



Vanuatu eyes clean, green and inclusive tourism by 2030

RESEARCH UPDATE: THE IMPACT OF 'GREEN GROWTH' IN THE PACIFIC

BACKGROUND

The term 'green growth' and its sister concept, the 'blue-green economy', have recently gained considerable traction in the Pacific island region. The terminology appears in a growing number of policy and planning frameworks at sub-national, national, sub-regional and regional levels. Both terms originate outside the Pacific islands region. Both have come into common usage recently. The words 'green growth' were barely used prior to 2008, when the United Nations Environment Programme commenced its Green Economy Initiative. The term 'blue-green economy' gained widespread usage after the Rio+20 Conference in 2012.

Despite their extensive usage, the exact meaning of these terms is not clear. International organisations offer a number of competing definitions: eight in the case of 'green growth'. In the Pacific, the terms are seldom defined, and where they are, there is little explanation of how the terms apply or can be implemented in Small Island Developing States of the region.

THE RESEARCH

A research team from the University of the South Pacific (USP) and Australian National University (ANU) are undertaking a research project on the origins of 'green growth' terminology in the Pacific. This research will examine how 'green growth' in the Pacific differs from other parts of the world, how it is measured, and whether it is useful in addressing development challenges.

Research Questions

The research project has been designed to address the following research questions:

1. What (and who) has driven the adoption of 'green growth' terminology within the region?
2. How does 'green growth' in the Pacific island region differ from how it is theorised or implemented in other parts of the world?

Key Points

- The terms 'green growth' and 'blue-green economy' have gained considerable traction in the Pacific island region in recent years.
- There are several competing definitions for the term 'green growth' internationally. However, the term is seldom defined in the Pacific, and there is little explanation of how it applies or can be implemented in the region.
- PLP's support for this research project is informed by its support for the Pacific regional Green Growth Leaders' Coalition and other regional and national coalitions working in this space.
- Interim findings include that there is no clear definition of 'green growth' used in the region and that policy makers have identified that there are 'trade offs' between economic growth and social/environmental sustainability.

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3. To what extent are these terms useful in addressing the development challenges faced by Small Island Developing States?
4. How have 'green growth' and its sister concepts influenced policy making in the Pacific? How has this influence spread between different tiers of governance?
5. How is green growth to be measured in the region? What indicators are to be used?

Methodology

Literature Review: Whilst the bulk of existing academic literature relating to 'green growth' originates outside the Pacific island region, there is appropriate grey literature to study within it. This review involves examining the theoretical construction of this term globally and in the Pacific; the means by which the term has been adopted in the region; and how 'green growth' concepts intersect with Pacific economic development more generally.

Case Studies: A number of case studies will illustrate how 'green growth' has been adopted at national, sub-regional and regional levels. At the national level, the countries of Fiji and Vanuatu have recently adopted 'green growth' as planks in national development policy documents. At the sub-regional and regional levels, the research examines policy formulation by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Melanesian Spearhead Group and the Pacific Islands Development Forum. Part of the analysis includes an examination of the influence of the Green Growth Leaders' Coalition.

The research team has conducted *interviews with key informants* at national, sub-regional and regional levels. They include politicians, policy makers, members of the private sector and civil society actors.

Funding

The research project is funded by ANU and USP, including by way of research grants provided by those institutions. PLP has provided funding to support the participation of Dr Tess Newton Cain as a member of the team, and additional knowledge dissemination activities.

Progress

Fieldwork for this project was conducted in Vanuatu and Fiji in early 2017, and the literature review and analysis are underway. It is anticipated that at least two academic papers will be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals during the third quarter of 2017.

RATIONALE

PLP's interest in this research is informed, in part, by the work the program has done to support the Green Growth Leaders' Coalition (GGLC). This support reflects PLP's approach to development. It is rooted in 'thinking and working politically' by supporting local leaders, including those working in coalition, to effect developmental change. PLP's support of the GGLC provides important insights into developmental leadership and collective action in the Pacific island region.

In particular, PLP recognises GGLC as one of the only coalition of leaders that is actively attempting to address a key public policy issue at regional, national and sub-national levels. Furthermore, it is owned and convened by and for Pacific island leaders and draws upon a cross-sectoral membership.

The findings of this study will contribute to a growing body of knowledge on developmental leadership in the Pacific island region. The work will inform any future support that PLP or DFAT may provide to Pacific leadership coalitions to achieve change around pertinent development issues. The results of this research will be communicated in a range of formats so that what has been learned can be accessed and utilised by a wide range of stakeholders and partners in the region and beyond.

INTERIM FINDINGS

Further to the completion of fieldwork in Vanuatu and Fiji, the following issues have become apparent.

- There is no one definition of 'green growth' as it is used in the Pacific and there is more to learn about how it is differentiated from 'sustainable development'. The use of the term 'green growth' by policy makers and others appears to be under-theorised.
- There are a number of pathways by which 'green growth' concepts have been included in policy documents and frameworks in the region. There are indications that recent 'green growth' discourses draw on previous Pacific thinking about the need for development models that reflect the particular contexts of small island states.
- The discourses of 'green growth' vary between different countries within the region, which may reflect political, cultural and economic differences. This may have an impact on how, if at all, this concept can be utilised in any envisaged regional activities.
- There are significant political implications associated with this aspect of how 'green growth' is implemented in Pacific island countries. Policy makers acknowledge the issue of trade-offs between economic growth and environmental/social sustainability. However, it is yet to become apparent as to how these trade-offs will be managed.

PLP Briefing Notes

PLP Briefing Notes summarise key findings and lessons learned from research, coalitions and other activities implemented or supported by PLP and its partners. The aim is to inform policymakers and practitioners on emerging themes and issues in PLP's current work and consider the implications of these for wider development policy and practice.

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