

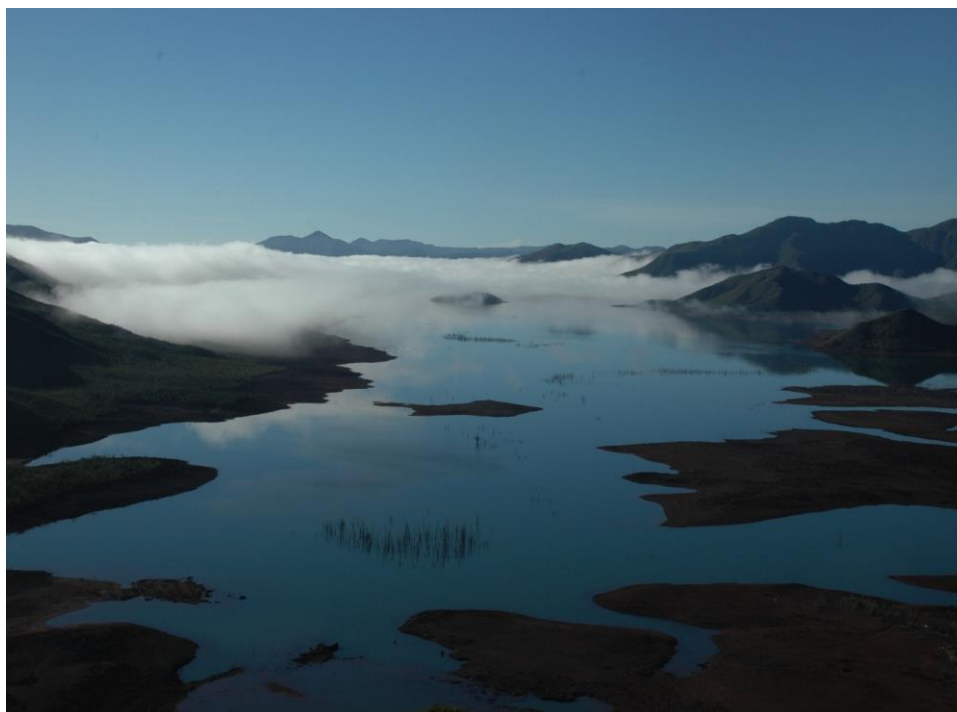


Pacific
Community
Communauté
du Pacifique

RESCCUE

Lessons Learned Workshop Southern Province Site – New Caledonia Report

October 2018



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Introduction

The RESCCUE lessons-learned workshop on the Southern mainland site was held in Noumea on 8 October 2018. The objective was to identify the lessons learned during the project so that RESCCUE's "capital" could reach beyond the sum of its achievements by outlining a set of relevant lessons for future projects and activities. So, the workshop's aim was to examine the bigger picture beyond the project and site themselves.

Joint discussions during the workshops were based on RESCCUE's fundamental objectives:

- **RESCCUE was designed to be an operational project**, which, beside producing studies and analyses, would also lead to concrete action and especially **observable change**, i.e. shifts in practices, rules or public policy conducive to preserving and even improving the environment.
- In order to achieve this, **RESCCUE's main quest was to trial innovative public policy mechanisms**, such as Integrated Coastal Management (ICM), and the project's trademark, i.e. **economic instruments** such as funding mechanisms, incentives, and various economic assessments.
- RESCCUE did not, however, have unrealistic expectations for such instruments or assume that trialling them would automatically lead to their wholesale application. **The project's aim also had a strategic purpose** in that it sought to **strengthen a common approach to the environment in stakeholders' interactions at various levels** and to **place** the issues at hand on the **agenda**, while helping **overcome resistance** to the required change.

What had the activities undertaken taught us about this threefold aim by the project's end? What lessons can we now draw from reality on the ground in terms of RESCCUE's operational effectiveness, the instruments trialled and the project's strategic environmental effects?

On its site at the southern end of the mainland, RESCCUE mainly provided strategic support to the Southern Province Department of the Environment (DENV), which involved very little concrete action on the ground. It was decided to divide the lessons-learned workshop into two sessions based on the various forms the strategic support took on:

- one devoted to economic approaches (ecosystem services valuation and economic and funding mechanisms) tested on site during the project; and
- a second focusing on planning systems supported by RESCCUE in terms of both strategy and a participatory approach.

During the workshop, these issues were discussed via presentations by the RESCCUE site operator group and the project's regional coordination team with feedback from participants facilitated by the lessons-learned support team.

