

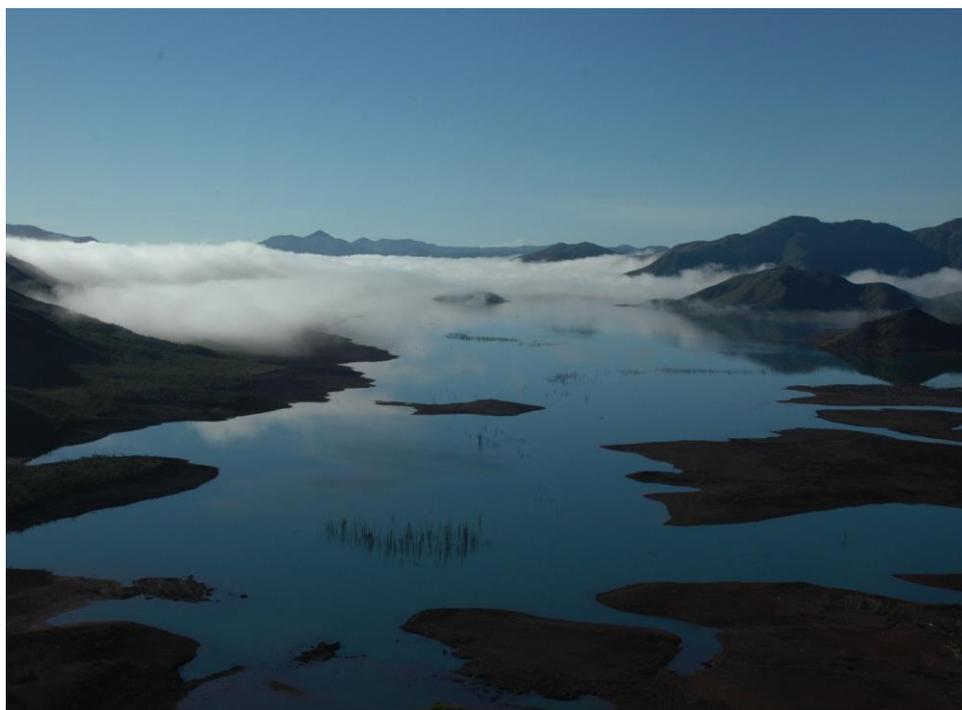


RESCCUE

Regional Lessons-Learned Workshop

Report

April 2019



© Pacific Community (SPC) 2019

Authors: Jean-Baptiste Narcy and Christophe Bouni, AScA

Main Lessons Learned

- **On the ground**, RESCCUE led to a number of observable outcomes, i.e. concrete action and changes in practices and behaviour, by supporting the development of planning systems, knowledge bases and collective action.
- In order to be effective, from the very outset such grassroots initiatives need access to local facilitation resources as back-ups to operations and such facilitation should be organised in advance, i.e. before planning work is completed.
- Having locally designated “champions” on hand who are seen as legitimate by the community is a critical factor in the success of RESCCUE-style projects on the ground as is a robust methodological framework provided by government agencies. Bottom-up and top-down approaches are not mutually exclusive in this context, but complement each other.
- **Regarding sectors of economic activity and the sector-based policies** regulating them, the RESCCUE-supported grassroots operations led to the involvement of and awareness among local economic stakeholders and the relevant government agencies.
- However their involvement was more difficult to track beyond the pilot sites, at least solely over the project’s lifespan in terms of all the sectors of economic activity and sector-based policies. Local trials lead to methodological systems and organisational innovations that could be used on a larger scale to achieve the same impact sector-wide.
- When studied or trialled on pilot sites, economic and financial mechanisms in such economic sectors can also lead to local collective learning outcomes and participants can even take ownership of them politically, at least at the community level. Effectively implementing them, however, often requires rethinking existing policy at higher levels and so, they need advocacy beyond the scope of the pilot sites.
- **With regard to government agencies**, local trials on pilot sites have trouble bringing about effective change as they are cross-sectoral in nature and, therefore, at odds with the agencies’ sector-based organisation. The trials, nevertheless, suggest that a project-based approach would overcome this obstacle.
- The challenge is not only organisational, however, but political as well. Projects such as RESCCUE give rise to sometimes conflicting positions between the various layers of jurisdiction and the technical neutrality of the operators recruited on each site is not always sufficient to overcome that difficulty.
- Projects like RESCCUE do not simply consist of field work and their regional activities deserve attention and showcasing beyond the confines of the organisations involved in the pilot sites (e.g. steering committees); particularly when the activities are directly aimed at national and/or provincial partner agencies.

