Addressing Challenges in Climate Change Adaptation: Learning from the Narikoso Community Relocation in Fiji[1]

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Abstract

Climate change adaptation remains a complex challenge both in policy and in practice. Yet, comprehensive and interdisciplinary research on adaptation barriers and challenges are limited, particularly in the context of small island developing states at the forefront of climate change. This paper draws from the experiences of a multi-stakeholder planned relocation measure in Narikoso village, Fiji, to enhance understandings around the nature and scope of challenges in relocation processes for adaptation. Key learnings are drawn from the Narikoso case study with implications for policy and practice. This brief makes strategic and operational recommendations in areas of: promoting participatory processes; building on existing capacities and improving coordination; strengthening the inclusion of socio-cultural dynamics; improving monitoring, evaluation and learning; and securing and managing finance.

Introduction

Adaptation to climate change poses a complex governance challenge for policy makers, development planners, practitioners and communities. While adaptation goals generally aim at reducing vulnerabilities and increasing resilience in human-environment systems (Smit and Wandel 2006), defining what this actually means for policy and in practice in local contexts poses a contentious issue. For one, adaptation processes inherently raise issues of prioritisation, trade-offs and just distributions in decision-making around 'who should adapt', 'what needs adapting', and 'how to adapt'. Moreover, understanding and dealing with global climate system dynamics and related inherent uncertainties and feedback effects is premised on reliable data and an effective integration of climate science into development plans and climate policy (Dessai et al. 2009; Termeer et al. 2013). Climate change adaptation is therefore a complex process where numerous gaps have become apparent as reflected in a lack of streamlined and effective strategies, plans and public policies (Klein et al. 2005), also with limited successes in achieving the desired outcomes on the ground (Berrang-Ford et al. 2011; Biesbroek et al. 2010; Biesbroek et al. 2011; Swart et al. 2014). Consequently, these observations have raised the need for different approaches in comprehensive analysis of adaptation challenges, as well as finding ways for addressing these in adaptation processes (Biesbroek et al. 2013; Moser and Ekstrom 2010).

In recent years, there has been growing political attention around the emerging issue of climate-induced relocation as an adaptation measure since it was officially brought into the Cancun Adaptation Framework in 2010 (McAdam and Ferris 2015; UNFCCC 2010). Planned relocations have been described as a state-led approach to move people from high-risk to lower-risk areas within national boundaries, developed in response to climatic and non-climatic vulnerabilities, and conducted with the prior informed consent and participation of the affected persons or communities (UNHCR 2014). Moreover, planned relocation involves a process of resettlement that aims to improve livelihoods and to enhance possibilities for social and economic development in a new locality (McAdam and Ferris 2015; McNamara et al. 2016). Planned relocations therefore differ from forced relocations where persons or communities are resettled involuntary and become displaced within or across national borders (Warner et al. 2013). Planned relocation is also different from climate-induced migration which usually refers to movement of people across national borders on a more permanent scale (Burkett 2011).

The increasingly relevant issue of climate-induced relocation has already translated into climate policy in some Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS). The Government of Fiji (GoF) is seen as a global forerunner in advancing national-level climate change policies, plans and guidelines for institutionalising planned relocations as a climate change adaptation measure. In this local context, community relocations are considered "an option of last resort" as such processes are considered both complex and costly (GoF 2018b). Nevertheless, given the increasing vulnerability of coastal communities, due to a myriad of factors but in particular linked to the issue of sea level rise and coastal inundation, 40 communities have already been identified as being in need of relocating (GoF 2018b). One challenge for strategic planning in this regard is that there is limited research on the long-term environmental, economic and political implications of past relocations in the Pacific region that can be used to feed into current policy and practice (Campbell 2008).

Moreover, recent research in more recent cases highlights that social and cultural dimensions remain "undervalued and understudied" (Bertana 2019: 6). As such, unpacking the scope and nature of challenges that emerge in relocation processes provides an essential first step for addressing, transforming, and at best overcoming the challenges in policy and practice. This paper presents strategic and operational recommendations for improving community-based multi-actor relocation processes in Fiji based on the learnings garnered from an in-depth case study of the Narikoso community relocation process in Kadavu province, with possible wider relevance for PSIDS.

In this research process, both primary and secondary data was gathered and triangulated in fieldwork conducted between August and September 2019. Several methods were used which included conducting semi-structured interviews with key government and non-government actors, and with men and women from Narikoso village. Additionally, one separate focus group discussion was conducted with the youth from Narikoso village. Field observations and a project progress assessment were carried out in the village and at the new relocation site. Moreover, available project assessment reports, related policy documents, and online media articles were consulted. The data was analysed qualitatively and coded, and involved elucidating interactions between the actors, the formal and informal institutional context through the exploration of process accounts to develop a process narrative. This process narrative was constantly amended throughout the fieldwork through checking and verifying with key interview respondents and identifying emerging patterns, drawing from the wider adaptation literature.