Session 1 – Economic approaches

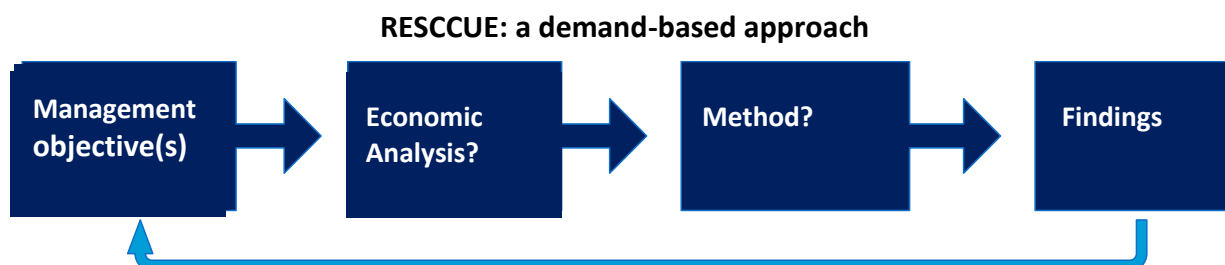
How did they contribute to sustainable management at the southern end of the mainland?

RESCCUE’s “demand-based” approach

One of RESCCUE’s most defining traits was its endeavour to contribute to Pacific islands’ social and ecosystem resilience against a backdrop of global change by adopting economic approaches. More specifically, it sought to:

- strengthen the use of economic assessments, particularly those on ecosystem services; and
- develop innovative and sustainable economic and funding mechanisms in addition to existing funding for biodiversity management activities.

In order to ensure the approaches were relevant and their outcomes would likely be used for management purposes, **RESCCUE based its economic studies on a “demand-driven” principle**, as pointed out by the coordination team during the workshop. Because academic literature on ecosystem services valuations was relatively silent on the use their findings are put to (implicitly assuming they were essentially effective in themselves, despite the fact that they did not appear to be used that much on the ground),¹ it was decided to design economic assessments *based on* the management objectives they were supposed to serve. The aim was to **select the types of analysis and methods by anticipating the intended end uses and the effects of the findings** (cf. diagram below).



Breakdown of the approach on the Southern mainland pilot site

The “demand-based” approach was specially adopted for the Southern mainland site², where it was broken down by the type of innovative funding mechanism assessed. As the operator explained during the workshop, **a large number of meetings were held with the various**

¹ Laurans, Y., Rankovic, A., Billé, R., Pirard, R., Mermet, L. 2013. Use of ecosystem services valuation for decision-making: questioning a literature blindspot. *Journal of Environmental Management* 119: 208-219.

² R. Billé, T. Binet, A. Diazabakana, J-B. Marre, P. Sauboua, Décembre 2016, l'évaluation économique des services écosystémiques : un atout pour la protection de la biodiversité dans le Grand Sud calédonien ?, RESCCUE, CPS-SPC

stakeholders tasked with biodiversity at the southern end of the mainland, chiefly the Southern Province Department of the Environment, to anticipate the uses such economic approaches could be put to. After meetings and discussions with stakeholders about their management objectives, it was decided to use the economic approaches for:

- strengthening the protected area network through to 2025;
- developing an ecological restoration strategy for areas damaged mainly by mining and fire;
- an integrated management plan for the RAMSAR Great Southern Lakes area; and
- an land-use planning blueprint, the first of its kind in New Caledonia.

In order to have “metrics” suitable for input into these policies governing sustainable development, the Southern Province Department of the Environment wished to have the Southern mainland ecosystem services economically quantified and assessed. The valuation work was specifically intended for the following purposes:

- **educating** provincial officials about the ecosystem service concept and assessing service value so as to bring staff up to speed and help them gain a better grasp of what could be expected or not from such assessments;
- helping **advocate** for more biodiversity protection based on the main hazards, including mining and fires;
- **achieving a balance** between the various development and mining-impact management scenarios and the different protected-area management scenarios envisaged through to 2025; and
- **support for developing innovative funding mechanisms**, such as ecosystem service payments, strengthening offset measurement systems and calculating public seafront occupancy fees.

Several preliminary tasks were, therefore, carried out on the site, including an economic assessment of ecosystem services, a mining-induced service loss estimate, a brief fire-induced loss estimate, a feasibility study on innovative funding mechanisms along PES (payment for environmental services) lines at Yaté Dam and a feasibility study on using ecosystem service value for calculating public seafront occupancy fees. Without going into the details of each task, an account is provided below of discussions about them during the lessons-learned workshop with references to the various functions they were intended to fulfil, as outlined above.

Technically, the education drive was successful, but how sustainable is it and at what level are decisions made?