Table of Contents

Regional Lessons-Learned Workshop Report	1
Main Lessons Learned	1
Introduction	2
Workshop objectives and organisation.....	2
The report structure is based on how much influence was exerted by the project in the various stakeholder circles it addressed.	3
1. Lessons learned regarding RESCCUE’s impact at the grassroots level	4
RESCCUE led to many changes at the grassroots level	4
The need for local facilitation to support operations	4
“We’re all champions”: community recognition as a driving force for local focal points	5
Essential methodology support for ICM: the main guarantee of sustainability	6
2. Lessons learned regarding RESCCUE’s impact on economic sectors and sector-based policies	7
Local economic stakeholders were significantly involved, but what was the impact on their sectors?	8
Collective learning generated by studying economic and financial mechanisms	8
Mechanisms that very often come up against existing rules when implemented	9
3. Lessons learned regarding RESCCUE’s impact on government	10
Although driven by government, can local ICM initiatives influence government in return?	11
RESCCUE’s contribution to the government discourse: certain regional activities need more showcasing	13
RESCCUE’s regional aspect: beyond the pilot sites	14
Conclusion	15

Introduction

Workshop objectives and organisation

The RESCCUE Regional Lessons-learned Workshop was held at SPC Headquarters in Noumea on 26-27 March 2019 as the culmination of a lessons-learned process at project-completion that spanned almost a year, including:

- preparatory work on finalising the outcome-capitalisation plan headed by the project coordination team, assisted by a group recruited as support for the process;
- designing, disseminating and processing an online survey for stakeholders who had taken part in the project on the pilot sites and regionally. Some 156 questionnaires were sent out and 44 responses received, i.e. a 28% response rate; and
- lessons-learned workshops for each of the five pilot sites held from July to October 2018 attended by a total of some 100 people.

This workshop aimed at highlighting the initial lessons learned so they could be discussed and elaborated on regionally. Two lessons-learned levels were created for the purposes of organising the workshop:

- The first level was discussed at length at the pilot-site lessons-learned workshops and focused on the “capital” produced by RESCCUE, i.e. concrete achievements, knowledge generated and “human capital” produced by stakeholder capacity building and networking with regard to:

- objectives in terms of observable change, i.e. progress made in practices, rules, policy and even ecosystem status;
- public policy instruments aimed at making possible such change, which was central to RESCCUE, e.g. integrated coastal management (ICM) planning and economic and financial mechanisms; and
- a strategic approach to change aimed at moving the stakeholder interplay and power balance in a direction that was more conducive to ecosystem conservation, i.e. strengthening community activities that strove towards ecosystem conservation and territory resilience, placing the issues requiring attention on the agenda, including in sector-based policies, and handling inertia and resistance to proposed changes.

Day one of the workshop was devoted to the first lessons-learned level, which was discussed in several successive sessions. The first featured RESCCUE’s operations assessment and discussed the first of the three points, namely observable change. The second point, public policy instruments, was dealt with during the following two sessions, one on ICM and the other on the economic and financial mechanisms deployed under the project. The third point was not so much a separate agenda item as an ongoing consideration that permeated discussions, since participants wondered to what extent the activities carried out (operations assessment) and policy instruments could affect stakeholder interplay for the good of the environment. Each session was divided into three sections, i.e. a summary of the lessons learned from both the online survey and pilot-site workshops with regard the topic considered, followed by a round-table discussion and then questions from the floor.

- The second level, which was more closely related to the regional workshop but also drew on the online survey data, focused on governance under RESCCUE as a system (the pilot-site approach, recruiting an operator for each site by tender, steering committees at various levels, combined project development agreements and regional activities, etc.).

Day two of the workshop focused on this level, discussing the regional activity outcomes and then collectively taking stock of the RESCCUE governance system.

The report structure is based on how much influence was exerted by the project in the various stakeholder circles it addressed.

Rather than follow a chronological minutes-style format detailing the lessons learned from each session, a more cross-sectional approach was adopted, as the same observations were often being echoed from one session to the next. It appeared that all the discussions could be reported in terms of RESCCUE's strategic objectives based on the following question: how did the public policy instruments trialled under RESCCUE and the project's governance system have a positive strategic effect in terms of the desired change, in other words climate-change resilience?

Discussions during the two-day meeting and considerations raised prior to project design and start-up revealed that, despite some overlap, there were three distinct stakeholder groups for the purposes of assessing RESCCUE's strategic impact, namely:

- "the grassroots", i.e. the local stakeholder world in which concrete operations play out plus community involvement as encouraged or supported by RESCCUE and affecting a broad range of stakeholders;
- "sector-based stakeholders", i.e. a more vertically structured set of stakeholders made up of economic sectors and governed by sector-based policies covering tourism, fisheries and mining, etc. Sector-based stakeholders have a marked effect on development in coastal areas and thus, in the long run, on ecosystems and the areas' climate-change resilience, which is why RESCCUE targeted them as well as the grassroots community;
- "institutional stakeholders", i.e. the sphere covering stakeholders from local government through provincial and country authorities to international donors who shape public policy and, in doing so, connect the other two sets of stakeholders. Government agencies are the focus of the governance and collective-action organisation challenges, e.g. rules, funding, relations between areas of jurisdiction, and political leadership, that were also covered by RESCCUE.

The lessons learned under RESCCUE can usefully be divided into these three areas, as the expectations of the project's designers and beneficiaries differed depending on the area considered.

1. Lessons learned regarding RESCCUE's impact at the grassroots level

On day one of the regional workshop, lessons were drawn from the basic grassroots level that formed the core of the pilot sites. The first two sessions were an opportunity to highlight just how diverse the achievements had been and identify the prerequisites for ensuring they would be attained and appropriately implemented on the ground. The challenge of keeping such initiatives sustainable led to fruitful discussion among the participants.

