

Evaluating the governance of coastal resources and environments in Vanuatu

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IWP-Pacific Technical Report (International Waters Project) no. 37



Global
Environment
Facility



United Nations
Development
Programme



Pacific Regional
Environment
Programme

SPREP IRC CATALOGUING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Lane, Marcus B

Evaluating the governance of coastal resources and environments in Vanuatu / by Marcus B. Lane. – Apia, Samoa : SPREP, 2006.

25 p. ; 29 cm. – (*IWP-Pacific Technical report, ISSN 1818 - 5614 ; no.24*).

ISBN: 978-982-04-0357-4

1. Coastal zone management – Vanuatu. 2. Coastal zone management – Law and legislation – Vanuatu. 3. Coastal zone management – Finance – Vanuatu. 4. Coastal zone management – Citizen participation – Vanuatu.

I. International Waters Project. II. Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). III. Title. IV. Series.

346.046917

This report (originally written in 2005) was produced by SPREP's International Waters Project, which is implementing the Strategic Action Programme for the International Waters of the Pacific Small Island Developing States, with funding from the Global Environment Facility. This study was jointly funded by the International Waters Project and the University of Adelaide.

The views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the publisher.

Cover design by SPREP's Publication Unit

Editing and layout: Mark Smaalders, IWP editorial consultant

Printed by: Marfleet Printing Co. Ltd., Apia, Samoa

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Contents

Acronyms	iv
1 Introduction	1
2 Governance and environmental context.....	2
3 Evaluating governance performance in ICM	3
4 Towards ICM in Vanuatu.....	6
4.1 Initiation of ICM	6
4.2 Planning phase.....	7
4.3 Adoption phase.....	8
4.4 Implementation phase.....	9
4.5 Monitoring phase.....	9
4.6 Adaptation and reformulation phase	10
4.7 Summary evaluation.....	11
5 Strategic governance issues in Vanuatu	11
5.1 A specific focus on coastal environments	11
5.2 Participation in environmental policy and management	11
5.3 Information for effective policy and decision-making	12
5.4 Governmental coordination	13
5.5 Customary land and resource ownership.....	14
6 Conclusion and recommendations	15
References	17
Annex: Interviewees	19

Acronyms

CRP	comprehensive reform programme
EIA	environmental impact assessment
EMC	Environmental Management and Conservation Act (2003)
GDP	gross domestic product
ICM	integrated coastal management
IWP	International Waters Project
LGC	Local Government Council
REDI	Rural Economic Development Initiative
SOE	state of the environment
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme

1 Introduction

This is a report on research conducted by the author under research funding provided by The University of Adelaide and the International Waters Project of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP).¹ The focus of the research project has been to examine how existing arrangements of and approaches to governance affect the management of coastal resources and environments in three Pacific countries: Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. It is not a comparative study; this report focuses on Vanuatu.

The overriding goal of this research has been to utilise insights from policy and institutional analysis to improve the sustainable management of coastal environments in these countries and to understand the barriers and opportunities to achieving integrated coastal management (ICM) in each country. ICM has become widely used as a comprehensive strategy for managing the coastal zone where land and sea interact, seeking to manage both development and conservation, resolve user conflicts and integrate the concerns of all stakeholders (Clark 1997). Integration is essential to coastal management because (i) the coast is a space where multiple environments (marine, terrestrial, and estuarine) interact, (ii) coastal areas must be managed for multiple use, and (iii) multiple claimants and actors across government, civil society and the private sector are involved in coastal governance (Tobey and Volk 2002). Consequently, the potential for user conflicts, fragmentation or duplication of policy and degradation of coastal resources abounds.

This report seeks to provide a comprehensive assessment of the current level of preparedness in Vanuatu to pursue ICM; in doing so, it also seeks to identify the strategic issues relating to improving the governance of coastal environments. A comprehensive assessment is provided so that the strategic, high-priority needs of Vanuatu with respect to coastal management can be identified.

The analysis provided here is based on: (i) fieldwork, involving extensive interviews with government and non-government personnel, conducted by the author in Vanuatu in December 2004 and August 2005²; (ii) a review of a range of government (and non-government) policy documentation; and (iii) a review of the academic literature on integrated coastal and environmental management and governance. Since all the personnel interviewed were from Port Vila-based governmental and non-governmental organisations, this report cannot address the "vertical" relations of governance in a comprehensive manner.

The report proceeds as follows. In the next section an evaluation framework for ICM governance arrangements is developed and presented. Subsequently, governance arrangements in Vanuatu are considered in the light of this framework. This evaluation demonstrates that current governance arrangements are insufficient to achieve integrated, sustainable management of coastal environments and fisheries. Evaluating governance arrangements in this way highlights the precise deficiencies in existing governance arrangements rather than generalising that "more needs to be done." It is hoped that consideration can thus be given to the most strategic reforms needed in Vanuatu. Thereafter, the report identifies the high-priority or strategic governance issues that require resolution if effective coastal management is to be effectively pursued. A brief conclusion and recommendations follow.

¹ The International Waters Project aims to strengthen the management and conservation of marine, coastal and freshwater resources in the Pacific Islands region. It is financed through the International Waters Programme of the Global Environment Facility, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, and executed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, in conjunction with the governments of the 14 participating independent Pacific Island countries.

² A full list of interviewees is appended. Note that all interviews were conducted on the basis that attribution of particular remarks to particular officers would not be made.

