

Draft Action Strategy for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Pacific 2008-2012

INTRODUCTION

The Action Strategy for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Pacific 2008-2012 (the Strategy) charts a course for conservation practice in the Pacific. The purpose of the document is to provide focus and strategy for concerted conservation action. It encourages coordination and cooperation around Pacific priorities that address a spectrum of issues from grassroots through national and to regional levels. It provides context for individual action to be framed in terms of contribution to a holistic Strategy. The document, and the wealth of experience that informed its development, represents knowledge of best Pacific practice in the field of nature conservation.

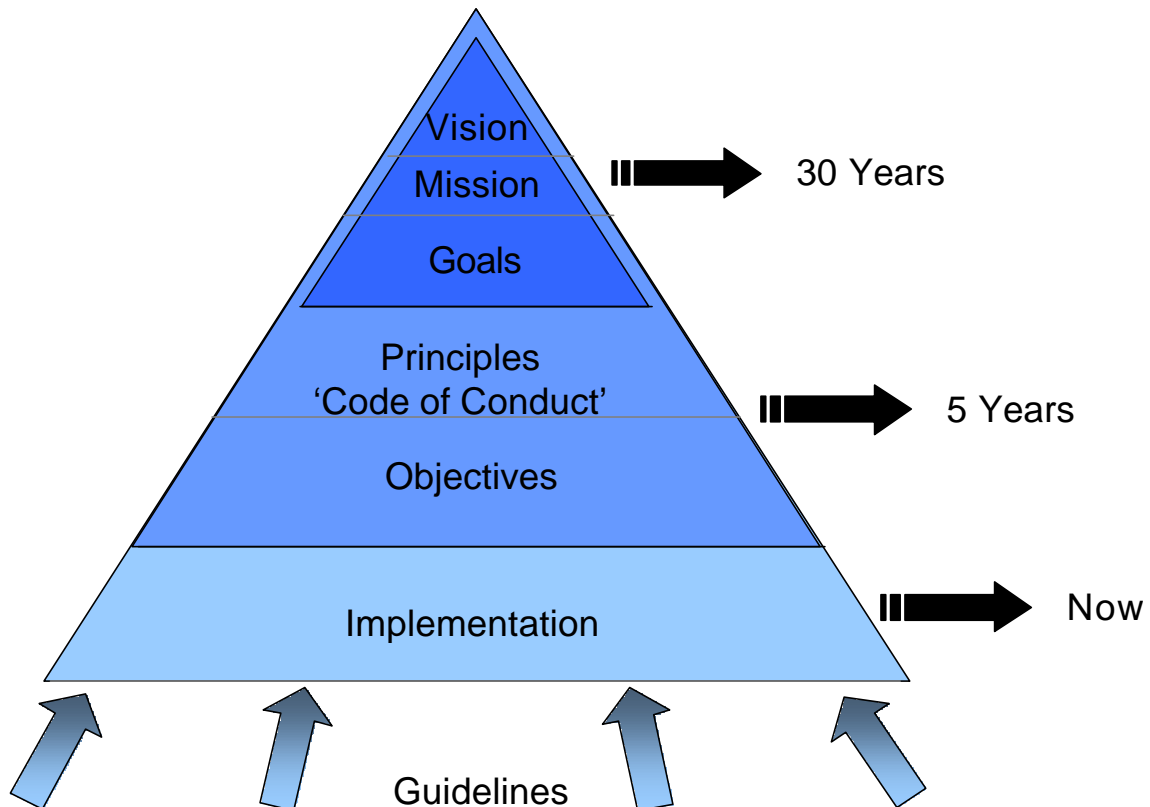
The underlying theme of the Strategy – *'Empowering people, communities and institutions'* – runs extensively throughout the document. It includes specific recommendations on how conservation can best serve communities in the Pacific, drawn from 400+ contributors at the 8th Pacific Island Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, Alotau, Papua New Guinea, 22-26 October 2007.