The Narikoso Village Relocation Process: A Case Study

The Context

Narikoso village is located on the south-eastern side on the island of Ono, in the maritime province of Kadavu, Fiji. Ono Island lies approximately 80km south of the capital city, Suva, and is accessible by regular sea transport. The village is located on a narrow strip of a flat coastal area that is fringed by a steep rock incline to the west and a mangrove strip that extends from the east to the south. Narikoso is an *iTaukei* (indigenous) community of 27 households with a population of approximately 100 people (McMichael et al. 2019). Villagers regularly move between localities within the province and the mainland for educational and work purposes. Most villagers engage in semi-subsistence agriculture and small-scale fishing activities, while some are either fully or partly employed in nearby tourist resorts (Barnett and McMichael 2018). The main agricultural cash crop is *yaqona[2]*, alongside other staple food crops and a variety of seasonal vegetables and fruits that grow abundantly on the island's naturally fertile soils. In 2019, the GoF provided solar electrification to the village, enabling households to run basic electrical appliances which were previously limited by the use of expensive diesel generators. Although Narikoso is remote, the villagers

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[2] Also known more widely in the Pacific as '*kava*', and scientifically as *Piper methysticum*, it is a plant that is indigenous to the Pacific region and holds high cultural significance in Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga and Samoa. Kadavu is renowned in Fiji for producing very high-quality kava, which is sold at a high market price making it a lucrative business.

are not isolated from international media and global events as they are able to access media channels through satellite television, radio and a mobile network.

Narikoso village first started to face problems with coastal erosion in the mid-1960s. In response, villagers built a seawall as a protective measure; however, over the years the seawall has been severely damaged and has not been able to prevent ongoing erosion. Recent technical assessments reveal a proximate 15-metre recession of the shoreline on the eastern side causing regular inundation of several houses in the village during extreme high tides and storm surges (EU-GIZ 2016). Sea-level rise has been identified as one contributing factor as the average rate of sea-level rise in Fiji lies at twice above the global average rate (Australian Bureau of Meteorology et al. 2015; EU-GIZ 2016). Despite this, other maladaptive factors have also contributed to the problem in Narikoso including the inadequate design of the seawall and the blockage of a passage between the village and a nearby islet in the 1990s, which have altered the wave and sediment flow dynamics (EU-GIZ 2016).

A Failed First Attempt

In response to the incremental and increasingly problematic issue of more regular coastal inundation, Narikoso villagers requested assistance from the government in 2011 to be relocated within their customary land boundaries. The project was consequently initiated in 2012 through the direct support of the Prime Minister who personally visited Narikoso on a rural outreach tour. Shortly after the visit, the Fiji Military Forces were tasked to undertake the initial excavation groundworks in order to prepare the new village site about 200 metres away from the current village site. Both the villagers as well as some government and non-government actors admit in hindsight that proper technical assessments and thorough consultations were not carried out during the initial project development stage. As a result, extensive environmental damage was caused by the groundwork activities due to the clear-cut removal of a portion of coastal mangroves and littoral forest adjacent to the village. The new area was excavated and flattened by cutting terraces and levelling the hilltop, with the use of dynamite in the process, causing surface erosion and siltation of the nearshore ecosystem and coral reef. The initial groundworks have cost the GoF 200,000 FJD yet the project was terminated at the end of 2012 due to poor planning and a lack of funds.

A Second Attempt

The relocation project was picked up again in 2013 when the local district representative approached the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ)[3] and the Climate Change Division (CCD) of the GoF to address the environmental degradation that had been caused during the first intervention phase, and with sights set on a second attempt to further develop the relocation process for Narikoso. This process signified a shift from being a joint government-community project to a multi-stakeholder and multi-level planned relocation with financial support coming from the the European Union channelled through the GIZ, technical support coming from the GIZ, SPC as well as key government ministries such as the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development, Ministry of Lands and Mineral

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[3] German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH.

Resources, Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Tourism, Ministry of Waterways and Environment, Ministry of Housing and Community Development, Ministry of Disaster Management, Ministry of Forestry, and the Ministry of Agriculture. . The Narikoso relocation project was brought under the umbrella of the broader EU-GIZ 'Adapting to Climate Change and Sustainable Energy' (ACSE) Programme in 2014. It was approved in late 2015 as a joint project with the relocation of Waciwaci district school, in the province of Lau, with combined project funds of 700,000 Euro and a planned project period of 3 years (EU-GIZ 2016). At this stage, national relocation guidelines were lacking. In response, a government-led National Relocation Taskforce[4] was established with the mandate to meet regularly and exchange information on the project progress, to consolidate and coordinate resources between the different stakeholders, as well as documenting lessons learned to inform a parallel process of developing the National Planned Relocation Guidelines which were later published in 2018 (GoF 2018a).