2 Governance and environmental context

Vanuatu is a country of approximately 190,000 people living on 67 of the 80 or so islands that make up the republic (Hickey and Johannes 2002). More than 70% of the population live on the coastal fringe and nearly 80% of the population are rural (Morrison and Munro 1999). More than 80% of the population depend on subsistence agriculture and fishing (EIU 2003). Importantly for the purposes of this study, the urban population is increasing rapidly (EIU 2003) and all major urban centers in the country are found on the coast.

Vanuatu gained independence in 1980 after being governed as an Anglo-French condominium since 1906 (CIE 1998). For most of the period since independence, two political parties, one anglophone and the other francophone, dominated parliamentary politics. However, in recent years politics in Vanuatu has fragmented; in the 2002 election 261 candidates from ten political parties, as well as independents, vied for 52 seats (EIU 2003). Since that time Vanuatu politics has been characterised by a high degree of instability.

This political instability has been responsible for periods of policy paralysis and economic mismanagement (EIU 2003). These problems culminated, in 1997, in the need for international intervention in the form of the "comprehensive reform programme" (CRP) underwritten by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other aid donors (ADB 2004). The CRP is focused on economic and public sector reform; it seeks to increase investment and entrepreneurship, reduce the size and role of the public sector and develop the country's human resources. A recent report suggests that public sector reform, commenced under the auspices of the CRP, has slowed in recent years (EIS 2003). There is widespread acceptance that additional improvements in governments are required to respond effectively to the range of social, economic and environmental policy problems confronting Vanuatu (GRV 2002).

There are three levels of government in Vanuatu. The national government, highly concentrated in Port Vila, is organised around a series of departments (e.g. Agriculture; Forestry; Lands and Survey; Geology, Mines and Water) which in turn fall under one of nine Ministries responsible for public policy and administration. This public sector also includes an Environment Unit that reports to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Provincial government comprises six provinces. The major functions of provincial government are to promote rural development through Rural Economic Development Initiatives (REDIs) and undertake land use and physical planning with the assistance of the Department of Provincial Affairs. The physical planning activities of provincial governments, however, are very much attenuated (ADB 2004). The passage of the *Environmental Management and Conservation Act* (EMC), 2003, which requires environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for new developments, is likely to require the improvement of provincial planning capabilities.

The *Decentralisation Act 1980* provides for local government that is "responsible for good government and welfare" in each designated region (SPREP 2001). Local Government Councils (LGCs) are highly autonomous entities, and have powers to prepare development policies (ADB 2004). There are also two municipalities, Luganville and Port Vila, constituted under the auspices of the Municipalities Act 1980, which have urban planning and public infrastructure powers in these two urban areas. As with provincial government, the advent of the EMC may see an improvement in the planning capabilities of local government because of the requirement to rigorously evaluate the environmental impacts of new proposals. Many of Vanuatu's LGCs and Municipalities have suffered from a lack of planning; this is particularly evident in urban centers such as Port Vila. In general terms, subordinate governments in Vanuatu, at both provincial and local levels, are poorly resourced in both financial and human terms.

In Vanuatu land tenure, and therefore resource use and management, is dominated by customary land ownership. The Constitution of Vanuatu states: "All land in the Republic belongs to the indigenous custom owners and their descendents"; as used here "land" includes

“land extending to the seaside of any offshore reef but no further” (quoted in Hickey and Johannes 2002, 10). Just as importantly, traditional land ownership invests the landowner with rights to access and use the resources on that land. Approximately 80% of land in Vanuatu is held in customary land ownership and, according to one report, disputes over the establishment of the rightful owners of land abound (ACIAR 1998). Some suggest this is a constraint on investment and economic development (ADB 2004; EIU 2003) and on the effective management of some natural resources (DoF 1997).

The EMC, 2003 is the most important statute relating to environmental policy and management. The provisions of this Act, among other things, created the Department of the Environment, require that all projects and development activities comply with the substantive provisions of the EMC, and require the completion of an Environmental Impact Assessment for any project considered likely to impact the environment. According to ADB, while the EMC provides for the development of national policies for environmental protection and management, it lacks some legislative and enforcement powers (ADB 2004).

Vanuatu’s economy is dominated by subsistence agriculture and fishing. The relatively small commercial sector of the economy is dominated by tourism, which currently accounts for around two-thirds of gross domestic product (GDP) (EIU 2003). The agriculture sector, which comprises copra and beef production as well as forestry, accounts for only 20% of GDP but 75% of exports. Manufacturing is a minute component of the national economy, accounting for only 3.5% of GDP (EIU 2003). While the national economy grew consistently throughout the 1990s, it has recently contracted. In 2002 the economy contracted by 5.2%. Given the extent of population growth this has meant that real per capita income has fallen sharply (EIU 2003).

The major environmental issues in Vanuatu have recently been described (see Rosillo-Calle, 2003) as being:

1. deforestation and forest degradation leading to a subsequent loss of biodiversity;
2. coastal erosion; and
3. overgrazing and burning of forests causing soil and water degradation.

Other problems include increasing urbanisation, which places excessive demands on existing infrastructure (EIU 2003); this creates significant problems associated with waste management (Morrison and Munro 1999; SPREP 2001). Other reports focus on the decline of inshore marine resources (such as trochus) as a result of the intensification of subsistence and commercial fishing (Hickey and Johannes 2002; SPREP 2001).

