensure that traditions are being respected.

Long Term Goals

Duration: 1.5 - 4 years of the project

From the 1.5-year mark of the project to the 4th year, the outputs and outcomes of the Regional Climate Change Resilience Program are hoped to be achieved. Getting a consensus amongst stakeholders requires time and patience to ensure that each stakeholder is represented fairly. Therefore, a stakeholder agreement to ensure continued support for the program will take time and is needed in the project. Getting the community to trust and participate in the course will also need time to achieve. The main reason for this is because, like any other community in the world that has faced the impacts of climate change, they have been given many false promises that help will be given for free. This with the idea of higher education in the South Pacific being only for those who want to get white-collar jobs is dominant in the villages that are being targeted and for their livelihood, they feel higher education is a waste of time and resources for their style of livelihood. Hence, the challenge of winning the trust of the local community and promoting the benefits of going back to school for a higher education program will need to be convincing for the local community. Convincing the community leaders/ youths to take part in the program will require them to learn how to use technologies like gauges survey gauges, computer systems like online education platforms, and materials. This will take time and will be a learning challenge for the community members. Therefore, anticipating this challenge will give the project a realistic timeline of ensuring that the students are competent and confident enough to take the program without losing motivation when the course challenges them.

It should be noted that the impacts of the program have not been highlighted in the long-term goals from 1.5 – 4 years. The reasoning behind this is the unpredictable nature of the project and climate change. One could wish that after implementing this project, the stakeholder inequality will no longer exist, communities are less vulnerable to climate change impacts, a sustainable community is achieved, and

development in the community is achieved. However, 4 years is too short of a time to observe these changes, and that the impact of the program is hoped to be achieved within the 6 – 10 year duration of the project. Nature and people in the South Pacific will need time to see the changes brought about through the Climate Change Resilience Program and we could present the changes with academic methods of measuring changes. But the goal of the project is to implement a Regional Climate Change Resilience Program that encourages local communities to initiate the changes they require, and they need to observe the changes themselves for the program to be considered successful. This will require the 6 – 10 year duration for the impacts to be observed.