RESCCUE led to many changes at the grassroots level

The round-table discussion on RESCCUE's operational outcomes and the presentation on the online-survey results shone a light on the project's wide variety of achievements in areas ranging from erosion and brush fires through water-resource conservation to invasive species and waste. In addition to these concrete achievements and developments, attendees were also reminded of the planning systems and knowledge bases developed by RESCCUE regarding issues involving economic and social ecosystem services, the various management options and their impact, etc. While working on the knowledge bases and planning, as well as providing support for observable change in the territories, the project also helped develop collective approaches involving a range of stakeholders through ICM promotion. Overall, the review showed that changing practices and behaviour at the grass roots was the observable change most frequently cited by participants and online-survey respondents, who commended RESCCUE for specifically organising discussions around activities to be implemented at the most local level possible.

The role played by operators in driving the process of community ownership of the issues and defining activities as closely as possible to pilot-site areas was also highlighted by participants, who saw the community-centred approach as key to implementing activities.

The project started off a collective learning process, strengthening and developing ties between the stakeholders and even sometimes helping them incorporate, as associations for example. RESCCUE did, in that way, contribute to expanding grassroots action and developing human capital on the pilot sites by organising the stakeholders and their interactions.

The general remarks about observable change on the ground generated by RESCCUE were likely due in large part to the pilot-site-based approach that defined the project. The regional workshop discussions that corroborated the lessons-learned workshops on each pilot site on this point nevertheless indicated that such a project design was not sufficient in itself to guarantee this outcome, as certain conditions needed to be met to ensure the results were produced and sustained.

The need for local facilitation to support operations

While all participants felt that operators were needed for driving activities on pilot sites, the feedback received highlighted how vital it was to have local facilitators' support from the project's outset. The project had not provided for such initial support, but had planned to

include it in the second, implementation phase, once planning had been completed and it was easier to quantify the required resources.

In practice, the RESCCUE pilot site experience suggested that a simple, linear view of the relationship between planning and action was questionable. To the extent that planning was carried out in a participatory manner, as required by the ICM approach, it needed local stakeholders to be involved. As particularly seen on the Fijian and French Polynesian pilot sites, such involvement was quite forthcoming when concrete action was implemented synergistically with planning efforts.

Locally available resources, such as local-government officers and partner-project field staff had to be relied upon to provide facilitation at such participatory meetings from the very outset. As a result, stakeholder involvement in climate-change resilience through the implementation of previously defined concrete action could be handled at the same time as identifying directions for future action designed to keep such involvement sustainable over time.

“We’re all champions”: community recognition as a driving force for local focal points

Local facilitator support and human capital for implementing and developing activities were clearly vital. Feedback from the pilot sites spontaneously identified “champions”, i.e. public figures who were already active locally or advocacy associations that were willing to drive the project. Caution was, however, voiced at the regional workshop regarding the dangers of high turnover among the “champions” and/or the government officers they dealt with, which could hamper initiatives and particularly their long-term viability. Staff turnover at the Southern Province of New Caledonia, which had sometimes made some communities feel abandoned, illustrated the difficulty. Keeping RESCCUE sustainable, therefore, required doing as much for its facilitators.

The discussions highlighted the importance of local communities on pilot sites in lending legitimacy to champions. On some sites and for certain issues, when no public figure could initially play the role of the project’s local driving force, the communities were often able to appoint their own champions. Once they had community recognition, the champions were then able to take on the required responsibilities and become public focal points. It was also pointed out that having the government appoint them would clearly have been a mistake, as being locally entrenched was very important for champions. Having communities appoint champions proved particularly effective under RESCCUE, leading some to commend the initiative by proclaiming “We are all champions!” by which they did not imply that a “champion” was a “pearl of great price” that needed to be hunted down by a talent scout, but rather someone whose abilities would grow precisely because they had been assigned the responsibility by the community.

Regarding incentives for serving as local facilitators, it was indicated that funding was clearly important, but perhaps not as much as community recognition. The facilitators’ training needs should not be overlooked either and could grow more acute as a project moves forward.

Essential methodology support for ICM: the main guarantee of sustainability

Not everything depended, however, on recruiting the local brightest and best. ICM's planning aspect was also a key factor in the project's success, as highlighted by many participants. Once the ICM framework and overall methodological approach was explained, everyone understood what they were able to do. As a result, the background against which the action was set became clearer, as long as sufficient information was provided for everyone to make sense of the framework in terms of their daily lives and organise their own activities so as to be available.

By explaining the bigger picture, RESCCUE was able to fit into the existing legal and policy frameworks and benefit from previous planning work to manage its own initiatives, as in the Northern Province of New Caledonia with the World Heritage listing records, for example, or more generally with contributions from the INTEGRE project. In Fiji, the national ICM framework was also considered very important for re-assuring the government in its budget decisions that would support the activities defined in local consultations. This was a key condition for involving local government and private-sector stakeholders.

