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A demand-driven approach to ecosystem services economic valuation: Pacific case studies from the RESCCUE Project

Key words: Economic valuation, decision, ecosystem services

Abstract:

Enhancing collective choices regarding ecosystems services management for climate change resilience is now on the Pacific Countries and Territories agenda. To achieve this, economic valuation is often presented as an effective tool for decision-makers. Yet social processes leading to decisions call for a pragmatic, demand-driven approach to ensure ecosystem services valuations (ESV) are actually used and make a difference. RESCCUE (Restoration of Ecosystem Services and Adaptation to Climate Change) is a 5- year project implemented by the Pacific Community. It offers opportunities to use ESV for integrated coastal management and climate change resilience in selected pilot sites spanning four Pacific Island Countries and Territories (Fiji, New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Vanuatu). RESCCUE builds on a three-fold diagnosis: (i) ESV is underutilized in coastal management; (ii) Experience from the Pacific and elsewhere so far shows both growing interest for economic valuations in support to environmental management, and growing concern over the lack of use of such valuations when they are conducted; (iii) Experience so far has been mainly supply-driven (based on what economists have to offer) rather than demand-driven (based on stakeholders' needs). RESCCUE promotes and implements a demand-driven approach. This means that each ESV conducted should have a precise and explicit role in achieving a given management/policy objective, which defines the type of analysis and methodology to be used. This presentation will share case studies and lessons learnt from the project, drawing especially on work conducted in New Caledonia in partnership with local authorities. After summarizing results of ESV conducted in the main island Great South biodiversity hotspot, several uses of these valuations will be discussed (mainly awareness raising, trade-offs and design of economic instruments) after having been put to the test of reality. Wider conclusions on the use of ecosystem services economic valuations in the Pacific will then be suggested.