3 Evaluating governance performance in ICM

ICM is “a continuous and dynamic process that unites government and the community, science and management, sectoral and public interests in preparing and implementing an integrated plan for the protection and development of coastal ecosystems and resources” (quoted in Olsen *et al.* 1997, 156). ICM differs from traditional approaches in that “success depends on coordination of effort and effective interorganisational linkages for multiple use management” (Tobey and Volk 2002, 187-8). Integration is essential because the coast is a space where multiple environments (marine, terrestrial, and estuarine) interact, because coastal areas must be managed for multiple use, and because multiple claimants and actors across government, civil society and the market are involved in coastal governance (Tobey and Volk 2002). Knecht and Archer (1993) suggest that ICM has four distinctive dimensions: (i) intergovernmental (or horizontal) integration, (ii) ecological processes linking terrestrial and marine environments, (iii) intersectoral coordination of diverse actors, and (iv) an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to management.

Achieving the integrated management of coasts is, to a substantial degree, a matter of governance. That is, achieving ICM is a matter of the structures and processes which govern

the behaviour of the state organisations, private sector corporations, civil society and citizens who are active in and utilise the resources of the coastal zone (Ehler 2003). In this sense, ICM is the task of arranging and organising these actors, establishing incentives and parameters for their behaviour, and creating circumstances in which collaboration and coordination are routine behaviours.

ICM is about governance, rather than government, because in the complex, multi-jurisdictional domain of environmental management, government is only one category of actor. Environmental management, as with other policy areas, now involves “a collection of interorganisational networks made up of governmental and societal actors with no sovereign actor able to steer or regulate” (Rhodes 2001, 57). To practice ICM, therefore, the government needs to act and think holistically (rather than in a series of distinct policy areas); policy development needs to deliberately and comprehensively integrate diverse policy issues (rather than proceed as a kind of policy competition that can be won or lost); and policy implementation requires cooperation and collaboration across the public-private divide (rather than the typical strategies that tend to either emphasise central regulation or decentralisation to non-state actors). This is, therefore, a whole new ball game.

To understand which elements of a system of governance need improvement or reform, a comprehensive evaluation is required. There are multiple forms of evaluation – they vary according to the purpose of evaluation and the stage of the programme. There are four distinct types of evaluation:

1. *appropriateness evaluations* of the extent to which a programme’s objectives or desired outcomes align with government priorities and client needs;
2. *cost-effectiveness evaluations* of the input cost (in money terms) of given outcomes which may not be readily expressed in money terms;
3. *effectiveness evaluations* measuring the extent to which project outcomes are achieving programme objectives; and
4. *efficiency evaluations*, which focus on the extent to which programme inputs are minimized for a given level of programme outputs, or the extent to which outputs are maximised for a given level of inputs (ANAO 1997).

Given the focus of this report — the integrated management of coastal resources and environments — the primary purpose of this evaluation is to measure the appropriateness and effectiveness of the management system in terms of predefined policy criteria. Does the system as a whole deliver the goods? If not, where are the gaps and what should be done? It should be noted here that it has already been accepted that Vanuatu has had difficulties in recent years with the performance of government (GRV 2002). It is against this backdrop that this report should be viewed.

This study uses indicators for measuring governance performance in ICM developed by Ehler (2003).³

³ Ehler’s indicators for governance in ICM also include indicators for “environmental and socio-economic outcomes” (2003, 344-5). These indicators related to substantive goals normally associated with ICM such as, for instance, improvements in water quality or the reduction of conflicts over coastal use. These have not been utilised in this study for two reasons. First, work in Vanuatu to improve the management of coastal resources is so nascent that an evaluation of substantive progress would be premature, and second, because the substantive goals developed in Vanuatu are unlikely to conform to universal prescriptions given the unique context that obtains.

⁴ Because governance entails the involvement of both state and non-state actors, Ehler’s (2003) framework has been adapted by incorporating indicators for the effective articulation and coordination of both formal and informal institutions in management. In Vanuatu, where the institution of customary land and resource ownership is a central dimension of social and economic life, the (new) indicators incorporated into Ehler’s framework primarily relate to relations between customary land owners and governmental actors.

Table 1 A framework for evaluating governance performance

Phase	Governance Feature	Examples of Indicators of output/outcome
Initiation	Authority	Enabling legislation Authority for national or subnational bodies Delineation of roles among levels of government
	Leadership	Agency leadership identified Leaders of constituency groups identified & developed
	Visioning	Consensus built for common vision Linkages between ICM and national development goals
	Institutional capacity	Interagency steering group established Scientific/user groups established Training courses for public officials Interagency process and authority defined clearly Coordination among ICM projects and investment assured
	Human resource development	Development of human resources to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate ICM Identification of necessary leadership skills
	Empowerment	Local stakeholders have influence & control of ICM regime
	Financial resources management	Scaling of financial resources is appropriate to institutional capacity Financial contributions to ICM are coordinated
Planning	Planning capacity	Allocation of adequate resources for planning Appropriate staff hired, trained and maintained Baseline studies completed Problems identified, analysed and ranked Management boundaries defined Measurable objectives identified Ability to adapt and react to change Predictive capacity established Participatory planning process established
	Information management capacity	Adaptive information management system established Information is effectively organised, managed and disseminated Public information to information is assured
	Public participation	Effectives stakeholder participation in all phases of ICM
Adoption	Formalisation and Support	Legitimate authority(s) agree to adopt plan of action ICM integrated into national environmental management and development programs Plan of action endorsed by constituencies and users Stakeholders actively seek resources to implement plan of action Long-term financial support for ICM
Implementation	Implementation capacity	Clear authority to develop/enforce regulations Appropriate funding available for implementation activities Diverse activities among institutions and projects are effectively coordinated
	Enforcement capacity	Compliance monitoring program in place Appropriate penalties assessed and collected for non-