The effects of clarifying the framework most often highlighted were not legal or regulatory, but methodological. By defining the participatory process on each site in proper order and with dates, allowing follow-up indicators to be developed and fostering debate on the kind of future the planning process would lead to, ICM supported local activities by providing them with guidance that would help them take shape and organise. RESCCUE did, therefore, challenge the standard notion of "bottom-up" versus "top-down" processes in ICM, as the latter supported the former.

As such, previous or national planning work was used to develop local plans that were specific to RESCCUE. The methodological framework provided through this process nevertheless required facilitators, as mentioned earlier, who were regularly trained in the various systems and methods it related to, such as consultation, planning and project management.

How sustainable project contributions were depended on the ability to place the implemented activities and local discussions within such planning frameworks. As emphasised by the municipality of the Gambier Islands, this should be borne in mind from the project's outset so as to anticipate the outcomes and ensure it remains sustainable over time. The need was also clearly felt in Vanuatu. Although the project's achievements are now being expanded in geographical terms following RESCCUE (particularly through training session away from the pilot sites), it is currently local in scope and essentially consists of offshoots from project concepts. A truly national strategy is expected to provide the means of moving on to a much larger operational scale.

Inset 1 – ICM and where to draw the line between formal planning and processes

There is a conflict at the very heart of RESCCUE between the desire to give the grassroots the leeway to define their own activities and systems and the yearning for a common methodology standard to ensure the project's overall aims are met.

The conflict comes to a head in ICM, which aims at reconciling substance (the plan to be produced) with form (stakeholder interplay) in planning exercises. This leads to a recurrent and sometimes lively debate on what truly constitutes an ICM plan. The achievements on pilot sites varied considerably in this regard with fully fledged plans that government agencies accepted, other similar plans that were not adopted at the higher territorial level and one that preferred to be called a “process”, thereby emphasising its procedural rather than substantive or programming nature.

Despite being so diverse and sometimes controversial, the ICM approaches implemented nevertheless provided the stakeholders with an effective framework for collective learning by involving them over the long term. They also sustainably laid out appropriate methodology principles for dealing with environmental issues, particularly in cross-sectoral terms.

RESCCUE, therefore, provided methodology guidelines that supplied a framework and visibility for each activity in the territories. As such, its impact may not only be measured by observable change, but also by considering the many instances of collective learning and stakeholder-network development that accompanied them. RESCCUE illustrates that, in addition to knowledge production, planning and the resultant action, facilitation, which sets the stakeholders in motion, is crucial and operators must devote considerable attention to it.

2. Lessons learned regarding RESCCUE's impact on economic sectors and sector-based policies

RESCCUE's integrated approach aimed at transcending governments' standard sector-based bias. In terms of action, however, the RESCCUE approach was not an attempt to circumvent or replace sector-based policies, but, quite on the contrary, rely on them as strategic targets, because future ecosystem development and the territories' climate-change resilience were primarily dependant on such policies and the economic sectors they regulated. When considering ICM, it was possible to convince economic-sector agencies to examine the potential for integrating local initiatives into their own programmes. More broadly, the entire sector-based organisation of government agencies was re-examined in terms of territorial, cross-sectoral approaches generated by RESCCUE on pilot sites.

These stakeholders were also discussed in some detail during the workshop's third round-table discussion on economic and financial mechanisms and during discussions on regional activities, particularly the mitigation hierarchy. The above-mentioned discussions on ICM were also an opportunity to consider whether to involve economic sectors in approaches and activities supported by RESCCUE.

Local economic stakeholders were significantly involved, but what was the impact on their sectors?

Sector-based stakeholders were involved on almost all pilot sites, e.g. tour operators in Vanuatu and Fiji, fishers on Moorea and pearl-oyster farmers in the Gambier Islands. Their involvement was determined by the links between the social and economic activities and preservation of the natural resources they used. In the Gambiers, for example, pearl farming relies on the quality of the lagoon that plastic waste from the industry was jeopardising. On Moorea, fisheries resource preservation has led to an original territory-level fisheries-management concept based on management councils. In Fiji, tour operators were involved in setting up and funding the Vatu-i-Ra Marine Conservation Park, while in Vanuatu they helped set up a conservation fund and committed to contributing to it. Overall, RESCCUE had a tangible effect on some local economic sectors on pilot sites with help from the appropriate local-government agencies.

Doubts were, however, expressed at the workshop as to the potential for such effects to extend beyond the local level to the whole economic sector involved. They consisted of one-off, locally initiated activities, which hampered them from affecting the whole sector and RESCCUE proved unable to develop relationships with the major economic players who shaped those sectors and were often at the heart of ICM issues. During a presentation on the mitigation hierarchy at the workshop, however, an exception to the rule was mentioned in that industries could apparently be interested in being more proactive about the environment by implementing a mitigation hierarchy and a national approach would then be effective.