All parties involved in conservation in the Pacific are called to adopt the Principles of the Strategy and align their current, planned and future work to contribute to its goals and objectives. At all levels, individuals and agencies are urged to develop their own appropriate systems for accountability in implementing the Strategy. Planning and progress on the implementation of the Strategy will be assisted and communicated through the Roundtable, the NBSAP process, national networks and other fora.

It is intended that anyone who plans to undertake or invest in conservation in the Pacific islands region would use this strategy to guide their work. The Principles embodied in the Code of Conduct would apply to investment in and implementation of all conservation activities at any level. The Action Strategy objectives need to be implemented using the Code of Conduct.

For those who are implementing conservation activities with communities then it is important to use the Guidelines for Implementation of Community Conservation Programmes to ensure the programme is successful. These Community Implementation Guidelines are the result of lessons learned and experience gained by communities, conservation practitioners and those who invest in conservation in the Pacific islands region.

STRUCTURE OF THE ACTION STRATEGY



Vision, Mission and Goals

The Vision, Mission and Goals describe our 30-year aspirations for nature conservation in the Pacific region. These were developed during the 7th Conference for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, July 2002. These Vision, Mission and Goals were endorsed by the Pacific island governments at the 13th SPREP Governing Council meeting in Apia, Samoa, September 2003, and by the membership of the Roundtable for Nature Conservation. The Vision, Mission and Goals form the basis for defining Principles, Objectives and Guidelines in each Action Strategy.

Principles for Nature Conservation in the Pacific

The Principles define critical components in delivering nature conservation, and were derived through lessons learned from past Action Strategies. The scope of the Principles reflects the outcomes of the Alotau conference. Because of their importance in the implementation of this Strategy, the Principles have the status of a 'Code of Conduct' for all conservation partners.

As a Code of Conduct they must be recognised, respected, supported and applied by all agencies, partners and organisations working in nature conservation in the Pacific to fully achieve the Objectives of this Strategy. The Code of Conduct is applicable to all projects and programmes.

Objectives

The Objectives establish five-year interim milestones for achieving the 30-year Goals. These Objectives were established as the key focus areas for the Action Strategy at the Alotau conference.

The Objectives were drawn from the 2002 Action Strategy and common priorities identified in completed Pacific island NBSAPs. After extensive review and consultation they were distilled into the draft Objectives that formed the basis for discussion at the Alotau conference. These draft Objectives were debated, modified and then endorsed by the conference.

These Objectives can only be successfully achieved if the Principles are applied to all conservation activities.

Guidelines for Implementing Community Conservation Programmes

The Guidelines were developed by working groups during the Alotau conference and represents the collective wisdom of conference participants experienced in community conservation. The Guidelines should inform practitioners involved in conservation programmes in the Pacific of effective community conservation.

VISION

30 YEARS

**Our people proudly honour our natural heritage and cultural identity
The waters of our streams, lagoons and ocean are bountiful and crystal
clear
Our mountains are wild, our forests pristine and our beaches unspoiled
Our societies are vibrant and diverse
We have equitable relationships with our global partners and our
economies thrive
Our cultures and traditions are widely appreciated, and
The products of our creativity and labour are especially prized**