Phase	Governance Feature	Examples of Indicators of output/outcome
	Conflict Resolution	compliance Mechanisms for resolution of conflicts among agencies Conflicts among users identified and implemented
	Decision-making	Definitive decisions taken Decision makers held accountable for results
Monitoring & evaluation	Monitoring capacity	Management performance monitoring is operational Appropriate users and communities are involved in monitoring Monitoring and evaluation of social, economic and bio-physical context is operational
Adaptation and reformulation	Evaluation capacity	Outcome indicators used to evaluate performance Evaluation of success/failure of management action fed back into planning Evaluation results used to reallocate resources Evaluation results used to change goals, objectives, management strategies and desired outcomes

Source: Adapted from Ehler, 2003.

These indicators closely resemble the framework provided by ISO14001 (McDonald and Lane 2002) but are more tightly focused around ICM needs. Table 1, below, presents (an adaptation of) Ehler's (2003) framework for evaluating governance performance in the integrated management of coastal resources and environments.⁵

4 Towards ICM in Vanuatu

The structure, arrangements and processes of governance in Vanuatu were reviewed with Ehler's (modified) framework in mind. In the following, each stage of ICM, from initiation to adaptation and reformulation, is considered.

4.1 Initiation of ICM

The initiation of ICM, that is the decision to pursue the development and implementation of an integrated coastal management framework, is a crucial step to improving the management of coastal environments. Such a decision reflects a realisation that coasts need coordinated management and that failure to do so carries important risks and costs. Initiation in this sense can be understood as a realisation that problems exist, that the problems are great and that a considered and deliberate response is required. Table 2 reveals the level of consciousness in Vanuatu about the problems confronting coastal environments and the degree of institutional preparedness for pursuing an integrated approach to coastal management.

In terms of institutional consciousness and preparedness the situation in Vanuatu is arguably depressing. Much remains to be done to achieve an ICM strategy and an architecture through which it can be achieved. There is no enabling legislation, policy or strategy for ICM. While the Environment Unit has recently made great strides with the passage of its legislation and the establishment of a scientific advisory group, much remains to be done in the area of inter-governmental and inter-institutional coordination.

⁵ Because governance entails the involvement of both state and non-state actors, Ehler's (2003) framework has been adapted by incorporating indicators for the effective articulation and coordination of both formal and informal institutions in management. In Vanuatu, where the institution of customary land and resource ownership is a central dimension of social and economic life, the (new) indicators incorporated into Ehler's framework primarily relate to relations between customary land owners and governmental actors.

Table 2 Performance in initiating ICM

Governance Feature	Indicators	Performance
Authority	Enabling legislation	×
	Authority for national or sub-national bodies	×
	Delineation of roles among levels of government	×
Leadership	Agency leadership identified	×
	Leaders of constituency groups identified & developed	√
Visioning	Consensus built for common vision	×
	Linkages between ICM and national development goals	×
Formal–informal institutional linkages	Responsibilities of government and customary land/resource owners delineated	×
	Effective communication between informal and formal institutions	×
	Mechanism to provide independent advice to customary land & resource owners when making resource decisions	×
Institutional capacity	Interagency steering group established	×
	Scientific/user groups established	√
	Training courses for public officials	×
	Interagency process and authority defined clearly	×
	Coordination among ICM projects & investment assured	×
Human resource development	Development of human resources to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate ICM	×
	Identification of necessary leadership skills	×
Financial resources management	Scaling of financial resources is appropriate to institutional capacity	×
	Financial contributions to ICM are coordinated	×

√ = accomplished or in place; × = not accomplished, not in place

To some extent the analysis presented in Table 2 understates the degree of concern within Vanuatu — across both government and civil society — about striking a balance between the need for economic development and increasingly observable need to ensure the sustainability of natural resources, particularly inshore reefs and other key coastal resources. This concern, although widespread, has not yet been translated into institutional policy action or the negotiation of a common vision for ICM. This perhaps reflects the fractured character of Vanuatu’s parliamentary politics, and also, of course, the overwhelming complexity of the problem.

4.2 Planning phase

The planning phase is where the political will and institutional preparedness developed in the initiation phase is translated into a series of discrete actions that enable an ICM strategy to be pursued. In order to undertake ICM, the planning capacity of government needs to be developed; information resources (such as scientific data sets) husbanded; and processes developed to ensure the ongoing involvement of the public and key stakeholders. Table 3, below, summarises the planning capacity of government in Vanuatu, the availability of information and mechanisms to ensure stakeholder participation.

Table 3 Performance in the Planning phase of ICM

Governance Feature	Indicators	Performance
Planning capacity	Allocation of adequate resources for planning	×
	Appropriate staff hired, trained and maintained	×
	Baseline studies completed	×
	Problems identified, analysed and ranked	×
	Management boundaries defined	×
	Measurable objectives identified	×
	Ability to adapt and react to change	×
	Predictive capacity established	×
	Participatory planning process established	×
Information management capacity	Adaptive information management system established	×
	Information effectively organised, managed & disseminated	×
	Public access to information is assured	×
Public participation	Effectives stakeholder participation in all phases of ICM	×

√ = accomplished or in place; × = not accomplished, not in place

Vanuatu is currently not prepared to administer an ICM framework. Three strategic issues are manifest here. First, informants interviewed for this study all report that government agencies largely deal with issues as they arise and solve them on an *ad hoc* basis: they do not have the resources (human or financial) or the institutional processes to conduct baseline planning in an effort to improve the management of coastal environments. Second, basic environmental research in Vanuatu is poorly developed and, as a result, key actors, such as government and customary land-owning communities, are poorly endowed with information and data. This is, of course, a significant impediment to improved coastal management. Third, most informants interviewed lamented the distance between the central government and the wider public and the dominance of elites in political and economic life. A "whole of government" strategy for ensuring (and enabling) the participation of Ni-Vanuatu in policy development and implementation is required.