Although some pilot sites highlighted difficulties in drawing national attention to innovations, lessons had been learned from the RESCCUE approach in terms of designing and building sector-based policies. By producing methodology systems for pearl-farming waste and recycling in the Gambier Islands that could estimate the volumes affected, the project was able to lay the groundwork for a French-Polynesia-wide pearl-farming waste-management plan – which is jointly led by the Environment and Marine Resources Departments. By influencing the way lagoon fisheries were organised on Moorea, INTEGRE and RESCCUE were able to start a conversation on the administrative organisation of lagoon fisheries throughout French Polynesia.

Collective learning generated by studying economic and financial mechanisms

Designing and deploying economic analyses and economic and financial mechanisms was a key ingredient of the RESCCUE approach. Many successive economic analyses and feasibility studies were carried out for over 20 economic and financial mechanisms both on the various pilot sites and nationally. In each instance, the proposed approach was based on a request to local or national authorities to select the methods and issues to explore so as to ensure the work was tied to genuine local needs. In each case, the main thread running through the economic approaches was assistance to such sectors so as to make their practices more sustainable. The sectors included, for example, pearl-oyster farming in French Polynesia, tourism in Vanuatu and Fiji, and invasive-species culling in New Caledonia.

As emphasised by the workshop participants, difficulties had been encountered in initiating discussions on economic instruments due to the specialist language that was perceived as complex, not to say forbidding. The discussions also required prior specialised work to identify options, which required considerable human resources before the economic study findings could be used. This highly involved economic research was nevertheless considered very useful for strengthening local collective learning on the sustainability issues of the social and economic activities under consideration. Such learning sometimes came about through government technical teams, who gradually came to appreciate the value of such feasibility studies and research on potential solutions. In Vanuatu and Fiji, the discussion of economic and financial mechanisms led to more concrete achievements because of the high-quality discussion process on the issues. New financial instruments very often require new partnerships, which form coalitions of environmental stakeholders and sometimes provide coordination between the stakeholders.

In Fiji, extensive discussions led to negotiations between local communities and the government as the arbiter of the regulatory framework. The communities proved keen to set up a trust fund for conserving a marine park and a special council was set up with members drawn from the communities and government, as was a multi-sector provincial council with the relevant economic-sector representatives sitting on it. A similar arrangement was set up on North Efate, Vanuatu with revenue from a tourist-industry fee that was allocated by community groups based on the association members' management needs. Both examples raised at the workshop showed that, in addition to collective learning, discussing the implementation of economic and financial mechanisms can lead to genuine political ownership, at least at the community level.

Mechanisms that very often come up against existing rules when implemented

On-site trials, however, also demonstrated that local initiatives could conflict with a country's legal and institutional structures. Governments do not take ownership of the financial instruments under examination as smoothly as local communities do. The discussions on game-meat sales in New Caledonia's Northern Province, for example, came up against health regulations and pearl-farming waste management in the Gambier Islands against waste-disposal regulations, while many financial mechanisms considered in French Polynesia or the Southern Province were eventually rejected by the relevant authorities.

Financial mechanisms, therefore, need to be driven at the highest level if they are to enjoy sufficiently widespread implementation and by mobilising private-sector stakeholders. The pre-requisite for such mechanisms to reach a wider audience would thus appear to be integrating the environmental issues addressed by such new economic and financial mechanisms into the national level, the taxation regime and budgets.

Insert 2: Economic and financial mechanisms – how can the technically complex design be reconciled with the politics of implementation?

There is a major technical component in discussions about implementing new economic and financial instruments, as this involves economic analysis and the technical and economic

aspects of the practices under consideration. Because it is complex, it is also time-consuming in terms of design and the collection of data that are suitable for the issue at hand, but often unavailable in national databases. Such an approach requires a great deal of patience and trust that must be built by establishing partnerships as close as possible to the grassroots level, to ensure the necessary cultural relevance is achieved. Technical complexity and politics, therefore, first meet at the local level, as illustrated by the Vanuatu example and the conservation fund set up in the North Efate communities.

The local level, however, is not sufficient, as it does not provide the various partners with the stability and legitimacy they would need to ensure the mechanisms are sustainable. The mechanisms require financial transfers between stakeholders that interfere with the economic equilibrium and competition between them. The social and economic context hinders the legitimation process required to expand the mechanisms, which would entail rethinking budgets and taxation systems. In the case of game meat in New Caledonia's Northern Province, deer farmers challenged the competition that would result from selling wild venison. The use to which tax revenue is put also requires considerable transparency and a discussion on the social-justice aspects of such extra taxation.

In addition to such legitimacy issues that require recognition for local mechanisms and their integration into countries' budgetary and taxation policies, the efficient management of the mechanisms also raises the issue of the level at which they should be implemented. Transaction costs for designing and managing the mechanisms, the communities' often limited spending power and the sometimes very small number of ecosystem-service beneficiaries are among the hindrances to setting up such economic and financial mechanisms. To overcome the difficulties, opportunities for pooling resources need to be found by using existing taxation arrangements or increasing the geographical scope of mechanisms so as to create enough critical mass to fund implementation.

