



Pacific
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RESCCUE lessons-learnt workshop
Ra and Kadavu provinces – Fiji
Report

November 2018



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Introduction

The lessons-learnt workshop of the RESCCUE project in Fiji took place on the 5th and 6th of November 2018.

The workshop objective was to articulate lessons that can be learned from the project activities implementation at a technical level, and, by taking a “step back”, to provide advice and input into future projects addressing environmental issues in Fiji. The workshop was structured around the project thematic interventions. Each project thematic intervention was presented in a plenary session and then followed by discussions and work in small group. The discussion focussed on: a) the tangible changes brought by the project, b) the challenges that have been faced and the way they have been overcome (or not), c) the main issues related to sustainability and replicability.

The RESCCUE project in Fiji was implemented on two pilot sites (the Ra and Kadavu Provinces) with quite different contexts but similar issues around environmental management.

It focused on:

- Strengthening the development and implementation of ICM plans.
- Performing ecological restoration and erosion control activities, through mangrove replanting, reforestation, nurseries and agroforestry pilot farm development.
- Improving waste and waste water management.
- Supporting community-based fresh water and terrestrial planning processes and protected areas.
- Funding ICM in the long term through innovative financial mechanisms.

To perform these objectives, the project allocated human resources in the field through the operator (a group of local and international organizations led by the Institute of Applied Sciences of the University of the South Pacific) to strengthen the development of planning tools, partnerships, participation of local communities or administrations, and more generally, an integrated approach of environmental issues.

Session 1: Supporting the development and implementation of Ra and Kadavu Provinces ICM plans

The Ra ICM plan has been endorsed by the Ra Provincial Council and subsequently the National ICM sub-committee of the National Environment Council.

The Kadavu ICM has been endorsed by the Kadavu Provincial Council. The plan is currently awaiting the next convening of the National ICM sub-committee where it is expected to be accepted.

A key consideration in both Ra and Kadavu is that the ICM planning process started long before the initiation of the RESCCUE project. The origin of activities in both Provinces was community-based marine management fostered in part by the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas (FLMMA) network. This work, in the example of Kadavu, began in the early 2000s. As the FLMMA work evolved, it increased in complexity to include land-based stressors to the marine

environment. In response, the evolution of Yabula (living wealth) Management Support Teams (YMSTs) in both Provinces began. The membership of these YMSTs included multi-sectoral agencies (fisheries, forestry and agriculture) and formed the genesis of the Provincial ICM committees.

The RESCCUE project has undoubtedly provided impetus in the ICM planning processes in each Province but it is important to recognize the processes began long before the project with the project building upon a solid foundation of action and community involvement in each Province. This consideration of time is important. To attempt to establish ICM planning processes without due consideration and investment of time is unlikely to be successful.

One of the key factors of success prior to and during the RESCCUE project has been the undertaking of tangible, community-based, low cost interventions that show visible results. The implementation of these activities is cited by the operator as a motivational force behind continued community involvement – and foster the perception that actions can be taken at the community level.

Provincial ICM committees comprise individuals from provincial administrations, government, private sector and community members. These individuals were identified in many cases prior to the RESCCUE project, although they have been further supported during the project. The identification and support of such champions has been a key to the successful implementation in both provinces. Whilst occasional instances occurred where partners within the consortium may have operated better together with the implementation having benefited from an increase in the involvement of partners across pilot sites, overall there has been cohesion in the consortium that has not impeded the implementation of RESCCUE. This cohesion in the operator model represents both an output of and factor in the success of the RESCCUE project in Fiji.

Within the lifespan of the RESCCUE project, specific tangible change has happened in the communities in each Province related to the awareness and understanding of environment legislation and government policy. Additionally, the RESCCUE project has increased access of communities to the relevant government agencies. In the case of Ra, this has resulted in a re-evaluation of previously approved gravel-extraction licenses – an issue which was identified in the ICM planning process as a key driver in the decline of freshwater ecosystem health. In the case of Kadavu, anecdotally there is renewed enquiry around the Environmental Impact Assessment process, outcomes and management of development activities in the Province. This mobilization of community enquiry has been a key success. It was noted that an expanded involvement of the Fiji Environment Law Association (FELA) would have been beneficial in the project – and is something that should be encouraged in future similar projects.