Importantly, the relocation taskforce was able to establish the need for comprehensive vulnerability and adaptation needs assessments to be carried out. The stakeholders involved also established, by means of a consultative process, that resettlement would need to be supported by a livelihood component to increase self-sufficiency and diversify income generating opportunities (EU-GIZ 2016). As a result, project activities involved the planting of more climate-resilient crops, provision of tree seedlings, coastal rehabilitation and extension of agroforestry services, and establishing a community vegetable and pineapple farm initiative (SPC 2014). These activities were also accompanied by the construction of a community greenhouse nursery and training on the propagation and management of nursery plants (SPC 2014). Moreover, villagers were also engaged in floriculture training, organic farming techniques, restoration of the village pine plantation, and other agroforestry including the propagation and sowing of native seeds and establishing a vanilla plot (Daveta 2018). Under the ACSE project timeline, additional support for the livelihood component in Narikoso came under the Integrated Human Resource Development Programme (IHRDP) of the Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism including the planning and setting up of a village cooperative and financial literacy training; for the maintenance and extension of the previously established poultry farm; and the provision of assistance for the establishment of bee farming. The programme also funded the purchase of a generator, cooler and freezer for the cooperative store that has being constructed by the villagers. Additionally, a 40HP outboard motor was also provided to assist with transportation and fishing.

Despite the impressive range of supporting activities carried out in cooperation with the community to enhance resilience and livelihoods, many challenges have been observed. For one, villagers became increasingly frustrated with frequent delays in the process; the timing of activities; the design and quality of the newly constructed houses; and ad hoc communication flows between the Suva-based stakeholders, the district administration and the community. Initial 'promises' by the government to relocate the whole village were reduced

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[4] The national relocation taskforce committee comprising the Commissioner Eastern Office, National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), Ministry of Economy (MoE) and the GIZ. The Narikoso community relocation committee representative was also part of the taskforce in the initial stage, but was removed later and replaced by a Suva-based representative. The taskforce consults with the CCD of the MoE, and the CCD then reports to the National Climate Change Coordination Committee (NCCCC). The NCCCC is mandated to make submissions for endorsement in Cabinet on climate policy-related issues.

to only seven households under the new EU-GIZ project process. Until today, villagers question why a proximate relocation on their own land would take so long to be realised. On the other hand, implementing and supporting agencies point towards the complexity of the project; the lack of policy guidelines resulting in ad hoc planning at the time i.e. adopting a 'learning by doing' approach; overstretched staff capacities and frequent turnovers; and unexpected events such as natural disasters hampering implementation plans. Some government officials also refer to the lack of commitment and ownership shown by the villagers in the livelihood component of the project as reasons why the project has failed to achieve the desired results.

However, in consolidating the views of the different stakeholders involved, it became evident that there was a lack of understanding of the linkages between different factors leading to barriers in the relocation process since the inception of the initial idea to relocate. In order to better understand the problems that became evident in the Narikoso relocation, a systematic causal process tracing method was used to identify and explain the underlying factors and mechanisms leading to the observed barriers (see Collier 2011; George and Bennett 2004; Kay and Baker 2015). This approach suggests that while identifying individual factors can explain *why* adaptation proves difficult, a deeper analysis must also include *how* these factors are related by identifying the mechanisms at play (Biesbroek et al. 2011; Biesbroek et al. 2014). This approach has been applied in other studies explaining adaptation barriers in various contexts with convincing results (see Biesbroek et al. 2014; Sieber et al. 2018). Moreover, this innovative approach provides an opportunity to better understand the emerging issues in their context; to deliver strategic adaptation responses; and to move closer to reaching the planned adaptation outcomes. The findings of the case study are synthesised below.

Understanding Socio-Cultural Dimensions

Adaptation research in recent years has drawn attention towards socio-cultural dimensions as a basis for understanding how actors perceive what is legitimate action (Adger et al. 2012), for enhanced engagement and building relationships (Evans et al. 2016), and to establish the symbolic and cultural meanings people attach to places (Adger et al. 2011b). As such, it is argued that a proper understanding of socio-cultural dynamics could support more effective planning to meet community values, needs and priorities.

The experience of the Narikoso relocation sheds insights into understanding the importance of community decision-making and legitimation processes. The case of Narikoso seemed to be straightforward as there were no preexisting land disputes. The decision to transfer a portion of land belonging to two village clans to accommodate the new village site followed a consolidated, consensual and legitimate process. Initial discussions with the government and the villagers over the project revealed plans to relocate the community as a whole. Along the process, on the basis of technical and economic assessments, decisions were taken by the external implementing agencies to reduce the number of households to be relocated. These assessments point towards the estimated costs and benefits and set out an economic rationale for relocation (Jolliffe 2016). Moreover, other considerations included limited project funding and the limited space at the cleared site to accommodate the entire village.