Of course, all of these issues are related to the resourcing of government in both financial and human terms. The availability of sufficient numbers of appropriately trained staff supported by an operational budget appropriate to the tasks at hand has been widely recognised as a fundamental constraint on government (see, UNU 2002).

4.3 Adoption phase

Table 4 Performance in the Adoption Phase of ICM

Governance Feature	Indicators	Performance
Formalisation and Support	Legitimate authority(s) agree to adopt plan of action	×
	ICM integrated into national environmental management and development programs	×
	Plan of action endorsed by constituencies and users	×
	Stakeholders actively seek resources to implement plan of action	×
	Long-term financial support for ICM	×

√ = accomplished or in place; × = not accomplished, not in place

Table 4 shows that there has been no systemic adoption of ICM in Vanuatu. This is not to say, however, that diverse government and non-government stakeholders are unaware of the need for action on coastal management issues. The opposite is true: there is widespread agreement that improved management of coastal environments is required. The highest levels of government recognise the centrality of improved environmental management (see GRV 2002). What is missing, however, is coordinated "whole of government" decision-making that enables cross-sectoral issues to be identified and responded to. There are some excellent initiatives occurring across government in Vanuatu — in Environment, Fisheries and Lands, for instance — but until the intersection of these issues and governmental responses are considered both systemically and proactively, a policy framework such as ICM cannot be pursued. What is missing is the architecture and methodology of governance that enables holistic thinking and action. If achieved, responsibilities could be allocated, different coastal management policy issues addressed in diverse agencies and, in these circumstances government could engage with the diverse concerns of the citizenry on issues such as coastal management.

4.4 Implementation phase

The implementation phase of ICM is concerned with ensuring the structures and processes of government are organised in such a way that ICM can be implemented. The implementation phase therefore includes matters such as funding, clearly delineated authority for ICM, mechanisms for conflict resolution and the like. These are, of course, crucial to practicing (rather than merely talking about) ICM.

Table 5 Performance in the Implementation Phase of ICM

Governance Feature	Examples of Indicators of output/outcome	Performance
Implementation capacity	Clear authority to develop/enforce regulations	×
	Appropriate funding available for implementation activities	×
	Diverse activities among institutions and projects are effectively coordinated	×
Enforcement capacity	Compliance monitoring program in place	×
	Appropriate penalties assessed and collected for non-compliance	×
Conflict Resolution	Mechanisms for resolution of conflicts among agencies	×
	Conflicts among users identified and implemented	×
Decision-making	Definitive decisions taken	×
	Decision makers held accountable for results	×

√ = accomplished or in place; × = not accomplished, not in place

Table 5 shows that there are no indications that ICM is being implemented in Vanuatu in a systemic way. Two strategic issues emerge from Table 5. The first is the need for improved mechanisms of inter-governmental and inter-institutional coordination. Effective ICM policy and planning will count for little if coordinated governance arrangements are not established to implement the goals of ICM plans. Second, in a crowded, contested domain such as coastal management, conflict is inevitable and, therefore, mechanisms for its mediation are essential.

4.5 Monitoring phase

Monitoring is, of course, crucial to determine if policies and plans are being implemented effectively and to establish whether the objectives of such activities are being met (in ecological, socioeconomic and other terms). Table 6 shows that improved commitment to and

capabilities in monitoring is an essential ingredient to improved coastal management in Vanuatu.

Two matters deserve further mention here. First, coordination across government and civil society is crucial to ICM. Explicit mechanisms, and perhaps training, may be necessary to improve intra-governmental coordination. Second, a dedicated system of monitoring is required to monitor: (i) the state of Vanuatu’s natural resources on an ongoing basis, and (ii) the effectiveness of management.

Table 6 Performance in the Monitoring Phase of ICM

Governance Feature	Examples of Indicators of output/outcome	Performance
Monitoring capacity	Management performance monitoring is operational	×
	Appropriate users and communities are involved in monitoring	×
	Monitoring and evaluation of social, economic and bio-physical context is operational	×

√ = accomplished or in place; × = not accomplished, not in place

4.6 Adaptation and reformulation phase

Information gathered during the monitoring phase — and during other phases of the planning process — needs to be used in a systematic way to fine-tune (and where appropriate, reformulate) policy and management settings. This is adaptive management. It is also extremely complex and a host of wealthy countries struggle to develop and maintain an adaptive approach to environmental management.