Under the National ICM Framework document, the Provincial ICM plans are endorsed and provided the necessary recognition by the national ICM sub-committee of the National Environment Council and, from there, are used to influence central government policy and practice. What remains unclear and needs further consideration is however how this occurs in-practice and how Provincial ICM plans interact with and influence government strategy and development planning. This is key to mainstreaming Provincial ICM planning processes with

the potential to attract core and recurrent funding. This is a topic that warrants additional consideration and activity in consultation with the relevant government agencies.

Session 2: Ecological restoration and erosion control activities: nurseries, mangrove replanting, reforestation and agroforestry farms.

One of the key activities implemented under the RESCCUE project was ecological restoration and erosion control in both provinces including reforestation, riparian rehabilitation, mangrove planting and model farms demonstrating sound land use practices.

There is widespread recognition that these activities have benefits in terms of community involvement and environmental awareness and education. Implementing these activities - especially involving participants across generations - provides community members tangible and visible achievements. In this regard, participants acknowledged the value of restoration. Additionally, specific and valuable technical lessons have been learned on restoration techniques from the implementation of RESCCUE activities including the planting of firebreaks of customary taboo trees amongst reforested areas and mixed culture of high value exotic species with native species. These lessons are documented in the various technical reports produced by the operator.

There have however been significant challenges to the success of restoration activities throughout the RESCCUE project. It should be noted that these challenges are not specific just to the RESCCUE project.

Firstly, during the implementation period, both Ra and Kadavu have been impacted by several extreme climate events: Cyclone Winston in Ra in 2016 and Cyclone Keni in Kadavu in 2018; periods of drought and periods of rainfall leading to significant riverine flooding in Ra. Anecdotally, operators and communities across both RESCCUE Provinces observe these climatic events worsening in intensity and increasing in frequency and attribute this to climate change.

These climatic events have had significant impacts on the ecological restoration activities implemented. Both the physical structure and plant stock at nurseries established in Ra and Kadavu were destroyed by the cyclones, requiring RESCCUE operators to obtain seed stock from across Fiji. Climatic events have also directly impacted survivorship of replanted stock – including removing, through riverine erosion, a significant proportion of riparian revegetation undertaken in Ra and, through drought, the loss of a significant proportion of planted stock. A clear lesson that should be taken from the RESCCUE experience is that any restoration activity needs to be designed to be climate smart:

- To construct nurseries in appropriate locations, with appropriate materials and in appropriate manners to be as resistant as possible.
- To plant species in locations and at times of the year as to provide greatest probability of survival.

It is prudent these considerations are accounted for in Project design processes.

The impact of uncontrolled fire on the success of restoration activities is also significant. Sources of fire include those from sugar cane burning and burning of vegetation to aid hunting and agriculture. The operator reported significant loss of replanted trees from fire. Whilst there appears to be encouraging actions being taken (for example, reference was made to two convictions under the Fire Decree), this issue remains largely under-addressed. Up to 15 fires were reported in Ra in a one-day period during the 2018 dry-season. Consideration is currently being given by the operator to the creation of Forest Wardens (akin to Fisheries Wardens appointed under the Fisheries Act) with the empowerment to enforce legislation related to fire control. Whilst uncontrolled fire is a specific issue, it is symptomatic of the recognition of a wider need to deal with the root causes of environmental degradation. It was a recommendation of the workshop that any future restoration activities proposed in Fiji be considered only in tandem with a programme to strengthen the implementation of, in particular, fire control and more generally the root causes of environmental degradation.

Session 3: Waste and waste water management activities.

A number of waste and waste water management activities were undertaken under the RESCCUE project. Centralised waste collection does not extend into the rural areas in pilot Provinces. Waste and waste water management activities were performed at the demonstration level – either at individual houses in the case of the construction of composting toilets or at individual village level in the case of waste segregation training and incinerator construction.