The implementing agencies were adamant that the villagers were aware of the reasons for the downscaling, and that it was justified in terms of vulnerability assessments carried out. Despite this, the decision to relocate only a section of the village challenged the idea of community, failed to acknowledge the villager's own processes of decision-making, and failed to move up the ladder from consultation to participation in decision-making. Deviating from the original plan to relocate as a community also caused anxieties and concerns that moving only one section of the village would affect community cohesion and structure and could be a source of conflict in the future as revealed in some responses: "We Fijian people work together, that is only one *mataqali* moving so the village will break down [...] also it's not fair if some stay behind [...] maybe one time we will fight" (Male villager, personal communication, 29.08.2019).

Moreover, the Narikoso case reveals a low level of social acceptability of the government standardised rural housing units at the new site. The housing units are too small to accommodate the existing family structures and the design and quality of the new houses have been called into question, with little response to these concerns. Also, cultural considerations were not adequately taken into account with regards to the layout of the new site and the design of the houses. For example, the villagers mentioned that initial plans to construct a community hall as an important social amenity were not taken into consideration, while others felt that the new site was incomplete without a church. Moreover, the new site does not resemble the typical set-up of an *iTaukei* village. In gaging the responses of the villagers, the sense of 'place' among villagers was strongly linked to a sense of community as captured in the words of one community member: "when we move, we move together [...] this is a village, we are family [...] we have been working together until now" (Male villager, personal communication, 29.08.2019). Notably, many of the issues outlined above echo experiences made in the previous community relocation of Vunidogoloa village in Fiji (c.f Charan et al. 2017), yet the transfer of learnings from one project to another has been low. While comprehensive and thorough assessments became indispensable for planning, the assessments did not fully capture socio-cultural dimensions by taking stock of actor dynamics, comparing individual versus community perceptions, mapping possible areas of conflict, and establishing other relevant social indicators as a baseline for vulnerability and action planning.

Participation in Planning, Decision-Making and Monitoring

The Narikoso process reflects a lack of participation in project design and defining the rules of engagement which translated into the design and implementation of the project. This was also linked to a lack of a shared understanding around the project objectives, project activities and the time plan. As a result, the lack of participatory planning marks the beginning of diverging issue frames in prioritising and assessing community needs between the
different actors involved. Concurrently, there is a lack of understanding among some villagers around future climate-related risks and possible solutions to address these risks, despite numerous awareness training sessions that have been carried out. This calls for a revision of awareness raising strategies and effectiveness in engaging communities in the identification of long-term vulnerabilities and adaptation. Taking 'head nodding' in community consultations as a basis for awareness raising is not a satisfactory approach to

ensure that the community has understood the scope of the issues discussed. What is required is a more nuanced, carefully planned, context appropriate form of dialogue and engagement to capture and bring together the different sources of traditional and technical knowledge.

Additionally, the Narikoso experience also showed that community engagement is time consuming and ideally involves monitoring by the community. However, communication flows between the government and technical agencies based in the capital city, the district administration and the community of Narikoso were neither fluid nor regular. Monitoring was carried out 'when possible' and with a lack of proper engagement of villagers. To ensure effective engagement, at a minimum level, there needs to be fluid communication with key knowledge brokers. Knowledge brokers are individuals who facilitate the flow of ideas between actors and enable collaboration and action (Agogué et al. 2013). For example, these could include key government officials and non-government practitioners who carry information between decision-making spaces, but also include the village administrator, village committee member representatives, youth and women representatives, the church pastor and other active and influential individuals in the community. When key knowledge brokers are not identified and utilised, information and communication flows within the project as a whole are weakened, resulting in vertical and horizontal coordination disconnects and ambiguity around project activities. By extension, this can also again lead to frustrations and mistrust towards implementing agencies, running the risk of a negative feedback effect that complicates monitoring efforts, making information less reliable and implementation less effective.