The RESCCUE-driven pilot-site approach was a means of starting up, assisting and strengthening local initiatives for managing environmental issues that genuinely strove to innovate in terms of addressing climate-change resilience issues. The economic aspect of the projects was often a key factor, alongside facilitation, for keeping the work sustainable and involving the stakeholders in the long term. Developing local partnerships across sectors often came up against the issue of involving higher decision-making levels with regard to economic sectors and the sector-based policies that govern local ventures. The interplay between the "horizontal" nature of local cross-sector initiatives and the more "vertical" aspect of economic sectors and sector-based policies often occurs at the government level.

3. Lessons learned regarding RESCCUE's impact on government

RESCCUE's impact on government and the relevant lessons that could be learned from it were discussed throughout the workshop. On day one, it was raised during the ICM and economic and financial mechanism workshops, which, as detailed above, involved issues in which implementation was often ultimately decided by government. It was even more robustly

discussed on day two when RESCCUE's regional aspect was discussed (regional activities and overall project governance).

Although driven by government, can local ICM initiatives influence government in return?

As seen earlier (cf. 1), the RESCCUE-supported ICM approach promoted by government and organised by municipal and provincial authorities could have a positive organising effect on the ground when implementing activities and ensuring stakeholders are sustainably involved. RESCCUE has, therefore, had a demonstrable effect at the grass roots, through the government agencies implementing the ICM approach there, but is the reverse also true? In other words, can the progress achieved on the ground at pilot sites have a wider influence within government agencies in the way they regulate sector-based policies and/or organise governance that involves local and central government and international organisations? Can local initiatives playing out on the ground feed back up to government and have an effect? This is an important aspect of ICM, because such "feedback" would be the pinnacle of achievement in terms of sustainability for projects such as RESCCUE, if its accomplishments receive government approval at the very levels where its most foundational rules are set.

This was the central issue at the ICM round-table discussion. The feeling was that, while government methodology oversight was indeed a means of keeping local initiatives sustainable on all the sites, their ability to influence government procedure in return was more difficult to trace. While such a reverse influence had not been observed on all sites, the workshop nevertheless highlighted a number of effects and lessons that could be learned.

With regard to governance, the importance of intermediate levels (provinces and administrative subdivisions, etc.) and intermediate stakeholders (local-government agencies as well as NGOs, churches, etc.) that could play a pivotal role between the horizontal plane of participatory initiatives and the more vertical nature of government, particularly in terms of budgets and administration, was highlighted several times. Concrete examples of government efforts to improve the linkage were offered by participants, such as in Fiji where a national committee charged with approving and drawing lessons from ICM plans submitted by grassroots entities obtained more resources for them in return; or in the Gambier Islands, French Polynesia, where, following RESCCUE, the territorial government created a cross-sectoral administrative officer position at the subdivision level. It is hoped that they will help streamline implementation of the local ICM plan.

Placing cross-sectoral issues raised by local ICM initiatives on the government agenda was also discussed. The Gambier Islands example was also pointed to, as a French Polynesian Mayoral Congress would soon be held there, following RESCCUE, to discuss the environment. Placing cross-sectoral issues on the government agenda was, nevertheless, viewed as generally difficult to achieve. While it was deemed unrealistic and not necessarily desirable to use ICM as an organisational model in central government, working in "project mode" could be a useful solution for some issues and cross-sectoral projects. The example of farming reserved indigenous land, which was cited as a promising prospect on RESCCUE's Northern Province, New Caledonia pilot site, did however elicit comments about the issue not only being

organisational, but political as well. In addition to demonstrating that it was useful on the ground, the idea would also need to be politically legitimised by, for example, being raised during elections.

Just as the feasibility studies for economic and financial mechanisms discussed above (cf. 2) could challenge government rules, so could ICM planning efforts at the local level, in terms of regulations, budget options and jurisdiction issues between layers of government and economy-related departments. As suggested by the scant implementation of the economic and financial mechanisms under RESCCUE (cf. above), this was one of the more testing issues in RESCCUE's strategic impact. Local government feedback pointed to clashes between the different jurisdictions, i.e. local versus central and traditional versus modern, etc. The RESCCUE governance approach was intended to appease this concern with the operators managing relations and any friction on the pilot sites (cf. inset 3), while the project's regional aspect also addressed it (see below).

Insert 3 – Can the “operator model” which RESCCUE relied on be improved?

The decisive role played by the operator was praised at both the pilot-site and regional workshops. It was one of the main keys to RESCCUE's success. The operators' ability to involve a diverse group of stakeholders and manage resources including funds, equipment and human resources within tight deadlines was so vital that when they left at the end of the project, concerns were raised about how sustainable the initiatives would be. The concerns were generally eased by providing facilitators and/or funding and capacity building to the sites and the potential issues offset by the good practices acquired.

The operators' valuable contribution was all the more highlighted by the fact that the RESCCUE governance session fully recognised the difficulties they had had to face. In addition to handling organisational challenges, the operators were caught between the various conflicting jurisdictions affected by projects such as RESCCUE.

RESCCUE's reasoning in terms of governance was to rely on *neutral* operators recruited by tender based on their technical skills as service providers. Their neutrality combined with their skills were hailed as major advantages for instilling trust in all the stakeholders. The fact that they were outsiders recruited by tender was also highlighted as beneficial in this regard. On some sites, however, i.e. Fiji and Vanuatu, it was considered more appropriate to have a local operator.

