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Integrated Coastal Management in the Pacific and participation in decision making



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James Comley ¹ and Hugh Govan ²	November 2014

¹ Institute of Applied Sciences, University of the South Pacific

² Consultant, hgovan@gmail.com

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CONTENTS

A variety of names	2
Levels of participation	2
Governance.....	3
ICM as an objective not (always) as a process.....	4
Complexities of the management challenge	4
The geographic area of management	5
Sustainability and replicability [in time and space]	5
References	7

A variety of names

The key tenets of Integrated Coastal Management have been at the core of a plethora of projects in the Pacific in recent times. With the range of projects has come a diverse range of terms used to describe them. A selection includes:

- Ecosystem Based Management
- Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management
- Whole-of-Island management
- Ridge to (community) to Reef
- Integrated Island Management (IIM).
- Natural Resource Management planning
- And of course... Integrated Coastal Management (with or without the Zone)

So, does a name really matter? Well, yes, and no. In certain jurisdictions, such as Fiji, a named process is recognized by government policy (Integrated Coastal Management). In such cases, there is a risk that by introducing new nomenclature, confusion abounds and resources can easily be distracted. In other jurisdictions, the name given to the process may not matter. Govan et al. 2011 introduced Integrated Island Management which was subsequently used in Jupiter et al. 2013 precisely to avoid any jurisdictional connotations or “bad” prior experiences. Perhaps IIM is a good catch-all name for similar projects.

The name given for Integrated Coastal Management initiatives in a given PICT must respect if there is already a named process contained in national policy or legislation. Nomenclature in PICTs that do not have existing policies or legislation is less critical and Integrated Island Management may be an appropriate title.

Levels of participation

One of main differences seen in various ICM planning initiatives to date in PICTS is the level of participation of stakeholders in the management process. One way to describe the different levels is illustrated below:

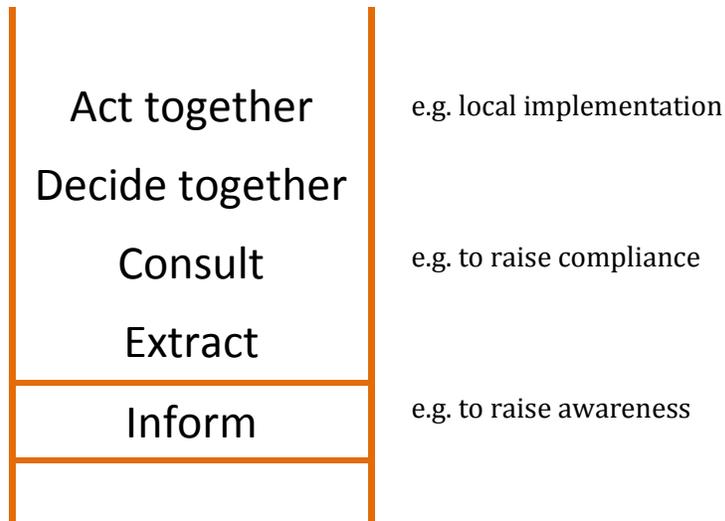


Figure 1: Ladder of participation after Arnstein 1969, Govan et al 2008

The appropriate level of participation often relates to the level of importance of central (or decentral) government and local communities. In some PICTs, local communities have implicit or explicit tenure over land and sea. As such, in these jurisdictions the need for their participation is obvious. In other jurisdictions this is not the case- but caution needs to be observed. In the absence of real or perceived tenure, local communities are often just as influential to project success or failure. A rule of thumb might be that the more a stakeholder stands to bear costs and accrue benefits the more that stakeholder may expect participate. As an example on the “ladder” implementers may expect high levels of participation in not only consultation but also decision making.

There is no right or wrong level of participation, though experience suggests that a greater degree of participation is linked to programme success. The appropriate level of participation will vary between contexts and programmes- what is important is to establish the appropriate level of participation early on in the planning process and support the appropriate level of participation throughout

Governance

In many PICTs, the function of government is decentralized to the province scale; with central government having limited resources (and possibly will) to administer their services in outlying islands. Sound and possibly more sustainable (to mean inclusion of coastal management into the core function of government) coastal management therefore is likely to occur at the decentralized scale. This approach is being used in many of the disparate and geographically spread archipelagic PICTs

Central government does however have an important role to play in province- or island-wide coastal management. Central government has the mandate over national policies, legislation and fiscal control- all things that can impact on coastal zone management. McDonald (2006) suggested a more realistic governance role for central government may be to seek to maintain an over-arching responsibility for

national strategic policy development and coordination whilst ensuring that the provincial, community and NGO activities are collectively capable of implementing national needs and priorities.

In many PICTs this dual level of governance is being realized by having both a national and sub-national (island or province) level coastal management committee.

ICM as an objective not (always) as a process

In many instances in PICTs, bad or inappropriate management of the coastal zone comes from failure of or inadequate implementation of sectoral policies and legislation. For example, in the Republic of the Marshall Islands Integrated Coastal Zone Management Framework, the main issues identified relate to the lax implementation of the EIA process or the issuance of coastal dredging licenses. Clearly these are sectoral policies and procedures. Adding an implicit and compulsory need for integration at the outset risks removing the focus of the threat to the coastal zone- the lack of or appropriate implementation of sectoral policies.

