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Presentation

Creating an international network of environmental professionals: the unique opportunities created by the New Zealand Development Scholarship Programme

Biography

Karen Hytten completed her PhD at Griffith University, Brisbane, and now works as a Lecturer in Environmental Management in the Institute of Agriculture and Environment at Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Abstract

Funded by the New Zealand Government's overseas aid and development programme, New Zealand Development Scholarships (NZDS) give candidates from selected developing countries the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills through study in specific subject areas which will assist in the development of their home country. The aim of these scholarships is to foster and build potential leaders and equip individuals with skills to benefit their home country. Under this programme, students from more than twenty different countries as diverse as The Bahamas, Ghana, Paraguay and Zambia have successfully completed a Master of Environmental Management at Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with recent graduates and current students, this research explores the challenges and opportunities experienced by NZDS students studying environmental management at Massey University. It also considers the unique opportunity for Massey University to contribute to the professional development of future environmental practitioners who return home to work in a wide range of roles within government agencies, non-government organizations and the corporate sector. It is argued that there are many things Massey staff and other Massey students can learn from NZDS students' work and life experiences and that there is the potential to build a strong international network of environmental management graduates. Such a network could foster ongoing mutually beneficial relations between, past, present and future staff and students with a view to ongoing educational and professional development and ultimately contributing to preparing the next generation of environmental specialists for tomorrow's challenges.

Creating an international network of environmental professionals: The unique opportunities created by the New Zealand Development Scholarship Programme



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Karen Hytten

Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Outline

- The New Zealand Development Scholarship Programme
- The Environmental Management Programme at Massey
- The motivations and methods for this study
- The opportunities and challenges experienced by NZAID scholarship students at Massey
- Potential opportunities for the future

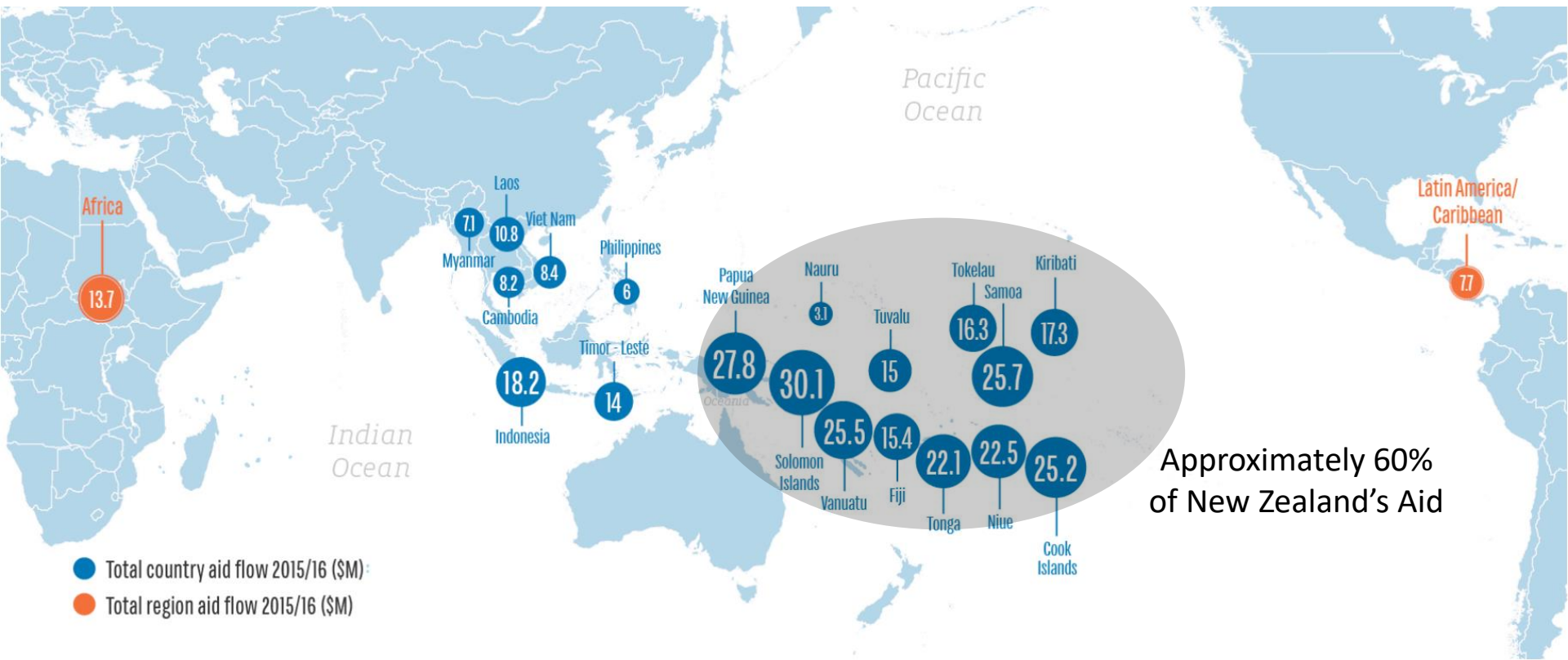
The New Zealand Aid Programme

“The mission of the New Zealand Aid Programme is to support sustainable development in developing countries, in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world” (MFAT 2011:2).

The NZAID programme focuses on 12 priority areas:

- Renewable Energy
 - Agriculture
 - ICT
 - Fisheries
 - Tourism
 - Trade and Labor Mobility
- } Flagship
Priority Areas
- Economic Governance
 - Law and Justice
 - Health
 - Education
 - Humanitarian Response
 - Resilience (NZFAT 2015a:26).