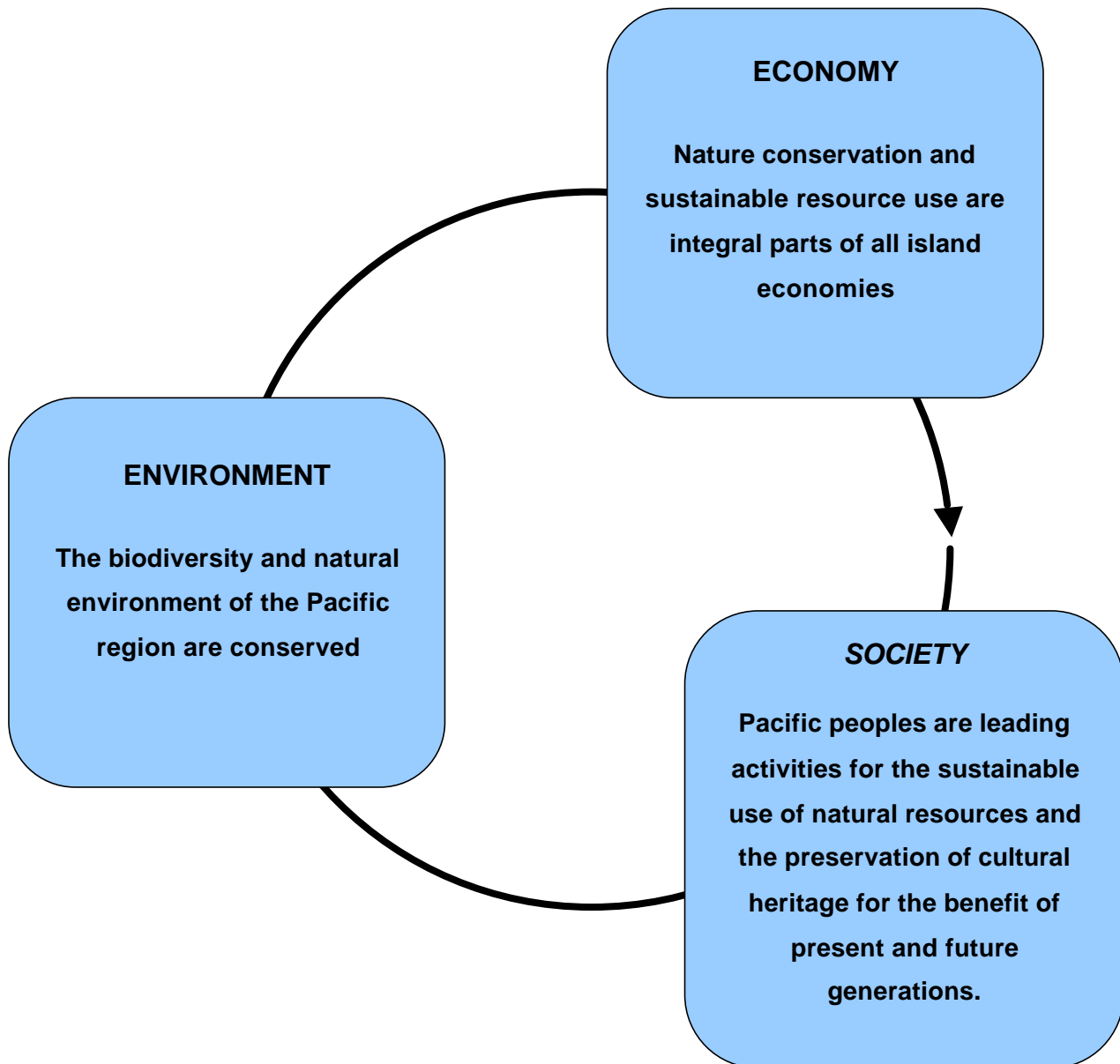
MISSION

30 YEARS

**To protect and conserve the rich
natural and cultural heritage of the
Pacific islands forever for the benefit
of people of the Pacific and the world**

GOALS

30 years



PRINCIPLES FOR NATURE CONSERVATION IN THE PACIFIC: A CODE OF CONDUCT

During the design and implementation of conservation programmes, the application of these Principles is essential to successfully achieving conservation objectives.

Principles

1. Community rights

Most natural resources in the Pacific are owned and used by indigenous and local communities

International and national partners will actively recognise, respect and support:

- Community property rights including traditional rights over natural resources, indigenous intellectual property relating to natural resources, and cultural knowledge.
- Community decision-making practices.

2. Conservation from a Pacific perspective

Natural resources are often the most important source of wealth and development opportunities for Pacific communities. Therefore the practice of Conservation principles in Pacific communities will influence the economic, social and cultural affairs of those communities

International and national partners will actively recognise, respect and support:

- Community aspirations for development and well-being.
- A Pacific approach to conservation based on sustainable resource use.

3. Ownership of conservation programmes

Lasting conservation in the Pacific can only be achieved if national partners (including communities) take responsibility for and leadership of the design, implementation and evaluation of all conservation programmes in their respective areas

National and community partners will commit to:

- Exercising and building their capacity for leadership of conservation programmes.