Moreover, while research around community based adaptation (CBA) projects in PSIDS show that adopting a livelihoods approach can enhance the overall adaptive capacities of communities to foster resilience (McNamara 2013), the Narikoso experience revealed that livelihoods activities can be rated and ranked differently in terms of their relevance and success with implications for planning and decision-making by the actors involved. The Narikoso case also reveals that when these are not resolved at an early stage, it can lead to diverging or polarising issue frames. For example, governmental and non-government officials framed the problem related to the low success of the livelihood component as a problem caused by the villagers who did not invest much commitment and initiative in the project. When the honeybee initiative failed to take off, the view was that "[the youth] just do things when they feel like it" (Government official, personal communication, 20.08.2019). Another view was that the community was not fully engaged because "they were looking more for financial support, rather than seeing what they could do themselves" (Non-government stakeholder, personal communication, 20.08.2019). Also, another view relates to the willingness of the community to understand the complexity that the implementing agencies have to deal with: "[...] they are tired of all these government people going down to do all these assessments so they must see the complexities of this – but they just don't care" (Non-government technical advisor, personal communication, 14.08.2019). The responses from most of the villagers on the other hand, indicate the issue of the 'unkept promise' by the government to relocate the whole village as the dominant issue frame and reflect mixed feelings of frustration and sadness: "it's shameful that they did not keep their promises [...] we are concerned that some will stay behind and half the village will move [...this] makes us sad" (Female villager, personal communication, 30.08.2019).

Diverging or polarising issue frames reflect an interactional process whereby issues held by actors become fixed and increasingly disconnected (Dewulf and Bouwen 2012) and which in turn can become increasingly polarised when actors face ambiguities, for example because of a lack of communication (Biesbroek et al. 2014). In multi-stakeholder settings where actors with different backgrounds, priorities, positions and value systems come together, ambiguity and misunderstandings are bound to occur when actors fail to recognise, and then also deal with, the underlying issues in order to be able to facilitate dialogues and action between these actors (Dewulf et al. 2005).

Powerful Actors and Donor Dependency

Enabling resource-intensive relocations often rests on establishing a partnership between funding agencies, governmental and non-governmental agencies, and local communities. However, such partnerships also hinge on differentiated levels of power, influence, and dependency and can reveal the presence of veto players. Veto players are influential and powerful actors with the authority and resources to make decisions that can delay, block and derail decision-making processes (Sieber et al. 2018). The case of Narikoso reveals that governments and financing agencies act, often unintentionally, as veto players in deciding on what, how, and when activities are carried out, as reflected in the experience of one villager: "why are we still going to the place which has been excavated, why not shift a bit further to the back which has not been touched by any machines and the soil has been stabilized very well? But the [government official] said – No, because the government has used the money for this site" (Male villager, personal communication, 29.08.2019).

The authority of the veto players is underpinned by unequal power relationships through communities' dependency on these actors, especially in terms of financing the project. As a result, Narikoso villagers have been reluctant to voice discontent openly towards the implementing partners, worried that project funds could be withdrawn: "[one thing] that keeps our mouth shut is that we did not give any money, because everything they provided ... so those are the difficulties we came across" (Male villager 01, personal communication, 29.08.2019). Moreover, the presence of actors that wield power through the control of information can also challenge participatory learning and decision-making processes and increases the risk of improper planning that can lead to maladaptation.

Therefore, while there is opportunity in drawing on different sources of knowledge, there also needs to be "a willingness to devolve influence and authority for decision-making" (Adger et al. 2011a: 765) in a process that should involve "consideration of the role of power and marginality among groups participating in the learning process" (Armitage 2008: 86). These considerations also form important elements in monitoring and evaluations, which to a large part also depend on the ability, timing, capacity and skills of actors to identify and respond to the emerging challenges (Dewulf and Bouwen 2012) as well the ability to foster trust between actors (Klijn et al. 2010).

Guidelines and Operational Procedures

In adaptation processes, roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined to reduce ambiguities and to enable the flow of communications for the coordination of activities. Importantly, it should be pointed out that roles and responsibilities are not merely defined in policy, but are also shaped by informal norms, beliefs and practices in communities (Agrawala and van Aalst 2008; Reid et al. 2009).

In the Narikoso case, the lack of clear guidelines to guide the process and interactions between actors was repeatedly highlighted by both government and non-government actors. Although the national relocation taskforce presented a forum to circumvent some of the limitations given the absence of relocation guidelines, a lack of effective engagement of sub-national level actors was evident, both on the community and provincial administrative level, particularly in relation to the development of operational procedures in the relocation process. Even though the implementing agencies consciously adopted a 'learning by doing' approach, the implementation process clearly lacked community participation in identifying, reflecting and acting upon the emerging challenges in the project process.

Project Coordination and Management

One of the main factors identified as a challenge in the relocation process relates to the ability of the implementing agencies to manage expectations beyond what could be delivered. When many agencies are involved, different messages may flow through the different channels unless information is well coordinated. In the absence of guiding frame-works at the time, some stakeholders saw the process as "top down and ad hoc with too many people who always feel a bit in the lead" (Non-government technical advisor, personal communication, 14.08.2019). Other institutional factors such as the reshuffling and shifting of government ministries and departments around the implementation phase incurred adjustment periods, staff turnovers, and further delayed the integration of activities into the existing ministerial workplans.