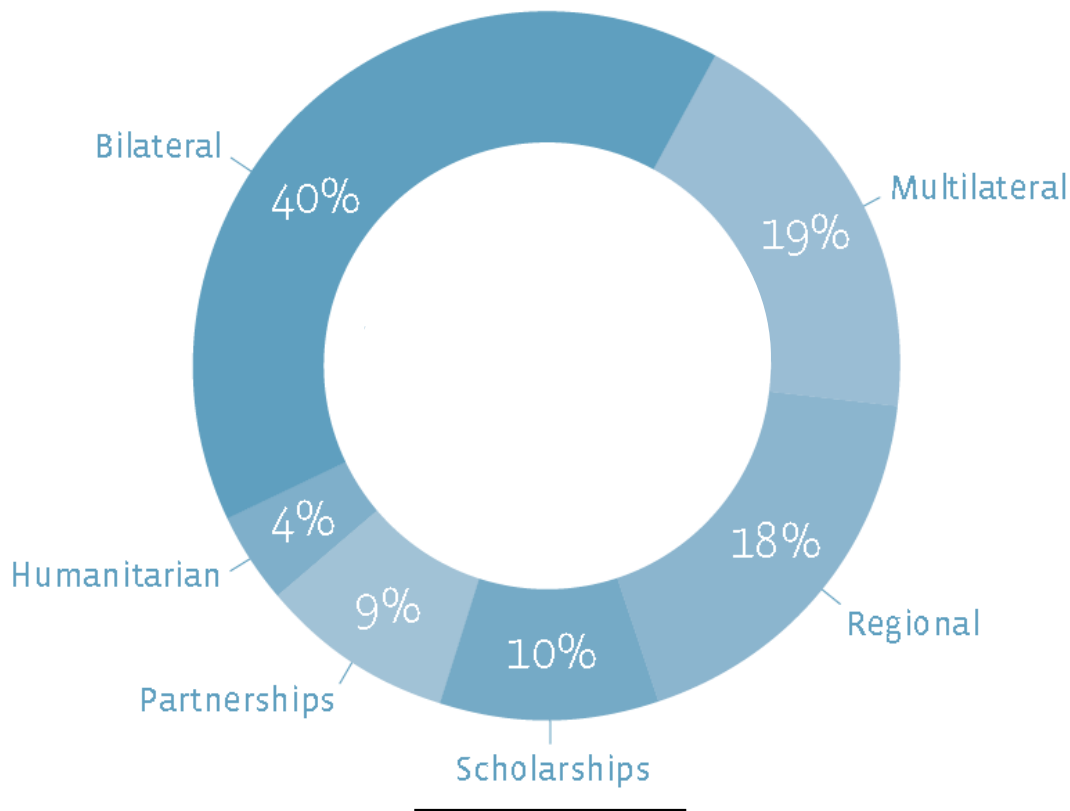
New Zealand Aid Spending



Approximately 60% of New Zealand's Aid

Source: New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade (2016).

New Zealand Aid Spending by Programme Type



Source: New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade (2016, p. 4).

Massey University

- Established in 1964
- Campuses in Palmerston North, Auckland and Wellington
- Approximately 37 000 students including 20 000 distance students



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA



Environmental Management at Massey

- Offerings include a Post Graduate Diploma, Masters and PhD programme.
- NZAID scholarship students undertake the Master of Environmental Management which involves:
 - 3 semesters full time study (12 - 18 months),
 - 1 core course and 2 - 4 elective courses, and
 - Either a self-directed research report or a supervised thesis.



Environmental Management at Massey



- Students can tailor their programme of study by choosing electives focusing on:

- Soil and water science,
- Ecology,
- Energy,
- Life cycle assessment,
- GIS,
- Environmental policy and planning, or
- Waste management.



- Our student cohort is very diverse including students from a wide range of backgrounds.

Our Student Cohort



Motivations and Methods

- I want to explore the potential for improving the learning experience and further enhancing the professional development of NZAID students studying environmental management at Massey.
- So far I have undertaken a literature review and conducted twelve in-depth semi-structured interviews with recent graduates and current students.

Shared Experiences and Common Themes

Opportunities

- The opportunity to live and study in another country
- Working with students from many different countries
- Improving spoken and written English skills
- Developing greater self-confidence
- Learning from supervisors and other academic and support staff
- Developing specialised academic knowledge and skills
- Doing field work and lab work and developing technical skills

Shared Experiences and Common Themes

Strengths

- The support provided by the International Office
- The sense of community fostered by the International Office
- The two field trips in the core course
- Particular courses and lecturers
- Being encouraged to develop critical thinking skills and intellectual independence

Shared Experiences and Common Themes

Challenges

- Homesickness and being separated from family
- Studying in second (third or fourth) language
- An unfamiliar with a different style of teaching and learning and some academic expectations (e.g. referencing conventions)
- Feeling overwhelmed and isolated
- Coping with time pressure and managing multiple tasks
- Designing and completing a research project within a tight time frame

Shared Experiences and Common Themes

Weaknesses

- The sometimes limited number of courses available
- Limited face-to-face teaching
- Some course are overly focused on New Zealand context
- A lack of hands-on learning or practical experience
- Limited exposure to industry or professional practice
- Inadequate recognition of varying prior knowledge and experience

Conclusions and Recommendations

- There is significant scope to strengthen students' learning experience through connecting with students earlier, increasing face-to-face teaching, and creating opportunities for further practical experience and exposure to industry/professional practice.
- Developing research projects in conjunction with NZAID and relevant stakeholders in recipient countries would help students to undertake more focused and relevant research and potentially contribute towards achieving NZAID's broader goals.
- There is the potential to build a strong network of environmental graduates to foster mutually beneficial relations between past, present and future staff and students with a view to ongoing educational and professional development.