Remaining neutral was still a challenge for operators, as their main duty was to act as the linchpin in both the operations and participatory processes. This required them to play an active role in operations and so they could not simply act as mediators. Having to be close to the local stakeholders sometimes put them at odds with the central government and at times raised doubts about their neutrality. This predicament was discussed at length during the regional workshop and two suggestions were made for improving the system:

- as operators were recruited by tenders overseen by SPC, the country/territory might have felt left out of the service provider/implementing agency relationship enshrined in the contract between the two parties. The steering committee chairmanships on each pilot site

and the relevant project development agreement signed with SPC did not fully resolve the issue. A possible tripartite contract between SPC, operator and country was raised and discussed and, while it would likely be seen as symbolic, some participants felt this was nevertheless significant.

- the fact that the operator was sometimes required to manage a large number of issues was seen as causing organisational difficulties as well as being a hindrance to managing the project's political aspects. A consensus appeared to emerge that more work should be done on setting priorities at the project's inception on each pilot site by the relevant steering committee.

RESCCUE's contribution to the government discourse: certain regional activities need more showcasing

The morning of day two of the workshop was devoted to regional activities, during which the efforts made by the project coordination team to foster discussion among all the project partners on RESCCUE's objectives and content were presented. Many of the regional activities aimed to provide technical information on the feasibility of particular mechanisms (see below). Two of them were more discursive and sought to clarify the project's objectives and rationale by placing them in the more general context of international discussions, i.e. one on ICM planning and the other on climate-change adaptation.

Regarding ICM planning, the RESCCUE team observed at the beginning of the project that there was no methodology guide on the subject, despite the topic's prominence. So, working with the INTEGRÉ project, the team began an international review of feedback on the subject and then developed a best practice guide (finalised when the project was completed), taking part in the sometimes lively discussions mentioned above (cf. 1) on what an ICM plan should or could be. Regarding climate-change adaptation, the team examined the link between concrete action taken by RESCCUE (erosion and invasive species control, household waste management and protected areas, etc.) and the stated objective, asking whether RESCCUE was truly an adaptation project, as these environmental issues predated the climate-change issue. By emphasising vulnerability rather than adaptation, the team was able to shed more light on the issue (as ecosystem resilience reduced territories' vulnerability) as well as on the appeal to international concepts such as "nature-based solutions" and "no-regrets measures".

When these activities were reported on and discussed at the workshop, participants showed a keen interest, but also revealed that there was little knowledge of them within the project. Several local stakeholders reported that it was the first time they had ever heard of these regional activities and voiced their disappointment at not being aware of these publications and discussions. This may also have been the case for other regional activities discussed (see below) and highlighted the need to devote more time and resources to information about regional activities outside the pilot sites and the discussions they had led to and ensure that government staff had first-hand experience of them.

RESCCUE's regional aspect: beyond the pilot sites

Although RESCCUE's general design was essentially based on a pilot-site approach, which was somewhat skewed towards local initiatives, it sought, at the same time; to set up a fully fledged regional project. The idea was to be in a position to advise public policy leaders involved in areas covered by RESCCUE at provincial and country level, without referring to pilot sites, which is why a number of regional activities involving greener taxes and subsidies, land transactions and the mitigation hierarchy were begun.

When the activities were reported on and discussed at the workshop, participants were able to appreciate how technically involved they were as well as being socially and politically sensitive. By redistributing wealth as they were intended to do, particularly through environmental and tax reform, and tightening up on standards or regulatory requirements if duly implemented, these mechanisms addressed social justice issues and challenged sometimes jealously guarded interests. In order to take ownership of these mechanisms, the appropriate authorities would not only have to deal with cultural adaptation to mechanisms requiring expert skills, but also make certain political choices.