One of the key lessons learned from the waste management activities was the interest and motivation of women in the communities to address this issue. News of the demonstration activities undertaken in the select communities soon spread to surrounding communities and the RESCCUE operator received repeated requests to expand the coverage of waste management activities.

Whilst waste management falls primarily under the Environment Management Act, the most active and committed government agency within the Provinces in these activities was the Ministry of Health and the Provincial Health Officers. Both are members of the provincial ICM committees and an important example of the inter-sectoral nature of the ICM committees. It was discussed during the lessons learning workshop that the issue of waste management is ubiquitous across rural areas of Fiji. Whilst waste management principles are contained with relevant legislation, the implementation of these principles are not decentralized (whether through a lack of resources such as centralized waste collection or through a lack of jurisdiction of laws within I’Taukei villages). The workshop concluded that, aside from novel demonstration activities, it is not the core role of ICM projects such as RESCCUE to address waste management but rather is the role of national scale programmes specific to waste management issues.

Session 4: Supporting community-based freshwater and terrestrial planning processes and protected areas.

Ra Province was the focus of freshwater management activities implemented under RESCCUE. Activities have included riparian restoration and community-based planning and protected areas establishment. The former is discussed as part of the lessons learned in Session #2.

Participants acknowledged that community-based freshwater management in Fiji is, compared to marine management, in its infancy, lacks specific community awareness and could benefit from additional awareness of legislation related to environmental management. Additionally, the work performed under RESCCUE highlighted the apparent lack of awareness amongst communities related to the communal ownership of fishing user rights over inland river systems. Freshwater systems in Fiji form part of the wider *i Qoliqoli* (traditional fishing ground) to which customary user rights are held at the Yavusa (tribe) level. This contrasts with land ownership which is typically at the smaller, clan (*mataqali*) level. Whilst because of freshwater management needing to occur over larger geographic scales (from ridge to coast), this larger management area is beneficial, activities, and initial community engagement and awareness raising need to be designed in recognition of this.

Terrestrial management activities conducted under RESCCUE were implemented in both Ra and Kadavu Provinces.

Activities in Ra included restoration activities discussed in Session #2 and the establishment of a community based forest reserve in the highlands of Ra in an area subject to intensive forestry and logging. No formal mechanism for this community-based forest reserve was established and the sustainability of this initiative is unknown.

Activities to promote terrestrial protected areas establishment in Kadavu centered on Uluinabukelevu (Mt. Washington) in Nabukelevu district in southern Kadavu. The upper reaches of this mountain have been recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by virtue of the endemic bird species found there, with the mountain included in prior initiatives led by Bird Life International and recognized by the Fijian government. The remaining forest in the higher elevations is threatened by encroachment of land clearing and agricultural development. During the RESCCUE project an immediate and direct threat was also identified – plans to construct a telecommunications tower with associated access tracks to the summit. This threat was identified at the district-level management committees and, through the RESCCUE operator network, connections with the telecommunications company were facilitated and an alternative location was identified. This specific threat also identified a disconnect between community members still living on the island and those that have left and moved to the urban areas with the latter proposing the telecommunications tower concept. From this, a lesson can be learned: that ICM planning processed at the community level may not identify fully all actors in the management context.

Whilst, through the engagement undertaken amongst communities in Nabukelevu, the RESCCUE project has provided renewed impetus to management activities, there is recognition amongst the operator of the need for more formal management mechanisms (such as conservation lease, protected area official designation). The workshop recognized the

need to expedite protected areas legislation. Additionally, the concept of land use zoning was discussed – although had not been socialized during the RESCCUE project with communities particularly in Nabukelevu.

Session 5: Supporting the development and implementation of financial mechanisms.