International partners will commit to:

- Respecting and encouraging national and community partner leadership for all conservation programmes and helping strengthen partner capacity to exercise their leadership.
- Aligning all conservation programmes with those of the national partners.
- Strengthening national and local partners as an alternative to establishing their own institutions and infrastructure.
- Connecting regional and international initiatives with national priorities and aspirations.
- Ensuring all key programme decision-making takes place in-country with participation by national and community partners and led by their conservation priorities.

4. Financial sustainability

Conservation initiatives must be adequately resourced over time

International and national partners will commit to:

- Ensuring their conservation programmes are of a scale and budget appropriate to the local context.
- Long-term strategic planning and resource mobilisation that sustains conservation over time.

5. Good governance

Effective conservation programmes are participatory, accountable and transparent

National and international partners will commit to:

- Reinforcing participatory approaches by involving all stakeholders, particularly community representatives when designing, implementing and assessing conservation programmes.
- Ensuring systems are in place to enable full accountability to the people affected by conservation programme implementation.
- Ensuring their programmes and systems are well communicated, fully transparent and open to stakeholder scrutiny.

6. Co-ordination

Conservation is more effective when partners coordinate and work within a strategic framework

National partners will commit to:

- Ensuring NBSAPs and other locally devised conservation programmes are strategic, focused and set clear local priorities for action.
- Taking a leadership role in coordinating all partners.
- Providing national and local focal points for coordinating NBSAP and other programme implementation.

International partners will commit to:

- Working within the legislation, policies, strategies, programmes and priorities established by national partners.
- Working with each other to ensure collaborative analysis, strategies, agreed priorities and coordination of political engagement to avoid duplication.
- Avoiding programming that directly competes with national partners for projects and funding.

7. Capacity development

Community and national capacity to design, prioritise, direct, manage, implement, monitor and evaluate conservation programmes must be put in place so that lasting conservation objectives can be achieved.

National partners and communities will commit to:

- Building effective and sustainable conservation capability and organisations through on-going capacity development.
- Ensuring conservation continuously improves by recording, disseminating and incorporating lessons learned and best practice.

International partners will commit to:

- Supporting national partners in their efforts to build effective and sustainable national institutions.
- Supporting national partners and communities in their efforts to develop leadership, project directing and management skills.
- Ensuring their presence in-country does not undermine national and local institution-building or capacity development.
- Contributing to national partner best practice by recording, disseminating and implementing lessons learned.

8. Accountability

International and national partners are accountable to the communities and countries they work in for their investment and engagement in conservation programmes

National partners will commit to:

- Reinforcing participatory approaches by involving all national conservation partners and other stakeholders including community representatives when designing, implementing and assessing conservation programmes.
- Setting clear and standard processes for the establishment, operation and accountability of international partners through formal agreements. These agreements should include a Code of Conduct, defined consequences for breaches of this, and mechanisms to ensure transparency of operations.
- Establishing systems to register all partners' conservation activities against national and local priorities (for example NBSAPs).
- Setting easily measured benchmarks to ensure progress against defined conservation problems, with each partner held accountable for its commitments and progress

International partners will commit to:

- Adopting systems that ensure transparency and accountability of their programmes at a national level.
- Providing timely, transparent and comprehensive reporting on conservation programmes to national partners including reporting on implementation of NBSAP priorities.

OBJECTIVES

5 years

These Objectives should be used to align a conservation programme to implementing the Action Strategy. Each Objective will only be fully achieved if all of the Principles of Nature Conservation in the Pacific are applied. It is intended these Objectives and progress in achieving these Objectives will be reviewed in five-years.