Table 7 Performance in the Adaptation and Reformulation Phase of ICM

Governance Feature	Indicators	Performance
Evaluation capacity	Outcome indicators used to evaluate performance	×
	Evaluation of success/failure of management action fed back into planning	×
	Evaluation results used to reallocate resources	×
	Evaluation results used to change goals, objectives, management strategies and desired outcomes	×

√ = accomplished or in place; × = not accomplished, not in place

Evaluation of management effectiveness is a fiendishly complex (and expensive) task. It requires, first, a mechanism for monitoring diverse natural resources and second, for identifying moments and places where management efforts have been sub-optimal. The former is complex, time-consuming and expensive, while the latter requires a good deal of political and institutional courage. Institutions are rarely good at accepting that their performance in environmental management could be improved and yet doing so is crucial to ensure that management is adaptive to changing knowledge and conditions. Table 7 shows that some mechanism is needed in Vanuatu to provide for adaptation and reformulation of coastal management strategies.

One (relatively) inexpensive means of responding to this need would be for Vanuatu to implement state of the environment (SOE) reporting on an annual basis. SOE reporting has proven, in some countries, to be an effective means of concentrating the monitoring effort and delivering a report card on management efforts. SOE reports can provide a repository of data on the condition of natural resources, provide valuable evaluative material of the success of management efforts and, in so doing, publicise priority issues associated with environmental management.

4.7 Summary evaluation

ICM is not currently being pursued in Vanuatu. There are, in addition, serious deficiencies in the governance arrangements associated with the management of coastal environments. If Vanuatu and the agencies with which it collaborates (e.g. SPREP) wish to pursue ICM, much needs to be done in the structure and process of governance to enable that effort every chance of success. In which areas should attention be first directed? What might be the strategic issues that require resolution before a suite of tactical measures designed to improve coastal management can be entertained? The discussion below focuses attention on the strategic dimensions of governance in Vanuatu that deserve priority attention.

5 Strategic governance issues in Vanuatu

The analysis provided above shows that governance arrangements in Vanuatu poorly resemble the ideal required to pursue the effective, integrated management of coastal environments. Much needs to be done to achieve ICM. In which areas might one accord priority for reform? Are there strategic, or overarching, governance issues that demand immediate attention? The analysis that follows identifies seven strategic issues for governance reform in Vanuatu.

5.1 A specific focus on coastal environments

There is no specific or dedicated policy focus in Vanuatu on coastal environments. While a number of agencies have responsibilities that are integral to the health of coastal environments (the Environment Unit, for instance, is responsible for biodiversity, and Fisheries has responsibility for managing the harvesting of marine resources) no line agency is has a policy objective centered on coastal environments. Given that 70% of the population live on the coast, that subsistence agriculture and fishing are the mainstay of the national economy, and that the urbanised population is increasing, the absence of policy leadership on integrated coastal management is likely to lead to sub-optimal management of coastal resources.

One effective response to the problem of a lack of policy leadership on coastal management would be to give the Environment Unit lead agency status on coastal management, so as to facilitate improved coordination of policy and action on coasts. Vesting leadership in one agency would greatly enhance the prospects for more integrated policy making on coasts in Vanuatu.

5.2 Participation in environmental policy and management

A recurrent theme in much of the policy documents written about natural resources management in the Pacific relates to the problems of ensuring the meaningful involvement of citizens in the development and implementation of environmental policy and management strategies (see, for instance, ADB 2004; EU 1999). This problem was raised again and again by informants to this study. Economic and policy discourse in Vanuatu is dominated by elites; policy makers interviewed for this study lamented the lack of participation of ni-Vanuatu in policymaking and implementation.

The issues here are both practical and profound. In practical terms, insufficient participation of ni-Vanuatu in policymaking and implementation: (i) reduces the extent to which policies and management strategies reflect the needs and interests of local resource owners and users, (ii) reduces the extent to which policy can be customised to suit local circumstances, and (iii) enhances the costs and difficulties of implementation because local users have little sense of ownership of the policy or action (Lane and McDonald 2005). Given that the focus of this research is environmental management, it should be remarked that these are important obstacles to improved management of coastal environments and resources.

More profoundly, limited levels of participation in governance undermine the development of what Putnam (1993) has called civic culture, which is crucial to ensuring the fidelity and

efficiency of government. Putnam (2000) explains that a vibrant civic culture has both a supply and demand function on the quality of government. Government finds it easier to supply effective governance because the energy, knowledge and commitment of an active citizenry can be harnessed in both policy development and implementation. Simultaneously, an active citizenry demands that governments govern with efficiency and fidelity. According to Putnam's (1993; 2000) analysis, achieving efficient and effective government in Vanuatu depends — to some extent — on the fashioning of a vibrant civic culture in which the policy and political participation of ni-Vanuatu is widespread.

What might be done about this? Assistance needs to be provided to the Government of Vanuatu to develop a protocol for engaging with ni-Vanuatu in both policymaking and implementation. As suggested above, overcoming this problem has both immediate and practical public policy benefits but more profoundly can contribute to the efficiency (and therefore the legitimacy of) government. Once developed, the protocol could be adopted by government and other actors (such as multilateral aid agencies) to ensure that all policy, project planning and implementation activities are undertaken in a consultative manner.

5.3 Information for effective policy and decision-making

Most of the informants to this study raised a lack of comprehensive and reliable scientific and other information as a major constraint on policy development and implementation (see also EU 1999). The ability of government agencies to strategically identify emerging environmental issues, or respond in a tactically effective way to environmental problems, depends to a significant degree on having a comprehensive (and searchable) environmental database. There are a number of different dimensions to this problem.

