



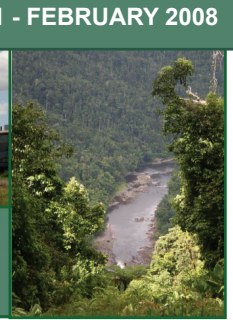
THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

UPDATE# 1 - FEBRUARY 2008



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts



MTSRF Project 4.9.7: Understanding and enhancing social resilience

Happy New Year from the University of Queensland research team!

We invite you to read our first research update for our research partners. In this edition we introduce ourselves, the meaning of social resilience and the goals of the project. Future research updates will keep you updated with the project direction and progress.

Introducing the University of Queensland research team

Three teams of researchers from CSIRO, the University of Queensland (UQ) and James Cook University (JCU) have received funding from the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF) for a project to investigate ways to understand and enhance social resilience in relation to environmental change in far North Queensland. This research is being carried out at three scales: the whole of the Great Barrier Reef management scale (CSIRO); the regional NRM and Wet Tropics World Heritage Area scale (UQ) and the community scale (JCU). Project 4.9.7 is numbered as such because it falls within Theme 4 'Sustainable Landuse and Management', Program 9 'Sustainable Use, Planning and Management of Tropical Rainforested Landscapes' and is Project 7 within this Program. **This research update introduces the research team from the University of Queensland (UQ).**

Helen Ross

Helen is Professor of Rural Community Development with the School of Natural and Rural Systems Management, UQ. She is an interdisciplinary social scientist (environmental psychologist and anthropologist) specialising in social aspects of sustainable development and environmental management. Current research projects include catchment management research in the Lockyer Valley, Darling Downs, and Burnett Mary regions as well as a project on individual and community resilience in Stanthorpe, South East Queensland (with Chrissy King). She has also been involved with the social impact scoping study for the Living Murray Project, and developing partnerships between the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Aboriginal Traditional Owners of reef coastal areas. Helen brings extensive experience to the project in the fields of co-management, Indigenous natural resource management and the use of social sciences in integrative environmental research.



Michael Cuthill

Associate Professor Michael Cuthill has been working for 12 years in the area of participatory democracy in Australia. Michael has held senior positions both in academia and government, and has been the Director of the **UQ Boilerhouse Community Engagement Centre** since 2005. Under his direction the centre has established 12 major projects relating to engaged governance and social sustainability, with over \$2 million dollars funding, involving over 100 private, public, community and university sector stakeholders. His work includes international research projects with North American and UK universities. Michael is a strong advocate for universities having an active role in helping build just and sustainable communities. Michael brings diverse community development experience to the project.



Kirsten Maclean

Dr Kirsten Maclean joined the UQ research team in September 2007. She came from Thursday Island where she worked with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority from late 2006. Kirsten is a human geographer. She completed her PhD at The Australian National University in 2006, partially funded by the Desert Knowledge CRC. Her thesis developed conceptual and practical strategies to improve knowledge sharing between the interest groups working for environmental management and community development in north central Victoria and the southern Tanami region of central Australia. She has the lucky role of driving the case study side of the project. As such she is the 'face of the research team' and will be based out of Cairns for much of 2008 and 2009.



Bradd Witt

Dr Bradd Witt teaches in the areas of environmental management and problem solving. He brings to the project his experience in the long term changes that have occurred in the rangelands, perceptions of landscape change as well as a developing interest in urban and rural relationships and its influence on rural land management.



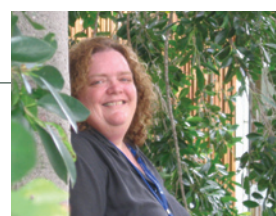
Chrissy King

Dr Chrissy King has worked as a practitioner, leader and trainer in extension development and social research in the national and international arena, including Indonesia, India, Cambodia, Chile, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Sweden, New Zealand, PNG, and South Africa. She brings to the project extensive experience and knowledge of the concepts, issues and strategies of contemporary change processes in agriculture and natural resource management.



Karen Owens, Rebecca Harrington & Josh Darrah

Karen Owens and Rebecca Harrington have been working as research assistants to the project team. Karen will be commencing her PhD in Behavioural Studies in early 2008. Rebecca is part way through her PhD studies with the School of Natural and Rural Systems Management. Josh has worked in multimedia production and graphic design for over 6 years, providing design support to the project team.