OBJECTIVE 1: Ensure conservation has a development context that recognises, respects and supports sustainable livelihoods and community development aspirations

OBJECTIVE 2: Identify, conserve and sustainably manage priority sites, habitats and ecosystems

OBJECTIVE 3: Protect and recover threatened species and species of ecological, cultural and economic significance

OBJECTIVE 4: Manage threats to biodiversity, especially climate change impacts and invasive species

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PROGRAMMES

During the design and implementation of community conservation programmes these Guidelines are essential to ensure the programme is successful. This comes from experience in the Pacific

1. Community ownership

Lesson: Successful conservation projects require community motivation, commitment and support

Guideline: Community engagement and ownership must be established at the outset of programmes and continually reinforced through the term of the programme

2. Community participation and leadership

Lesson: Community participation is a critical component in all aspects of successful conservation programmes

Guideline: Communities should be engaged in all aspects of programme design, delivery and evaluation and have the opportunity to provide leadership in decision-making

3. Community benefits and incentives

Lesson: Conservation programmes need to have clear benefits to communities in order to be successful

Guideline: Ensure community values and aspirations are integral to programmes when designing and implementing conservation initiatives

4. Networks and partnerships

Lesson: Conservation best serves communities and has a greater chance for success when implemented in partnership with the full range of stakeholders

Guideline: Actively build partnerships and work collaboratively with all stakeholders

5. Information acquisition and accessibility

Lesson: Conservation programmes benefit from the application of relevant local, traditional and scientific information

Guideline: Ensure that relevant information is used throughout the life-cycle of programmes, and made accessible to and shared with local stakeholders

6. Sustainable finance

Lesson: Communities need to have the resources to continue initiatives over the long-term

Guideline: Design programmes to ensure resources for ongoing implementation are available beyond the duration of the initial funding period

7. Education and communication

Lesson: Conservation programmes are most effective when they incorporate mutual learning between communities and conservation partners

Guideline: Use a two-way process of communication and education to exchange knowledge, skills and perspectives at a range of levels

8. Strengthening community capacity

Lesson: For conservation to serve communities, local people need to have the skills, knowledge and ability to fulfill community aspirations in the long-term

Guideline: Design conservation programmes that strengthen long-term community capacity

9. Strategic planning

Lesson: Conservation programmes best serve communities when they take a long-term strategic view

Guideline: Ensure activities are part of a broader strategy that address community aspirations and conservation outcomes

10. Political commitment

Lesson: Community based initiatives are more likely to succeed if they have the support and commitment of leaders and decision-making bodies

Guideline: Engage relevant decision-makers to secure their understanding and support

11. Local and traditional knowledge and practices

Lesson: Local and traditional knowledge and practices are fundamental to the design and implementation of community conservation programmes

Guideline: Local and traditional knowledge and practices must be identified and form the basis of community conservation programmes

12. Good governance

Lesson: Conservation programmes best serve communities when governance systems are robust, well designed and agreed between partners at all levels

Guideline: Care must be taken to ensure that best-practices for governance are in place and supported at all levels

13. Monitoring and Evaluation

Lesson: Community level monitoring is effective in measuring and evaluating programme success and is important for building community ownership

Guideline: Design conservation programmes that use community-based monitoring and evaluation

14. Managing expectations

Lesson: Raising unrealistic expectations can be damaging for ongoing programme success and community engagement

Guideline: Carefully assess and communicate the costs, benefits, risks and uncertainties of conservation programmes to communities on an ongoing basis

15. Cultural sensitivity

Lesson: Local practices and circumstances need to be integrated into programme design and delivery

Guideline: Listen, learn, understand and respect local people and their cultural values

16. Community enforcement and compliance

Lesson: Community participation in the design and implementation of compliance and enforcement systems leads to improved conservation outcomes

Guideline: Support the establishment of effective community based compliance and enforcement programmes

17. Legal framework

Lesson: Legal mechanisms (including customary law) can be used to support or enhance conservation outcomes

Guideline: Explore the use of legal mechanisms (including customary law) that enhance conservation outcomes

18. Land, marine and resource tenure

Lesson: It is important to clearly establish the tenure and resource use rights of the land and marine areas involved in the programme

Guideline: To the extent possible, clearly determine land, marine and resource tenure during the initial phases of programme development

19. Simplicity

Lesson: Conservation programmes can be undermined by complex systems and processes

Guideline: Ensure that conservation programmes are as uncomplicated as possible