

Social Assessment

Financial sustainability for the TasiVanua protected areas network (North Efate)

Indigenous Peoples

The North Efate region is colloquially known as “Taleva” or “the other side” and covers roughly 180 km². This encompasses the Northern quarter of Efate as well as the satellite islands of Nguna, Pele, Moso, Lelepa and Emao, which are located between one and seven kilometres off the north coast of Efate. More than forty villages with a combined population of around 10,000 identify as belonging to the Taleva region, each speaking the same Nakanamanga language. 35 village environment committees composing 2 networks oversee the area, which is located some 40 km from the capital Port Vila. Around 50 km² of marine ecosystems (coral reefs, seagrass beds, lagoons, mangroves and beaches) and 180 km² of terrestrial ecosystems (tropical forests and coastal) are represented within the site. The North Efate and Nguna-Pele areas are a single geographical unit, made up of an ancient volcanic caldera. Similar geography, natural resources and socio-economic contexts make these areas an appropriate geographical focus for this programme.

Like the rest of rural Vanuatu, the people of Nguna and Pele subsist on the products of agricultural and fishery activity. However, small-holding agriculture is undoubtedly the most socially and economically important subsistence activity practiced by local residents (Lini 1980). Income on North Efate is largely generated by supplying root crops, fish and handicrafts to the national market in nearby Port Vila. Other forms of income also support the local economy including small trade stores, tourism bungalows, boat and truck transport, small-scale construction and family remittance. Revenue derived from agriculture, fishing and handicrafts sold in the market represent over 50% of monetary income of rural households in Efate (the income of rural households in Vanuatu is around 500 € per household per month in 2009 (equivalent to \$1 300 international). Conditions in the villages are relatively basic and to date, no village in North Efate has access to electricity service.

Most communities are located along the coast, with tenure areas extending to the ridge of volcanic peaks. Narrow fringing coral reefs, coconut plantations, subsistence gardens, forested areas, and hill-top areas of wild grass comprise the majority of tenures. Due to the relatively small size of community tenured areas, most villages practice simultaneous management of both terrestrial and marine areas. In these villages, a ridge to reef management approach is both in line with customary practices and suits the environmental management contexts.

Potential Positive and Negative Impacts

Positive Impacts

The expected impacts will be overwhelmingly positive and timely as Efate is in a transition phase at this time, between a subsistence community economy and a market economy. For the past five years, various "nature" tourism activities have been implemented. They include guesthouses, guided tours and day-tours from the capital. The main attractions are based on terrestrial and marine ecosystems, the presence of

marine reserves and cultural aspects of community life. With a strengthening of NETEN, income generation should be greatly increased (from these and other activities), and environmental management improved. The linkages with the Private Sector and establishment of the organization's financial structure are expected to generate increased revenue (from the former) and a secure and sustainable means of financial management (from the latter).

In addition, the dedicated staff member (funded by this grant) will in a sense provide the "glue" for all aspects of environmental management. With this consolidation of ideas and actions, both terrestrial and marine ecosystems are expected to see improved management and greater ecosystem services for the people of Vanuatu. This is especially important with the changes and pressures anticipated with the expected demographic growth over the next 5-10 years¹.

Negative Impacts

Potential negative impacts revolve around the expected improvements to management of the Protected Areas, and should all be alleviated via the stakeholder consultation process and continued engagement with communities. There is the potential for conflict with regards to boundary disputes for Protected Areas. Most villages have areas of overlapping boundaries with adjacent communities, which under normal circumstances creates no problems. However, boundary disputes have occasionally flared up into hostilities when benefits of tourism or infrastructural development have been at stake.

The introduction of user fees for Protected Areas, might be met with some resistance by persons accustomed to using the areas free of charge. There could be reduced fishing income for Fishers, if MPAs are more efficiently managed and the rules enforced. An important component of the process however is the determination of Income Generating Activities for affected Fishers.

Consultation

North Efate area is perhaps one of the most advanced in Vanuatu in terms of general awareness of natural resource management. Each village has established a committee of resource conservation, whose primary responsibility is the management and regulation of uses of land and marine resources. These committees, managed by the villages, report and follow the mandates of the village council, which in turn, follows the direction of the chief council.

Dr. Nicolas Pascal, the project lead, lived and worked in this area for 2 years (2010-2012), conducting a cost benefit analysis of MPAs. From this interaction, the idea of technical assistance to the network was developed. He held a series of informal meetings with members of the communities and 2 formal meetings (2014) with the

¹ Vanuatu has one of the highest rates of population growth in the Pacific (2.4% per year). As described previously, the population is predominantly rural with most of the villages on the coast. The villagers are highly dependent on agriculture and marine resources for subsistence and local revenues. However, urbanization occurs rapidly with an increase in urban population greater than 40% between 1999 and 2009.

network to present the proposal of technical assistance, building capacity, generating financing and developing a business plan. The response from the communities and networks was good, hence the drive to find the funding to carry it out.

Measures to Avoid Adverse Impacts and Provide Culturally Appropriate Benefits

Close friendships and professional relationships already exist, between Dr. Pascal and community members and the network, which was developed during his 2 years of living and working in the community. This led to a greater sensitivity of the issues and a better appreciation of the situation. In addition, the local coordinator will be chosen from the communities and will work alongside the Blue Finance Team. Finally, the network itself comprises representation from all the villages. In this way, the interests of the locals will be taken into account at each step in the project's process.

Monitoring of these Measures

Meetings of the network are held twice a year as a minimum. Village representatives will be asked in one of these meetings to distribute simple questionnaires on the project (Yes-No), designed by the BF team, to their constituents prior to the meetings. This data and their ensuing discussions will form part of the agenda for each meeting.

Grievance Mechanism

Communities will be encouraged to bring any grievances to the BF team and if off-island, to the local coordinator who will be in contact with the team.

Any grievances raised with the project leads or third-party contact will be communicated to Vatu Molisa, Helen Pippard and Luisa Tagicakibau of the CEPF Regional Implementation Team at IUCN within 15 days, together with a plan for remedial action (if any is required). The Regional Implementation Team can be contacted via phone on +679-331-9084 or email on cepfeastmelanesia@iucn.org and vatumaraga.molisa@iucn.org or via post on c/- CEPF Regional Implementation Team, PMB 5 Ma'afu St, Suva, Fiji.

Map of the area of work