Some government officials noted that the amount of work that was required often exceeded their capacities to deliver these activities in a timely manner. Furthermore, different paces of work within government agencies also contributed to considerable time lags throughout the implementation process as there were certain activities that needed to be completed, before moving on to others. Particularly processes dealing with land issues were described as complex, requiring verification and lengthy administrative procedures when redefining land boundaries, including for the purpose of extending village boundaries.

In terms of managing finance, there were considerable difficulties in synchronising the periodic transfer of funds between agencies in a timely manner. One argument for the delay of activities was that the external funders have a different financial calendar than that of the government which causes delays in receiving project funds. Also, it was evident that funds became significantly delayed when funders refused to release the next tranche of project funds due to missing vouchers and receipts from a previous reporting period. Although these were recovered later, it caused considerable delays that were not communicated well at the community level.

In terms of coordinating activities with the community, it became evident that project activities were not streamlined well to the existing village time plan. There seemed to be a misconception among some actors that villagers have abundant time or that they work in an unorganised way. In retrospect, villagers are organised but often overwhelmed with the requirements of hosting numerous assessment teams, researchers and the media, attending the numerous ad-hoc training activities, being involved in the construction of the houses, while also carrying on with their lives in attending to daily livelihoods and cultural obligations.

Altogether, it was not expected that the process would stretch over such a long period of time. With the visible delays and increasing ambiguities around the reasons for these, the motivation levels of the villagers dropped for some project activities, such as for the community vegetable farm, seen as causing unnecessary delays to reaching their prime goal of building the new houses. Additionally, villagers have voiced their disappointments around the unclear timeframe for the planned activities: "There was no timeline for this project that is the big issues there [...] so we cannot monitor" (Male villager, personal communication, 29.08.2019).

To make sense of the nature of interactions between the implementing agencies and village, many issues are similar to those found in other cases that point towards "discrepancies [...] in ways governments and private actors interact and collaborate" (Sieber et al. 2018: 2385). The differences between how private actors, including communities, and public actors operate are linked to different "functional rationalities" or sense-making processes, for example deciding what should be done, and how it should be done, that create "inherent tensions between the considerations [...]" (Mees et al. 2012: 310) and which can have a hampering effect for collaboration. Together with a lack of vertical information flows, this effect also contributed to unaddressed conflict emerging over the course of the project.

Unaddressed Conflict

The Narikoso relocation shows that unaddressed conflict was transferred from one phase to the other. In this case, the sources of tensions between the actors related to: the absence of clear relocation policy and/or implementation guidelines; the lack of participatory planning input from the community; a lack of accountability towards the community from the side of the implementing agencies and funders; and a lack of monitoring to identify early warning signs. Where critical issues have remained unattended and concealed in silence, this has allowed frustrations, mistrust and rumours to pervade beneath the surface of interactions between the actors involved. As a result, these tensions affected relations and collaboration between the actors and led to issue frames becoming increasingly polarised in the process.

When problems became increasingly visible in the delay of the project, the implementing agencies tended to react aversively to the problems by evoking a blame avoidance attitude instead of engaging in dialogue and analysis of the emerging issues. For example, when government officials were confronted with discontent about the project process, the was that "[p]eople are always looking for someone to blame, even if they themselves are at fault" (Government official, personal communication, 12.08.2019). In turn, this closed

spaces for open communication and reflection, reinforcing the relational rift between the village and the implementing agencies along the process. The absence of consistent and effective monitoring further hampered open communication around conflicting issues across the project phases.

Unexpected and Unplanned Events

Finally, the Narikoso case shows that adaptation processes can be significantly hampered by external, unplanned and unanticipated factors. For example, shortly before the project funds for the Narikoso project were received, Fiji experienced Tropical Cyclone Winston, the strongest cyclone to make landfall in the country's recorded history, causing damages amounting to F$2 billion, equivalent to 20 percent of gross domestic product (GoF et al. 2017). Although the cyclone did not pass directly over Kadavu province, governmental agencies had to channel their capacities to national recovery efforts as it took almost two years to normalise things again within the country. This has contributed to the delay in project activities between 2016-2017 since the responsible agencies tasked with coordinating the implementation were fully occupied with large-scale national disaster response and recovery efforts.[5]

While uncertainty cannot be eliminated in adaptation processes, it can at best be managed effectively by the actors involved through effective coordination (Klijn and Koopenjan 2015). On the other hand, the Narikoso experience also shows that when activities, roles and responsibilities are coordinated in a delegated form across several agencies, this can also slow down implementation due to different work paces, capacities, and annual workplan schedules between the different agencies. Therefore, implementation plans in multi-level governance settings need to be supported by clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and backed by adequate finances, staff and actor capacities to negotiate and manage unexpected changes in project implementation.