During the workshop, both the operator and representatives of the Southern Province Department of the Environment, testified to the Province’s strong commitment (that went beyond the department) to the methodological design of the various activities, from selecting the assessments carried out and funding mechanisms studied to interpreting the results and gauging their potential for use going forward. The department had evidently “got the hang of it”. This clearly demonstrated **the department had been effectively trained in these**

approaches and that the systems and their potential relevance to management objectives had been reviewed in depth.

Discussions at the workshop not only confirmed the positive outcome achieved by the regional coordination team and pilot-site operator, but also examined **a few limitations**.

- The first concerned **staff turnover** in provincial departments, where the majority of the agents who benefited most from the education drive had left their positions or even New Caledonia by the project's end. This might, of course, have been seen as a peculiar feature of the project in the Southern Province, but staff turnover is in fact a phenomenon that affects all government organisations. As educating government departments first and foremost required training individuals, participants wondered whether such efforts would be nullified when staff moved on. Was it realistic to educate a branch of government, or at least its most directly concerned departments aside from individual officers? Discussions during the workshop were fairly optimistic in that, while staff turnover may jeopardise the sustainability of RESCCUE's achievements in "human" capital terms, participants felt the considerable "knowledge" capital (i.e. the studies themselves and their findings) should not be overlooked as they remained available within the department. One participant stated that it was not unusual for government agencies as a whole to appear as though they had not taken ownership of such capital, as they may not as yet have realised how relevant it was. There was still time for them to put such now-internally-available knowledge to good use later once they had matured enough to do so, such as when a crisis helped raise awareness for some.

- The notion of knowledge that would be "pulled up" when needed led to the second limitation raised at the workshop that could hamper the education drive, namely the relationship between departments or what could be termed the "decision-making level", i.e. an elected executive and closely allied officials. Participants mostly felt that departmental staff were a kind of "filter" between economic approaches and the decision-making and policy issues they were designed to assist. In other words, **the effective education observed at the end of RESCCUE had only benefited technical department staff involved**, but hardly reached the decision-makers within the province, still less the territory. Various comments were made about this drawback during the workshop with some viewing it as typical and even inevitable (*"Let's be realistic, RESCCUE won't be 100% adopted by the politicians."*) while others believed that the department had sometimes practised a form of "self-censorship" when passing on the lessons learned from the economic approaches to political leaders *"by assuming that politicians will have problems signing onto them, which is not always true."* Whatever the case, the gap between technical department staff and political leaders in the RESCCUE education drive did cast doubt over the project's decision to adopt "demand-based" economic approaches and the workshop was then able to draw various conclusions from the experience.

A few lessons learned from the "demand-based" approach taken in the economic assessments and mechanisms promoted by RESCCUE

During the discussions, it was pointed out that RESCCUE's "demand-based" approach was clearly not aimed at framing the project's economic aspect in terms of some "political directive". It was explained that, based on the way government agencies worked, **the**

“demand-driven” approach was a response to more realistic, but also more complex processes on the ground, which one participant summarised as follows. *“Provincial departments requested economic approaches by discussing them with RESCCUE [i.e. the operator and/or regional coordination team] and, based on their requests, RESCCUE designed a product that would help them make an offer to the political leadership.”* It was only when the offer was being put together that the various advocacy, mediation and financial-mechanism design assistance features in the project came into play. Participants wondered to what extent these features had effectively informed decision-makers through technical department staff.

A review presented to the workshop showed that **ownership of the economic approaches at the decision-making level generally appeared modest** in RESCCUE’s final stages.

- with regard to **advocacy**, as highlighted by the coordination team, the ecosystem services assessments carried out revealed *“a real but limited potential”*. While the values observed were low due to a sparsely populated site, they nevertheless justified taking some protective measures, particularly for the RAMSAR area where ecosystem services valuation has been identified as a useful advocacy tool. Such advocacy is, nevertheless, hampered by the methodological limitations underlying this type of assessment, due to certain features at the southern end of the mainland preventing it from being used to justify targeted preservation efforts, such as protecting a given species;
- with regard to **mediation**, the assessments carried out did not generally appear to be used much, but as one participant pointed out, this paradoxically showed that the decision-makers had truly taken ownership of the findings. Because the ecosystem services at the southern end of the mainland produced such low values compared to the profits generated by mining, the authorities initially refused to disseminate the findings, as they were concerned that they might be used to pit ecosystem protection against mining in a cost-benefit comparison. This legitimate objection could, however, hamper other more rational use of assessments by decision-makers that would not involve mediating between “mining” and “ecosystems”, but between different types of mining, biodiversity offsets and protected areas, as the study, for example, had emphasised that ecological continuity was an important consideration; and
- regarding **funding mechanisms**, the feasibility study was disappointing overall, with the province rejecting most of them, either because they were unlikely to generate significant revenue or because they would be socially unacceptable (willingness to pay) and thus viewed as being politically challenging to implement.