A feasibility study for economic and financial mechanisms to support ICM in Ra province was conducted under the RESCCUE project. The main opportunity identified was around potential mechanisms for funding the proposed Vatu-i-Ra Conservation Park. A reflection of the operator was that this part of the study was not critical, though it helped reinforced the selection of financial mechanism: the Vatu-i-Ra financial mechanism (voluntary contribution to conservation scheme) being proposed by local communities in partnership with the tourism sector prior to the initiation of the RESCCUE project. That effort could have been better directed in the implementation of the mechanism. The mechanism is now operational although the deed of trustees is awaiting registration. The Vatu-i-Ra initiative in part mirrors an existing voluntary dive user-fee system established around Namena Island in Bua Province - although the Vatu-i-Ra system is more complex with many more communities and less interaction between community and tourism operations.

The 2010 Surfing Decree prohibits charges being levied in exchange for recreational access to traditional customary fishing areas. The decree does not however prohibit voluntary contributions being made by recreational users. The financial mechanism had to be designed carefully to ensure compliance with the Surfing Decree (and other legislation). This required significant investment of the Fiji Environment Law Association and may prove an impediment to the adoption of financial mechanisms involving tourism operations more widely in Fiji.

Day-to-day management of the financial mechanism is entrusted to a Management Committee with representatives from tourism, community and the Provincial Administration. The selection of trustees has required careful consideration and now comprises one representing each party: community and tourism operators; and one a neutral third party.

An early challenge to the mechanism was need for clarity amongst the community around which community members should be involved. Vatu-i-Ra island is owned by a single mataqali (clan) whilst the wider fishing ground traditional user rights are owned at the Yavusa (tribe) level. Historic discussions related to management of Vatu-i-Ra island had been held with the single mataqali whilst the discussions of the mechanism related to the wider Yavusa. The Provincial Administration and traditional Fijian governance systems were important in providing this clarity.

Overall, setting up the Trust fund (including the trust deed) and the associated funding mechanism (tourism voluntary contribution) required a significant investment in both time and financial resources from the different stakeholders, including the operator, in addition to the extensive amount of work and consultations needed to develop the marine park. The total expenditure to establish the Trust and financial mechanisms is estimated to be around FJ\$ 63,500 (while more than FJ\$ 450,000 have been spent to establish the conservation park). This

highlights the need to anticipate and not underestimate transaction costs for any future development of similar mechanism in Fiji. In comparison, the cost of operating the trust itself is low and estimated around FJ\$ 1,000 per year (due to voluntary work), while the estimated income from tourism contributions is comprised between FJ\$ 15,000 and 30,000 per year. Whilst such figures suggest that the investment is sound from a financial perspective, it highlights important considerations in the replicability of the approach to other areas in Fiji.

Key to success in the long-term sustainability of the initiative will be the maintenance of trust between communities and tourism operators.

In Kadavu a systematic household socio-economic survey was conducted in 2016. The survey demonstrated the significance of kava cultivation to the economy of Kadavu. The results from the household surveys were then used in the economic and financial mechanisms feasibility study to support ICM in Kadavu, which demonstrated the potential for a viable financial mechanism based on the sale of organic kava from Kadavu primarily to the export market. However, the project did not make much progress on this: a possible explanation is the current lack of attractiveness for such an incentive and associated price premium because of the already high Kava demand in Fiji associated with a significant increase in Kava price following TC Winston and Keni.

The organic kava certification as a financial mechanism to support ICM in Kadavu represents both an opportunity and a threat. The value of the trade is significant and, through the adoption of sustainable land use practices, there is opportunity to promote coastal management. In contrast, the value of cultivated kava is leading to increased pressure on land availability and has the potential to result in land and forest clearing.

Outside of the RESCCUE project, the Provincial Administration – led in part by the Agriculture extension officer – have established the Kadavu Organic Committee and declared commitment to Kadavu becoming an organic certified island under the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETcom) initiative. The RESCCUE project has provided support to this initiative including, in part, an exchange of ICM committee members with sites in Taveuni under the SPREP implemented Pacific Ecosystem-Based Adaptation to Climate Change (PEBACC) project where the organic certification process is more advance. A “Kadavu Going Organic Action Plan” was subsequently developed and is currently being implemented by the different stakeholders, but may require some financial and external support.