First, in some areas, government lacks reliable information upon which to develop policy. The Lands Department files, for example, are all paper files, which makes searches slow and cumbersome. The information held by the Department of Forestry, to use another example, is outdated; an updated, comprehensive resource inventory is urgently required. The recent establishment of the Scientific Research Council (see EU 1999), a significant recent achievement, will improve the quality of information available to policy makers. However, this advice of such committees, while valuable, occurs at a single moment of the policymaking process and does not give the officers developing the policy information on an ongoing basis.

A second related problem is the absence of a mechanism to ensure that scientific and other valuable environmental information is shared across government (see ADB 2004). While some departments maintain databases of different kinds, there is a need for such information to be available across government (and, indeed, in some cases, to civil society as well). Data availability is a crucial factor in enabling and facilitating coordination across government.

Finally, one considered informant remarked that on occasion government officers sometimes did not use the information that was available to government. This was not verified by other sources. If true, it might signal two possible problems in governance in Vanuatu. First, it might reflect a lack of training among government personnel (a matter frequently commented upon by informants to this study) and therefore a lack of understanding of the policymaking process. Second, it might also reflect the volatile character of government in Vanuatu in recent years and the rapid changes in Ministers and government structures that sometimes occur.

What might best be done about these matters? Two steps are suggested. First, SOE reporting, if implemented, would be a cost effective way of (i) improving the level of information available to all government departments as well as civil society, and (ii) signalling high-priority environmental issues for which a response is required. Second, continued investment in the training of the Vanuatu Government's personnel is crucial to ensuring that government responds to available environmental information.

5.4 Governmental coordination

There are three tiers of government in Vanuatu – national, provincial and local. In addition, the Constitution of Vanuatu recognises customary land and resource ownership and this system operates alongside formal institutional arrangements (ADB 2004). For a country that is small in both demographic and geographic terms, this is a complex governmental arrangement. If one also considers the range of multi- and bilateral organisations involved in a range of different policy domains (such as SPREP and AusAid) and the role of the non-government sector, we can see that governance in Vanuatu is a crowded arena.

This architecture creates a number of difficulties for effective environmental governance in Vanuatu. First, the national government is highly centralised in Port Vila and its capacity to implement its policies and strategies in all parts of the country is limited. In terms of environmental management, the geographic focus of policy activities means that the central government cannot hope to be an active regulator of environmental extraction in the islands that make up the Republic.

Second, the national government is also highly sectoralised and mechanisms for inter-agency (or "horizontal") dialogue, cooperation, coordination and collaboration are highly attenuated. All government personnel in major environmental and natural resource agencies interviewed for this study report an absence of effective, routine inter-governmental coordination mechanisms. As a result, individual departments largely operate in isolation and advice to the highest political and administrative levels of government becomes fragmented. While the Government's *Priorities & Action Agenda* (GRV 2002) provides for clear lines of communication and authority within individual agencies, it does not attend to the coordination of information and strategy across government. In this respect, the introduction of EIA to Vanuatu under the auspices of the EMC is a welcome development. EIA processes will inevitably require agency interaction across government and this process of consultation and information sharing may lead to improved levels of coordination.

In addition, the national government's organisational structure exhibits duplication and policy gaps as well as programmatic fragmentation. Some departments report a lack of clarity in the delineation of responsibility between departments. In environmental management in particular, it is clear that there is a need for a cross-sectoral analysis of those agencies centrally engaged in different aspects of this policy domain, leading to a re-specification and perhaps reconfiguration of responsibilities.

Informants to this study also report that coordination between national and provincial government is poor. In addition, provincial government is largely dependent on national government for its funding. Provincial government lacks a clear policy focus, has no clear framework within which to operate and has low staffing. Given the role of provincial government with respect to development decisions and roads etc., and the new mandate to consider the environmental impacts of these decisions under the auspices of the *EMC Act*, these are crucial issues.

In summary, these problems represent a major constraint on the ability of the national government to link environment and development strategies; they also constrain efforts to move toward more *integrated* approaches to environmental management.

Two strategies are suggested in response to these problems. First, improving integration and coordination across the Government of Vanuatu is crucial to development of more systemic responses to environmental policy problems. A three-pronged approach is suggested: (i) an institutional analysis of the organisation and allocation of tasks across government, leading to some re-organisation of tasks, is required to achieve improved levels of coordination; (ii) some intensive training of government personnel in the area of collaboration, consensus-building and communication is also required; and (iii) the development of protocols for intergovernmental coordination and communication.

Second, the (vertical) relations between different levels of government need to be reviewed with a view to ensuring :

1. duplication is minimised;
2. policy tasks are allocated to different levels of government in accordance with the subsidiarity⁶ principle;
3. ensuring lower levels of government are sufficiently resourced. .

5.5 Customary land and resource ownership

Customary land and resource ownership dominates land tenure in Vanuatu (ADB 2004). Approximately 80% of land in Vanuatu is customarily owned (ACIAR 1998); although one estimate suggests that 98% of land in Vanuatu is held in customary tenure (Cocklin and Keen 2000). This pattern of land and resource ownership is central to the culture and traditions of the society, and also makes possible the subsistence economy; approximately 80% of the population relies on subsistence agriculture and inshore fishing (EIU 2003).

Because constitutionally recognised land ownership extends to inshore reefs and marine areas, and because it also confers rights to the natural resources within those lands, customary tenure is a crucial issue in environmental policy and management in Vanuatu. On the one hand, customary tenures place considerable resource decision making authority in the hands of customary land owners; on the other, customary tenure mediates the ability of government to regulate land and resource use. In addition, land disputes —concerning rightful ownership and the boundaries of that ownership — are commonplace in Vanuatu. According to some, this represents an important constraint on economic investment and development in the country (EIU 2003). The establishment of the Customary Land Tribunal offers hope that the resolution of land disputes can be expedited (ADB 2004).

