Co-management of reefs and lagoons with high natural values, New Caledonia - FR

1. Policy Objective & Theme

• SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Knowledge-based
- Socio-economic

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

The building up of enabling conditions for coastal resources co-management in a tropical lagoon.

4. Overview of the case

Under the Development Research Institute (IRD) located in New Caledonia, the COGERON initiative is the fruit of a concerted effort with the island North Province authorities and the French Initiative for Coral Reef (IFRECOR) in the context of the newly acquired World Heritage status for a substantial part of the coral reefs and lagoons of New Caledonia. It is thus a pilot in support to public policies in one of the North Province lagoons.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The siting of a Nickel-processing factory in the area of Voh-Koné-Pouembout (VKP) is of utmost importance to the socio-economic development of New Caledonia in the rather under-developed North Province. The societal changes generated are linked to issues regarding the management of the VKP lagoon area. What are these issues? How can the expected changes with fishing practices be monitored? How can the area adapt whilst conserving local traditions and culture and anticipating the over-exploitation of marine resources? It is these questions that this initiative has been addressing since 2008.

b) Objectives

Promoting the VKP lagoon resources co-management with local stakeholders following the emergence of a major mining and processing project in order to avoid use conflicts over the marine area and its resources. The same kind of co-management approach could be transferred to the neighbouring Ouvea island located in Loyalty Province as the third province of New Caledonia.

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

There is a steering committee associating scientists, local stakeholders and North Province decision-makers. Through specific meetings and workshops, this committee finds some consequences for specific community groups like crab or sea-cucumber fishers, women's groups, and boating users. In the long term, this committee should become or contribute to the lagoon resources co-management under the North Province authorities.

b) ICZM tools

It is a multi-disciplinary approach which includes: (i) an inventory of existing studies in order to confront the outcomes with the local stakeholders' perceptions and identify the issues at stake, in particular in the field of fisheries; (ii) the identification and development of a relevant set of simple but significant indicators that would allow the follow up of the socio-ecological system represented by the VKP lagoon; (iii) the possible legal framework based on traditional rules and practices allowing the co-management of reefs and lagoons.

7. Cost and resources

The project is funded by the LITEAU national programme for a cost of €130,000 Eros and had a duration of 3 years (2008-2010).

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

Given the multiplicity of activities, although most of them have been achieved or are on the way to be correctly achieved, there is a weakness in planning them in a coherent and productive way in regard to the setting up of co-management arrangements in the long term. This can be attributed to the novelty of such an approach in a territory like New Caledonia with two well distinct populations: the "Caldoche" or European-originated and the "Kanak" or indigenous tribes. As an example, the jurisdictional approach related to coral reef co-management raised enough suspicion from the Loyalty Province Assembly to be rejected in the name of self-determination before any kind of study could be done by "outsiders". Because of the delay in the achievement of the jurisdiction-related objective, the other objectives have been refocused giving the priority to those that are most likely to produce sustainable outcomes because of local stakeholders' ownership. These are mostly related to sustainable livelihoods like fishing and boating as a tourist activity.

9. Success and Fail factors

Associating local managers and stakeholders was important although there was a lack of experienced practitioners in a co-management setting. There were good results where ownership was generated, i.e. mainly where sustainable livelihoods were at stake.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

None.

11. Prepared by

Y. Henocque, IFREMER, France

12. Verified by

X. Lafon, LITEAU programme Officer, Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development

13. Sources

• MEDD LITEAU 3 Interim report. 2009 - Marc Leopold, IRD, New Caledonia

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