Recommendations

The ability of policy-makers, development practitioners and communities to be able to effectively adapt to the impacts of climate change is critical for sustaining and enhancing livelihoods and development opportunities in the medium to long-term. Governments continue to play a central role in developing and coordinating the implementation of adaptation policies, plans and guidelines at local levels through harnessing the support of various external and local agencies and actors across levels. Nevertheless, lessons drawn from adaptation approaches, including the planned relocation of Narikoso village, reveal the need to look beyond technocratic and policy fixes. These experiences show the need to use adaptive co-management approaches for better planning, implementation and monitoring in order to facilitate effective adaptation outcomes (Armitage et al. 2009; Fabricius and Currie 2015; Folke et al. 2005). As such, the Narikoso case also highlights that progress should

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[5] At the time of writing this paper, Narikoso village has been directly affected by Tropical Cyclone Harold, making landfall in April 2020. A total of 15 homes were either badly damaged or destroyed, with the affected villagers seeking refuge in the community hall.

not only be defined by the ability to implement activities according to project time plans and budgets, but rather also by the ability to continuously reflect and respond to the underlying social, economic, environmental, cultural and political factors that influence the adaptation process. The recommendations put forward here suggest a need to look at both strategic and operational level responses to enhance adaptation outcomes.

Promoting Participatory Processes

On a strategic level, there is a need for effective involvement of local actors, especially affected communities, in the planning and implementation of adaptation policies (Dovers and Hezri 2010), because "adaptation will only succeed if it is acceptable to the people concerned and congruent with their values and way of life" (Spires et al. 2014). Communities concerned should be placed at the centre of decision-making, planning, design, implementation of projects, and accompanied through an enhanced understanding of their capabilities, knowledge systems and needs. Learning from the case of Narikoso, this could in practice include:

- Prioritising capacity building in areas identified by the community.
- Enhancing engagement of sub-national level actors such as district administrations, non-governmental and faith-based organisations.
- Improved willingness and ability to harness and transfer learnings between sub-national and national levels.
- Clear roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms between the different actors involved. Often accountability flows towards governments and donors and little attention is given to accountability mechanisms which flow towards the receivers of assistance in terms of the resulting adaptation outcomes and impacts.

Building on Existing Capacities and Improving Coordination

Government is well placed to identify key areas where capacities are needed for harnessing joint action towards adaptation goals. Nevertheless, tensions often arise between having clear and robust policies while also allowing for flexibility and change. On a strategic level, these tensions need to be understood and clarified collectively by the stakeholders involved in any adaptation process, and at best managed and facilitated by a designated entity, such as the climate change division/department, to ensure that frame conditions and guidelines for implementation are clear at the outset. Learning from the case of Narikoso this could in practice include:

- Equipping Government ministries or departments with adequate staff and financial resources before engaging in ambitious planning and implementation of projects. Conversely, these actors require regular capacity building in areas of participatory action planning (PAP) and participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning (PME&L).
- Building capacities across levels in areas of social and conflict analysis, as well as mediation techniques, to enhance trust and healthy relations. This type of specialised knowledge and skills often lie beyond the scope of government and

could be harnessed through more collaborative approaches with non-government entities.

- Gaps and delays in the project should be well communicated in an open and transparent manner. Mistakes need to be acknowledged.
- Documenting all aspects of the process to avoid knowledge 'getting lost' over time. This could be enhanced through bringing together the capacities which already exist, utilising key knowledge brokers at various levels for effective communication flows between national and subnational levels.
- Assigning climate change point persons across government departments responsible for streamlining and monitoring climate change activities. These key point
  persons act as key knowledge brokers, and are responsible to feed information into reports to the central coordinating unit and for supporting the integration and alignment of adaption plans with ministerial budgets and annual workplans.
- Assigning key point persons within the climate change unit to support the implementation of the different strategic policy areas [6] and to facilitate the establishment of project-specific taskforces on a case and needs basis including a wider representation from communities, national and district administrations, nongovernment
  actors, researchers and development practitioners. Drawing on the different expertise of these actors could ensure that communities receive the needed accompaniment not only in technical but also in social terms.

Strengthening the Inclusion of Socio-Cultural Dimensions

There is a need to consider how to better integrate complex socio-cultural dimensions related to the local value and belief systems, needs and practices of local communities both in policy and in actual project planning and implementation. Learning from the case of Narikoso this could in practice include:

- Enhancing the weighting, relevance and ability to identify socio-cultural dimensions in vulnerability and adaptation assessments.
- Utilising improved methods of approaching and engaging communities in terms of the timing and design of activities.
- Developing strategies to include 'silent' or marginalised voices while being aware of power relations and inequalities that affect communication and decision-making.
- Ensuring guidelines are in place for analysing and addressing conflicts.