General overview of the lessons learned from RESCCUE in Fiji...

... A project strongly connected with YMST, that strengthened ICM practices and mostly relied on local operators...

- There is in Fiji an extended network of local communities involved in development and environmental issues. Provincial ICM committees are the culmination of this bottom-up flux of concerns and management actions. The ICM committees are, in many instances, now formalising the Yaubula (living wealth) Management Support Teams (YMSTs) established across many areas of Fiji during the last decade. The RESCCUE project was able to meaningfully connect with this network and to benefit from/to the ongoing dynamics of ICM approaches.
- By allocating human resources in the field (local coordinators from USP-IAS in Kadavu and USP-IAS and CI in Ra provinces), RESCCUE strengthened ICM practices by improving communication between partners, creating new partnerships and involving a large variety of stakeholders (NGOs, provinces sectoral administrations, other projects) in processes and activity design, also raising awareness on environmental issues and strengthening involvement in YMST at the communities level. The implementation of actions in the field that provided tangible changes in a short term has been a key point in strengthening the motivation and involvement of communities both prior to and during the RESCCUE project.
- The operator's knowledge of customary rights and organisation was a key point enabling efficient consultations and to have relevant involvement of local stakeholders in on the ground activities throughout the project. The RESCCUE project highlighted the necessity of including traditional customary rights (Yavusa-tribes) whilst promoting discussions/decisions in arenas at a larger scale to address issues on fresh water management.
- It is important to underline that in the future and outside of the project period, as most the partners involved in the operator consortium were Fijian, the capacities built at the operator level will largely remain in Fiji, improving local capacities in terms of project management and delivery.

... improved development and implementation of ICM plans in the Ra and Kadavu provinces with one innovative financial mechanism established to fund environmental management ...

- The two ICM plans are endorsed or nearly endorsed at every level of the provincial and central administrations. They provide a general framework for multiple and interlinked strategies, plans and actions on both marine and inland environmental issues.
- They have been built by beginning with a focus on specific/sectoral issue, adding new issues, objectives and partners along the road. Considering ICM planning as a long-term process has been a key-point in the success for ICM practices development in Fiji. As said during the last steering committee, *"the RESCCUE project has been a long travel, but a travel that didn't begin with RESCCUE and won't end with it"*.
- ICM committees and provincial administration are expected to replace the RESCCUE staff in coordinating and implementing the ICM plans in Ra and Kadavu. The project operator is confident that the local dynamics have been strengthened enough to ensure continuity. The fact that the RESCCUE project not only focused on developing the ICM plans, but reinforced ICM practices and networks of

stakeholders throughout and often during the project is a key factor in terms of the likely sustainability of the different activities implemented.

- The trust fund associated with the Vatu-i-Ra conservation park is functional. The annual budget expected remains humble for now but new diving operators are interested to join and there are opportunities for the trust fund to grow. In terms of replicability, there are high transaction costs to consider and complexities involved in the governance framework design for the trust. The latter has required significant involvement of the Fiji Environment Law Association and may prove an impediment to the adoption of financial mechanisms involving tourism operations more widely in Fiji.

... And finally revealed an unaddressed issue: the need for investment in capacity and means development for the central administration.

- Despite the ICM plans being endorsed by the government, the funding of these plans implementation in the future and the way they will be mainstreamed into the development plans and policies of the central administration remains unclear. An important lesson that resulted from the RESCCUE project is that future projects focusing on ICM will need to work not only at the Provincial level but also more closely with relevant government agencies to address this issue.
- Some RESCCUE activities were limited by being dependant on the enforcement of existing laws or appropriately resourced implementation of existing policies. This is especially the case for the waste and waste water management actions that, whilst having led to some changes in actions and practices at the communities, remain dependent on solid waste management practices at the national level. More generally, future projects in Fiji willing to address environmental issues should continue to work at the community and provincial level (the most appropriate levels to ensure local stakeholders commitment and participation) but should work in parallel to reinforce the capabilities and means of central government agencies.