The final point attracted the most comments from participants who considered that the biodiversity management funding issue was the most sensitive in a climate of budget restrictions and economic hardship. Participants emphasised the area’s characteristics that had led to such an uninspiring assessment, i.e. a low-income local population (automatically ruling out on social grounds any new funding mechanisms or the strengthening of existing ones) and the small number of economic stakeholders, both of which made such innovations politically sensitive. Participants recommended looking elsewhere for solutions, pointing to

the important role played by taxation and subsidies in preserving biodiversity in New Caledonia.

Broadening the circle of technical stakeholders who fuelled “demand” so as to improve political ownership of economic approaches

Essentially, the workshop provided an opportunity to explain what was meant by RESCCUE’s “demand-based” approach, i.e. that it consisted of **jointly framing a public policy proposal with the technical department staff** (the level “requesting” the economic approach) **that was likely to be taken on by decision-makers**. RESCCUE’s experience at the southern end of the mainland, nevertheless, showed that technical department staff **encountered difficulty selling the findings to the political leadership**, and some even found them reluctant to do so.

During the workshop, suggestions were made for improving their sales pitch by broadening the scope of discussions. Two such proposals were discussed, i.e.

- other stakeholders, such as mining companies, and their concerns could be considered in addition to the technical department in charge and their issues. One participant felt it could be useful to produce an economic study of the cost to industrial operators of lost mining rights, if a mining moratorium were declared on the Cote Oubliée, as some companies’ share value partly depends on their ability to mine and, therefore, the mining rights they hold. Providing such a perspective would explain this major factor from the mining companies’ point of view so as to help guide policy decisions on the issue; and
- in addition to studying *funding mechanisms* and their feasibility, conduct a prior assessment of funding *needs*³ and, therefore, the cash flow required to cover them, as well as the relative burden to the expected fee payers, depending on the mechanisms considered.

By making the ins and outs of the issues to be addressed easier to understand, expanding economic assessment “demand” could increase the chances of ownership by decision-makers. In any event, it is essential to ensure political ownership of economic assessment findings, which requires a collective anticipation effort beyond a circle of technical department stakeholders.

Session 2 – Strategy, planning and participation in environmental management support at the southern end of the mainland

In the Southern Province, RESCCUE generally consisted of providing support for various strategic planning approaches, namely a protected area management strategy, damaged site restoration, southern-mountain-range fire protection plan and RAMSAR-area integrated management plan. In addition to using economic approaches, the support also consisted of promoting participatory strategy development based on general integrated coastal management principles. Combining planning and participation is no easy task and, historically,

³ As was done for the protected area funding study by considering the current situation and protected areas in 2025.

these two terms refer to two different ways of developing public policy that could even be considered as fundamentally antagonistic. The first term involves very carefully choosing the most efficient and soundest ways of achieving a goal and has long been practised in top-down mode, while the second is based on a process that involves bringing stakeholders together and generally seen as more bottom-up. For those reasons, the second session in the lessons-learned workshop consisted of reviewing the four RESCCUE-supported strategies in the Southern Province so as to determine how and to what extent planning and participation had been synergistically combined.

Very different participation functions in the strategies presented

As with the relationship between planning and participation, the review and discussion of the four supported strategies revealed **stark contrasts between the purposes of participation**.

- Regarding the **protected area network** strategy, participation focused on **shared methodology decisions** to address the targeted issues, such as the categories used to describe the green and blue corridor, and to develop a diagnosis. Significant delays were experienced precisely because the circle of experts involved in the discussion needed to be broadened during the process. This is where planning and participation were combined, i.e. while developing the knowledge and diagnosis that were supposed to then form the basis of the future strategy, which would aim at a cross-sectoral approach cutting across departments and areas of expertise.
- Regarding the **damaged-site restoration** strategy, participation entered the equation later on in the planning process under a broader cross-sectoral, multi-institutional participatory framework that combined the environment and mining and involved civil society. Here, the aim was to share the **priority-setting process for areas in need of restoration**, i.e. not the diagnosis, but the strategy itself would be shared and tied in with cost-sharing negotiations with the mining industry for restoring the relevant sites.
- Regarding the **fire-protection plan** and **RAMSAR-area integrated-management plan**, participation and planning were combined even later in the process, i.e. during local participatory workshops open to a wide range of participants, such as various government bodies, civil society, traditional community stakeholders, local residents, etc. The aim here was to **jointly develop an action plan** in such a way that it would attract the broadest ownership possible so as to facilitate operational implementation. The intent was, therefore, to pursue shared, collective action, even if the end product was at loggerheads with approved budgetary objectives, as participants pointed out.

