

Secretariat of the Pacific Community looks for funding

By Online Editor
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New sources of funding are being sought to sustain the battle against non-communicable diseases, which kills more than half of the region's people prematurely.

Government representatives and administrators met in Noumea and voiced concern last Wednesday that Secretariat of the Pacific Community's (SPC) public health division could lose some of its technical capacity to respond to this high priority health concern and on pandemic preparedness.

The division's director Bill Parr said one of the largest health projects managed by SPC - the AUD \$26million Pacific NCD Programme funded by Australia and New Zealand - was due to finish at the end of 2011.

Fiji described this work as 'vital to our communities' and for which development partners should be thanked. It was concerned though about the loss of funding and suggested that SPC seek support from alternative, non-traditional sources such as China to 'lighten the load carried by our traditional donors'.

In response to the submissions, SPC Director-General Dr Jimmie Rodgers said it was crucial that countries had the capacity to manage large grants such as those from the Global Fund on malaria and from AusAID and NZAid on NCDs.

As countries developed this capacity, SPC could withdraw from managing grants. But in the meantime if they requested help, SPC could not decline on the basis of it not being defined as a 'regional' project.

SPC had meanwhile started talking to new potential development partners and were keen to follow through to ensure the long-term sustainability of assistance.

"We are reasonably good fisher folks (in the region) and our lines are out there," he told the meeting.

With 63 per cent of its health budget tied up in grant management of disease-specific projects, Dr Rodgers said SPC was working on an exit strategy from managing funds.

"We do not see grant management as a long-term role for SPC," he said.

SOURCE: FIJI TIMES/PACNEWS