Annex 1 : workshop participants

DOE focal point:

Eleni Tokaduadua – Principal Environment Officer, Department Of Environment

SPC RESCCUE coordinators:

Raphaël Billé – RESCCUE Project Coordinator, SPC

Jean-Baptiste Marre – RESCCUE Project Deputy Coordinator, SPC

Operator consortium:

Isoa Korovulavula – RESCCUE Fiji National Coordinator, Institute of Applied Science, University of the South Pacific (IAS USP)

Albert Whippy – IAS USP

Tomasi Delana – IAS USP

Teddy Fong – IAS USP

Sangeeta Mangubhai – Fiji Country Director, Wildlife Conservation Society

Kiji Vukikomoala – Executive Director, Fiji Environment Law Association

Nemani Vunimaya – Conservation International

Livai Tubuitamana ... - Conservation International

Local stakeholders:

Mosese Nokoroi – Roko Tui (Ra)

Ilimi Rokoduru – Provincial Administrator (Ra)

Rusiate Waquata – Fisheries Officer (Ra)

Josaia Moceinasau – ICM community rep. (Ra)

Seru Manoa – Provincial Council Chairman (Ra)

Sikeli Naitura – ICM Provincial rep. (Ra)

Kitione Raibevo – Senior Roko Tui (Kadavu)

Malakai Masi – Provincial Council Chairman (Kadavu)

Aunit Narayan – Assistant Agricultural Officer (Kadavu)

Kelepi Saukitoga – Norikoso relocation coordinator (Kadavu)

Joseteki Vakacereivalu – YMST (Kadavu)

Herman Timmermans - SPREP PEBACC Project Coordinator

Workshop facilitation:

James Comley – Golder

Aurelien Degoy – GIE Océanide

Annex 2: workshop programme

Monday, November 5th, 2018

8h30 – Reception of the participants (DOE + SPC)

9h00 - Introduction

- General overview of the RESCCUE project (Raphaël Billé - SPC)
- The lessons-learning process of the RESCCUE project – what we aim to achieve from the two days and how the schedule is structured ((James Comley - Golder)
- Project objectives and activities for the Kadavu and Ra pilot sites (Isoa Korovulavula - USP)
- Participants introduction – roles and responsibilities both within and outside the RESCCUE project (participants).

Session 1 – RESCCUE activity: supporting development and implementation of ICM plans for Ra and Kadavu Provinces.

Presentation of the activities implemented and their results.

Break-out session in small groups around the different components of the lesson-learning process.

Small group report back session and distillation of lessons-learned (participants and J. Comley).

Session 2 – RESCCUE activity: ecological restoration and erosion control : nurseries installation, mangrove replanting, reforestation and agroforestry activities.

Presentation of the activities implemented and their results.

Break-out session in small groups around the different components of the lesson-learning process.

Small group report back session and distillation of lessons-learned (participants and J. Comley).

Session 3 – RESCCUE activity: waste and waste water management.

Presentation of the activities implemented and their results.

Break-out session in small groups around the different components of the lesson-learning process.

Small group report back session and distillation of lessons-learned (participants and J. Comley).

16h45 – end of work for day 1

Tuesday, November 6th, 2018

8h30 – Session 4 - RESCCUE activity: supporting fresh water and terrestrial environmental management strategies and the planning process: freshwater and terrestrial community-based protected areas.

Presentation of the activities implemented and their results.

Break-out session in small groups around the different components of the lesson-learning process.

Small group report back session and distillation of lessons-learned (participants and J. Comley).

Session 5 - RESCCUE activity: supporting the development of financial mechanisms : the Vatu-i-Ra trust deed, the Kadavu organic certification project

Presentation of the activities implemented and their results.

Break-out session in small groups around the different components of the lesson-learning process.

Small group report back session and distillation of lessons-learned (participants and J. Comley).

12h15 – closing of the workshop