As time goes by and projects develop, so too may integration- but only if it is necessary.

Complexities of the management challenge

Best practice would seem to be to focus on key threats to the coastal zone as defined by an appropriate level of participation of most affected stakeholders as opposed to a wider casting of the net to include all possible minor threats.

A good example of this is in the developing case study in Fiji where grass roots participation identified the key threats (no more than half-dozen) perceived by local communities and provincial government agencies. By narrowing the list in such a way, inadequacies in sectoral policies and procedures have become increasingly evident.

Such an approach also allows the possibility of harvesting 'low hanging fruit'; issues that are obvious, defined and have a sectoral solution that can be implemented quickly with minimal resource needs. Demonstrating success on a single issue has the benefit of reinforcing involvement of all stakeholders to challenge some larger and more complex issues.

There is also a strong argument for ensuring that communities have had experience with local management previously and then are able to participate in higher level planning events as experienced managers with not only a grounding in the reality of local threats and responses but also in the overall management process.

The geographic area of management

In many of the PICTs, the true definition of the coastal zone from the function of an ecological unit is from the ridge out to the reef. By contrast, in many jurisdictions legislation and policy limits the coastal zone to a (possibly arbitrary) narrow strip (30m from the high water mark in Fiji, 25ft landwards of the high water mark in the RMI). What is increasingly being shown to be important when defining the scale over which coastal management operates is the need to recognize the larger ecological functional area whilst being cognizant of the need to be able to break the area down into local governance units.

In addition to the range of scales of the coastal zone, there is a range of scales over which management can most appropriately be done. Many countries have recognized that there are significant differences in the threats to the coast between individual islands or collectively at the sub-national (e.g. Provincial scale). In parallel with these differences between islands or provinces, Sustainability and the need for

Sustainability and replicability [in time and space]

The ultimate value of ICM projects will depend on their sustainability and replicability. This may in part be gauged through measures of cost-effectiveness. Almost all the selected IIM case studies in Jupiter et al 2013 were pilot or small scale projects and yet none designed the approach to match the expected budgetary constraints of future uptakers of the process or indeed monitored the resource inputs during the project. As an illustration the following table shows the budget and staffing situation in select countries for Fisheries and Environment departments.

Table 1. Government recurrent budgets and staffing for Fisheries and Environment departments in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Kiribati and Vanuatu. Data are in USD, exclude climate change departments and are for 2012 except Tonga (where Fisheries 2010 and Environment 2013). From Govan In Prep – Report to MacBio project.

	Fisheries budget	Fisheries budget for coastal management (estimate)	Fisheries staff	Environment budget	Environment staff
Fiji Islands	3,395,982	816,759	147	1,054,361	22
Solomon Islands	1,088,181	101,891	73	297,662	13
Tonga	873,600	174,414	54	NA	19
Kiribati	1,323,333	95,129	103	396,046	30
Vanuatu	741,856	233,333	49	186,667	9
Total	7,422,952	1,421,526	426	1,934,73	93

For a project to be deemed sustainable and replicable in a given context, it should demonstrate core approaches that are able to achieve substantial outcomes in the long-term, while being affordable at the scale of islands if not countries. This requires consideration of:

- Cost-effectiveness and/or self-financing appropriate to the national context; and

- Embedding programs in systems that are financed and implemented by governments, institutions, markets or economies.

Measuring and comparing cost-effectiveness across different projects is important to environment agencies and donors, yet remains extremely difficult.

The following provide some selected guidelines from summary lessons learned from good practice implementation of Pacific IIM towards increasing the probability of an approach being sustainable and replicable (Jupiter et al 2013)

Planning

- Planners should clearly define at the outset resources and policy that would be required to sustain, generalise or replicate the outcomes of their activities beyond project completion.
- Costs for these should also be realistic in the national context.
- Include strategies to maintain the human and financial capacity needed for legacy activities beyond the initial project lifespan.
- IIM projects/programmes should, from inception, be planned to integrate into local and national policy, planning and management systems across sectors, to ensure long-term and broader scales of implementation.
- Social and learning networks can be used to help scale up management models across entire islands, countries or regions.

Implementation

- Because Pacific Island cultures emphasise cooperation, collaboration and participation, IIM projects that build on these cultural foundations and empower communities will increase successful outcomes.

Adaptive management

- Careful consideration should be given to the resources available for monitoring and the technical ability of participants to efficiently analyse the information and create data products in an accessible format usable for making island management decisions.
- Monitoring plans or pilot projects should include the costs, other resources required, and relative cost-effectiveness of the different actions implemented.
- Rigorous documentation of processes, costs, successes and failures need to be provided in order to assist replication of IIM activities elsewhere.
- When replicating IIM models or outcomes to other locations, economies of scale should be used to improve cost-effectiveness and leverage at larger scales.
- Use system-wide enabling policies and financial mechanisms to facilitate replication beyond the time-scale and geographic-scale of projects.

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