As the four experiments progressed, a highly variable role of participation was seen to emerge in the strategic planning process, correlating with **a gradually increasing acceptance of participation as the process moved from the diagnosis to action plan stages**. It would appear more or less implicitly that the willingness to share in the action itself in operational terms was greater than that for selecting methodology or strategy, which were left to a smaller circle of stakeholders. This realisation led to discussion of the broader issue of **defining the basic purposes of participation when implementing environmental management strategies**.

Much-needed discussion of the ultimate aims of participation as used in environmental intervention strategies

Despite the small number of participants, the issue elicited highly contrasting responses:

- for some, participation served essentially **political** purposes. It was about soliciting the opinions of as many people as possible so as to collectively define the desired balance between environment and development and thereby guide policy decisions;
- for others, it had a more **strategic** purpose that served an environmental objective. It was about educating the community about environmental issues so as to “set up a permanent lobbying force, regardless of the changing political landscape.” The consensus appeared to be that RESCCUE had fulfilled this objective; and
- for yet others, based on the accounts provided, it would appear that government was tempted to use it for **operational** programming (jointly developing an action programme). While such an approach facilitated stakeholder involvement, it also carried its fair share of risks, insofar as budgetary constraints were difficult to predict, making it unsuitable for matching up action-programme ambitions with financial feasibility. Rather than drawing up a “*wish list*” and then generating “*disappointments and frustrations*”, it was probably more advisable to involve the stakeholders in jointly developing strategic principles that would govern action, rather than the actions themselves.

The following, therefore, emerged from the second session:

- very different ways of combining participation and planning, i.e. at the diagnosis, priority-setting or programming stages;
- various sharing processes (knowledge sharing and disagreements on methodology, shared strategy negotiation and joint development of action programmes); and
- widely differing purposes for participation, including political, strategic and operational considerations.

This was hardly surprising as the participation concept is very broad and used for many applications and systems. The observations were echoed by comments made during the INTEGRE and RESCCUE joint regional workshop on public participation in environmental management and decision-making held in Noumea in December 2017⁴. The discussion process during the workshop suggested, however, that the contrasts pointed to were not fully recognised by the very individual who stated the differing positions at the time. This may indicate that, even at the end of RESCCUE, there is still **a major need for discussion about the participatory systems** set up by various people and agencies, and, as a result, **genuine difficulties are encountered in tailoring methodologies and processes to the various objectives pursued**. This need had already been pointed out for New Caledonia as a whole by

⁴ Workshop report available at:

http://integre.spc.int/images/pdf/reg/Atelier_Participation/CPS_Rapport_participation_5_avril.pdf

the workshop facilitators when discussing participatory systems set up on three INTEGRÉ pilot sites in the territory⁵.

Brief Summary of RESCCUE Lessons Learned in the Northern Province

Regarding economic approaches to environmental management

- RESCCUE's "demand-driven" approach was not based on a formal "political directive", but rather aimed at jointly developing a public policy proposal with technical department staff, who were the level "requesting" the economic approach that would likely be adopted by decision-makers.
- As a result, departmental staff were thoroughly trained by the project's end, despite being hampered by two factors, namely staff turnover and the procedure for interfacing with decision-makers. Despite this, the "knowledge" capital produced would remain within the department and so the limitations would hopefully be overcome in the long run.
- The difficulty experienced by technical department staff in ensuring that economic approaches were used in policy as anticipated by RESCCUE for advocacy, mediation and developing funding mechanisms could explain why decision-makers made little use of them.

Regarding the combination of participation and planning

- Participation and planning were combined in very different ways in the systems supported by RESCCUE, in terms of the stages involved (diagnosis, priority selection and action programming), the processes at play (technical discussions with divergent viewpoints, negotiation and joint development) and the degree of acceptance by the relevant government agencies.
- Such differences reflected a stark contrast during discussions between the purposes participation was seen as serving, whether political, strategic or operational, revealing a major need to discuss the issue so as better to tailor participatory methodology to the desired objectives.

⁵ Narcy, J.-B., Degoy, A., 2017- Appui méthodologique à la mise en place d'une gestion intégrée des zones côtières dans les sites du projet INTEGRÉ en Nouvelle-Calédonie, Analyse transversale des 3 sites pilotes -Note de synthèse - Rapport Projet INTEGRÉ, février 2017, 28 p.