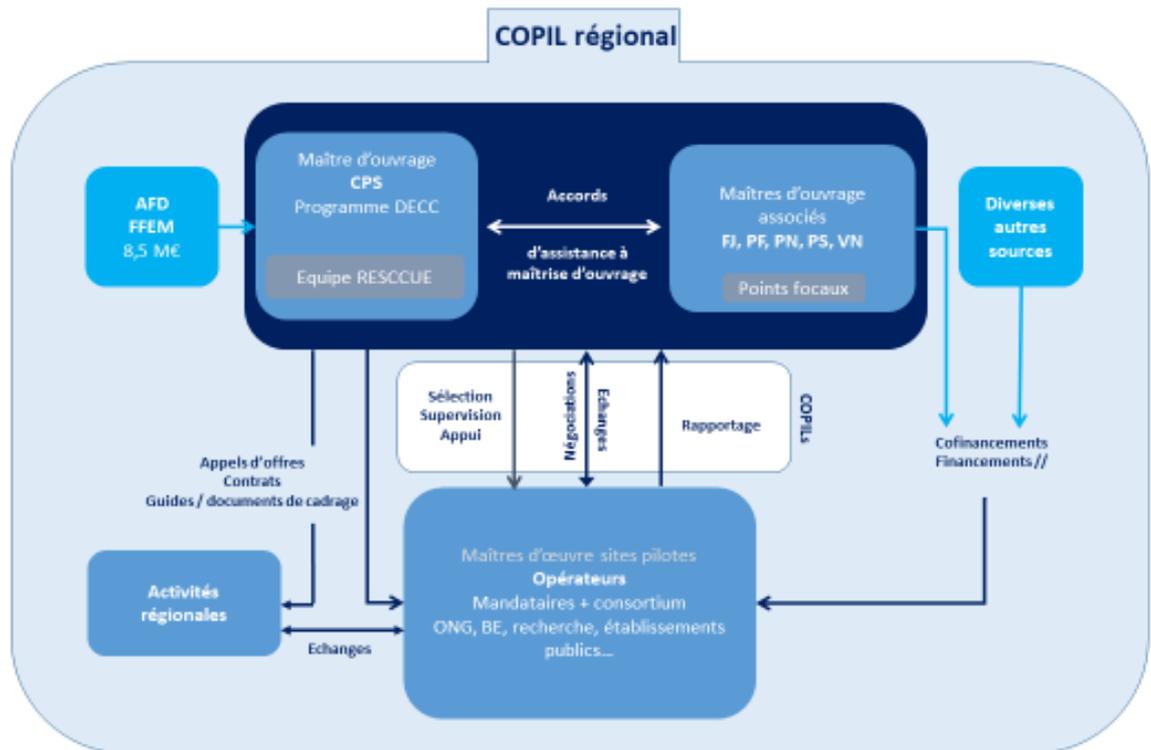
This general observation required the mechanisms to be placed not only in the varied contexts of pilot sites, but also of the international discussions in which they were being debated. Several participants felt that progress could only be made on implementing such mechanisms by facilitating regional meetings and discussions and involving the donor community, major economic sectors and international bodies, so that countries would take ownership of them by a "trickle-down effect". The discussions underlined how important RESCCUE's regional operations were in terms of substantive issues and not just for pooling resources or facilitating communication between pilot sites. RESCCUE also needed to be thought of as a direct contributor to international discussions on and progress in ICM and climate-change adaptation. As such, the ultimate step in RESCCUE's end-of-project activities after the workshop, i.e. showcasing the lessons learned in various regional and international forums, was particularly important.

Inset 4: A regional dimension that challenges RESCCUE's governance

The overall architecture of RESCCUE's governance (cf. diagram below) was designed to emphasise the pilot-site approach by defining the relationship between the operator, who played a central role, and the stakeholders supervising him/her, i.e. project implementation agencies and associate agencies in their relations with donors. The relationships between the institutions within the project were then built around the steering bodies who played their role in a collegial manner, whether this involved the pilot-site steering committees or the Regional Steering Committee.

Without calling the appropriateness of this project design into question in terms of emphasising its general pilot-site approach, it does not, however, fully reflect RESCCUE's regional calling as discussed during the workshop. It may well be asked whether the fact that some of the mechanisms explored through regional activities are politically sensitive requires,

in addition to the steering committees, more bilateral discussion forums for the project team and representatives from each of the authorities affected by the mechanisms.



Project governance framework

Conclusion

By dividing the workshop report into the three areas covered by RESCCUE, i.e. the grassroots, sector-based stakeholders and institutional stakeholders, it places them in perspective and is a reminder of the strategic considerations that governed the project's design and implementation as a whole.¹ By doing so, a counterbalance is provided to prevent the report from gravitating towards the “grass roots” as would a report based on the pilot sites that shape the project's general design, focusing heavily on operational implementation indicators such as expenditure and activity-completion rates, etc. in a bid to sum up progress. As one of the participants pointed out when emphasising how important it was to produce knowledge and methodology frameworks as guides to local activities, the tendency to overemphasise operational aspects is very strong, as, generally speaking, that is what donors and local

¹ Cf. *The Resccue Approach*.

stakeholders expect. One of the overall lessons learned at the regional workshop was that this tendency, while existing for valid reasons, oversimplified reality. Between the time the money was spent and the concrete action saw the light of day, much had transpired in terms of community involvement and strategic interplay between stakeholders with public policy instruments being implemented and it was at this stage that the project's success or failure was determined.

Upon realising how crucial the project's strategic aspect had been in discussions, one of the workshop participants wondered why the diagnostic tools provided at the beginning of the project had been so highly technical and whether it would not have been useful to also provide a formal diagnostic strategy through "stakeholder mapping", for example, so that, at the end of the project, it would have been possible to assess to what extent they had progressed. The coordination team nevertheless highlighted how, with a multi-party project like RESCCUE, it was difficult to provide and share an evaluation that differentiated between "allied" "opposing" and "unconvinced" stakeholders, etc. in terms of the changes promoted by the project or that detailed the various coalitions that were in conflict to varying degrees.

Without going into all the details of such an admittedly sensitive and even counterproductive assessment, it would nevertheless be possible to provide more information on the strategic nature of a project like RESCCUE by discussing it in greater depth. At the project's inception, for example, the various rationales driving change or the "action theories" advocated by the stakeholders involved could be analysed so as better to prepare the project for adapting to local implementation scenarios.