Customary land (and resource) ownership creates a number of important complexities for effective environmental governance in Vanuatu. First, the shared locus of environmental authority (between government and landowners) creates an ongoing policy tensions and confusion (Alley 1999). Second, the village-dwelling, subsistence population is materially poor and in need of a cash income. The natural resources they control constitute their major source of food and their only source of capital. As Alley has suggested:

“dual systems which operate to allow local customary and state-level authorities rights to negotiate resource access contracts with foreign commercial operators. Over logging and fishing, external interests have manipulated such duality to their advantage” (1999, 138).

Third, this duality limits the ability of government to achieve national conservation and resource management standards (Alley 1999). Fourth, it creates an important need for a mechanism to ensure landowners contemplating commercial deals with logging or fishing companies have access to necessary legal, environmental and financial advice to assist in their decision-making.

The attenuation of government regulatory ability, and the operation of this dual system limits the national government to a few strategies: (i) raising community awareness; (ii) promoting community-based environmental management; and (iii) licensing extractive industries. There is real evidence that community-based environmental management can be effective in Vanuatu (see Hickey and Johannes 2002; Johannes 2002), although evidence from other parts of the world suggest that it is profoundly difficult to systematise and institutionalise (see Lane and McDonald 2005).

⁶ The principle that a central authority should perform only those tasks that cannot be performed effectively at a more local level.

Customary land and resource ownership is a central dimension of cultural and economic life in Vanuatu. However, there is a need to attend to the enduring tensions created by the dual system of customary and governmental authority. A review, examining the institutional and administrative relations between government (at all levels) and customary landowners is required. Such a review might: (i) clarify the respective rights and responsibilities of government and custom landowners, (ii) improve the ability of the government to intervene on matters of national environmental importance, and (iii) provide a mechanism to ensure customary landowners have access to advice prior to making important natural resource use decisions.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

This report has sought to evaluate the governance performance in ICM in Vanuatu. The evaluation demonstrates that current governance arrangements are insufficient to achieve the integrated, sustainable management of coastal environments and fisheries. In addition, the report has also sought to identify the major strategic governance issues requiring reform. Efforts to achieve ICM without attention to these strategic problems of governance are unlikely to be bear fruit. Attention, therefore, needs to be directed towards the following issues.

1. Institutional and policy leadership on coastal management needs to be developed in Vanuatu as a matter of priority. Fortunately, with the passage of the ECM Act, it is clear that the Environment Unit has developed into a policy leader on environmental matters. Therefore, it is suggested that granting lead agency status to the Environment Unit on coastal management is likely to ensure improved policy leadership on coastal management and also facilitate improved coordination of policy and action on coasts.
2. Assistance needs to be provided to the Government of Vanuatu to develop a protocol for engaging with ni-Vanuatu in both policymaking and implementation. Overcoming this problem has both immediate and practical public policy benefits but more profoundly can contribute to the efficiency (and therefore the legitimacy of) government. Once developed, the protocol could be adopted by government and other actors, such as multilateral aid agencies, to ensure that all policy, project planning and implementation activities are undertaken in a consultative manner.
3. The standard and availability to government and other actors of high-quality environmental information needs to be improved. Two steps are suggested. First, annual SOE reporting, if implemented, would be a cost effective way of (i) improving the level of information available to all government departments as well as civil society, and (ii) signalling high-priority environmental issues for which a response is required. Second, continued investment in the training of the Vanuatu Government's personnel is crucial to ensuring that government responds to available environmental information.
4. Improving integration and coordination across the Government of Vanuatu is a crucial to developing more systemic responses to environmental policy problems. A three-pronged approach is suggested: (i) an institutional analysis of the organisation and allocation of tasks across government, leading to some re-organisation of tasks is required to achieve improved levels of coordination; (ii) some intensive training of government personnel in the area of collaboration, consensus-building and communication is also required; and (iii) the development of protocol for intergovernmental coordination and communication.
5. The vertical relations between different levels of government need to be reviewed with a view to ensuring duplication is minimised, policy tasks are clearly and appropriately allocated between different levels of government, and lower levels

of government are sufficiently resourced.

6. There is a need for the enduring tensions created by the dual system of customary and governmental authority to be attended to. A review, examining the institutional and administrative relations between government (at all scales) and customary landowners is required. Such a review might: (i) clarify the respective rights and responsibilities of government and custom landowners; (ii) improve the ability of the government to intervene on matters of national environmental importance; and (iii) provide a mechanism to ensure customary landowners have access to advice prior to making important natural resource use decisions.

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Annex: Interviewees

Mr. Thomas Bangalini – Department of Economic and Sector Planning

Mr. Reuben Bakeo – Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries

Mr. Pakoa – Department of Health

Mr Michael Mangawai – Department of Lands

Mr. Geoffrey Kaitip – Physical Planning

Mr. Wycliff Bakeo – Department of Provincial Affairs

Mr. Moses Amos – Department of Fisheries

Mr. Tate Hanington – Department of Forestry

Mr. Earnest Bani – Environment Unit

Ms Donna Kalfakak – NBSAP

Ms. Katherin Malosu – Environment Unit

Mr. Chris Yoan – Geology, Mines and Water Resources

Mr. Erickson Sammy - Geology, Mines and Water Resources