Clockwise from top left:
Karen Owens, Rebecca
Harrington and Josh
Darrah

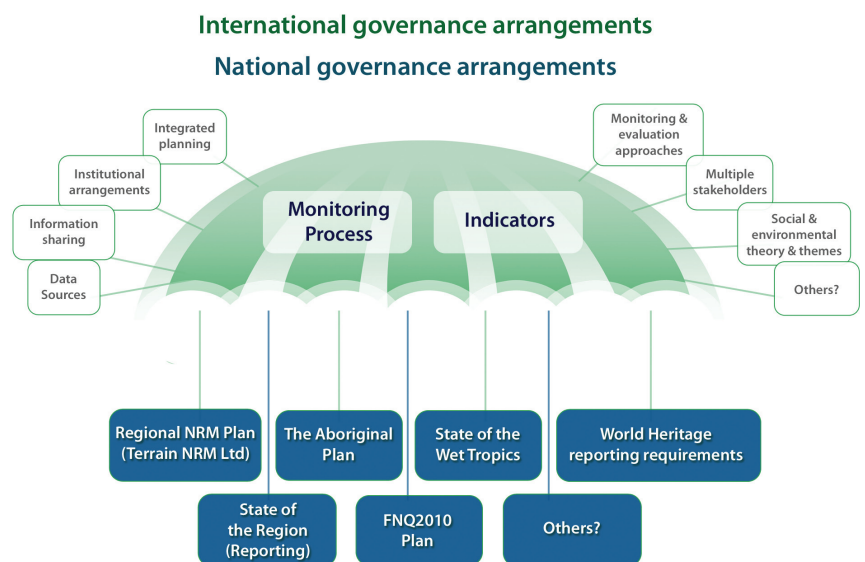


Research Resilience

The UQ team works at the regional scale with Terrain NRM Ltd, the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the Aboriginal Rainforest Council and potentially other regional bodies to develop indicators to measure social resilience. Indicators provide a way to measure regional social resilience, and will inform management approaches that ensure both social and environmental systems are healthy and adaptive.

These approaches will continue to enhance and build stronger and more resilient communities in far North Queensland (Management plans and reporting systems we will contribute to include the Terrain Regional Plan, 2008 – 2012; State of the Wet Tropics; the Aboriginal Plan; the FNQ2020 Plan; and the State of the Region report card).

ROLE OF THE PROJECT IN THE REGIONAL GOVERNANCE LANDSCAPE



What is social resilience?

Social resilience is one way to describe how individuals and communities respond, adapt, and become stronger when faced with environmental (or other) challenges that impact upon their lifestyle. It recognizes the two-way relationship between people and the environments in which they live. It focuses on communities' strengths (rather than just the challenges they wish to overcome).

Workshops, interviews, case studies

The development of these indicators, as well as their ongoing monitoring and evaluation, will depend upon the knowledge and experience held by individuals, groups and organisations living and working in North Queensland. Preliminary workshops have begun with key individuals from Terrain NRM Ltd, the Wet Tropics Management Authority and the Aboriginal Rainforest Council to start to detail the potential ingredients of the indicator sets. Case studies will test the appropriateness of the indicator sets to specific geographic places within the Johnstone and Barron river catchment areas. They will also act as an interactive forum in which to develop appropriate and achievable monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Coming to a catchment near you in 2008

Regional Partner Workshops

Two workshops were held in 2007 with our regional partners. The first workshop was held in May. It provided an interactive forum to discuss the pertinent social and ecological issues facing individuals, communities and agencies in the region. The second Regional partner workshop was held in December. Michael Cuthill and Kirsten Maclean led a discussion about the role of the project in the regional reporting landscape and the important role of social indicators in understanding and measuring regional resilience. Workshop participants were asked to consider the social, cultural and economic factors that build or reduce regional resilience. The workshop was a great success.

Four workshops will be held with regional partners in 2008. The social indicator framework will be presented and evolved at these workshops. An additional four workshops will be held in 2009 to progress the monitoring and evaluation process.

Thank you to everyone who stimulated discussion and gave their time in 2007! It is a pleasure to work with such a dynamic and diverse group.

Case studies : People and Water

Two case studies will be developed in 2008. Approximately 80 interviews will be conducted in the two catchment areas. The information gathered from these interviews will inform the social indicator framework. Kirsten Maclean has met with a variety of people from the Johnstone and Barron River catchment areas. Many wish to share their knowledge about their region for the project. She will be conducting interviews for the case studies May-September 2008.



Johnstone River



Mt Hypipamee Crater



Irrigation channel

Thank You!

We would like to extend our ongoing thanks to our regional partners from the Aboriginal Rainforest Council, the Wet Tropics Management Authority and Terrain NRM Ltd. As well as our MTSRF project partners from CSIRO and JCU. We look forward to evolving the project together in 2008 and beyond.

Project contact information

If you would like to know more about any aspect of the project please contact:

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