Improving Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Monitoring is often highlighted in policy yet in practice often neglected, especially beyond the scope of project timeframes and for the purpose of learning. A monitoring framework should be developed closely aligned to existing adaptation plans and policies to systematically harness learnings – this is currently being developed in Fiji. Nevertheless,

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[6] Fiji's 2018-2030 National Adaptation Plan identifies the following key strategic sectoral areas: Food and nutrition security, Health, Human settlements, Infrastructure, Biodiversity and the Natural Environment.

there is a risk that project-specific monitoring requirements and standards set by external funding agencies may lack alignment to the national-level monitoring framework leading to excessive reporting workloads - an important factor to be considered in strategic planning. Learning from the case of Narikoso improving PME&L in practice could include:

- Monitoring and evaluation techniques which not only determine the extent to which project goals and objectives have been met, but could also reflect how learning goals and outcomes have been negotiated by the actors involved (see Bours et al. 2013).
- Considering not only the implementation level, but also analysing the process as a whole. Participatory action research methods could be better integrated in such an approach.
- Documenting and sharing PME&L outcomes in an open-access online portal with regularly updates as an effective and transparent knowledge sharing platform.

Securing and Managing Finance

The Narikoso case study reconfirms the importance of planning and matching financial resources to adaptation policies and plans before commencing implementation activities. For most PSIDS, including Fiji, climate finance is handled outside government budgets and remains project-based (Samuwai and Hills 2018) which lowers the ability to control such finance, making long-term adaptation planning difficult. On a strategic level, new and innovative approaches are necessary in order to move towards more sustainable forms of finance. For example, Fiji has recently established a national relocation trust fund for relocation purposes including relocation-related research; assessments; infrastructure development; and other related activities and initiatives (GoF 2019a). While part of the contributions to the fund are sourced from taxes, such as the Environment and Climate Adaptation Levy (ECAL)[7], further support towards the locally administered fund could be sought in terms of bilateral and multilateral grants and private sector donations into the fund, thereby consolidating funding beyond the level of projects and enabling more flexible use of adaptation finance in the long run. Utilising the recently launched Fiji sovereign green bond (GoF 2019c) to support community relocations could also be further explored. Learning from the case of Narikoso for better management of project finance could in practice include:

- Running a risk analysis and close monitoring of parallel projects. For example, the Narikoso case showed that unexpected events and delays in the parallel project of Waciwaci also led to implementation delays and risk maladaptation.
- Clarity around procedures for financial reporting requirements by all local stakeholders involved prior to developing projects.

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[7] The ECAL tax was first introduced in Fiji as an environment levy in 2015 and later amended in 2017. It is calculated at a tax rate of 10% on service providers registered and operating in Fiji whose annual gross turnover exceeds $1.5 million FJD [~600,000 Euro], 10% tax on importation of luxury vehicles, 10% charge on super yacht charters and docking fees; 10% income tax on individual annual earnings exceeding $270,000 FJD [~100,000 Euro]; and a 20 cents levy on plastic bags (GoF 2019d). So far, the revenues generated from the tax have been largely spent on more resilient infrastructure developments (GoF 2019b).

- The presence of robust financial monitoring guidelines, together with enhanced financial staff capacities prior to developing projects.

Conclusion

A multi-level governance perspective on the specific case of the Narikoso relocation reveals the many challenges that can play out at local levels. These challenges are interrelated and should not be seen in isolation from one another. The challenges often extend beyond the limited scope of the project itself and may result from unexpected external events; from the lack of policy and operational guidelines; and the inadequacies to include, measure and place a value on important aspects of the socio-cultural context in actual planning and implementation processes. Moreover, improper planning can have long-lasting implications, even when plans are amended later in the process. This was revealed in the Narikoso case when the first phase of the project resulted in severe environmental degradation and inadequate planning use of financial resources. When plans made in a consolidated community process are changed by donors and coordinating agencies, this not only highlights the frequent lack of accountability external actors have towards communities, but also the presence of power dynamics and dependency relationships which tend to favour the donors, the technical expertise and government rather than communities. The Narikoso case reveals that decisions not only lacked community participation, but also contributed to increasing concerns over community cohesion which did not register with the external agencies, leading to unaddressed conflict. Building on these findings, there is scope for more practice-oriented research in the field of adaptation governance and community-based relocations, for example, looking into integration of process-based research methodologies and monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks. Furthermore, there is scope for more comparative analysis of many more case studies to consolidate causal process patterns and to develop better planning and intervention strategies. On a final note, this brief suggests that adaptive co-management should strive towards better integration of adaptation research, practice, and policy informing each other.

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