

# What a sea turtle taught us: learning to learn from setbacks

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What the sea turtle taught us



Learning to learn from setbacks

# Interfishery bycatch credits

## HAWAII

- High value fishery
- Constrained by sea turtle bycatch (17 turtles)
- Shadow price of saving additional turtle estimated at \$40,000-\$60,000 /turtle

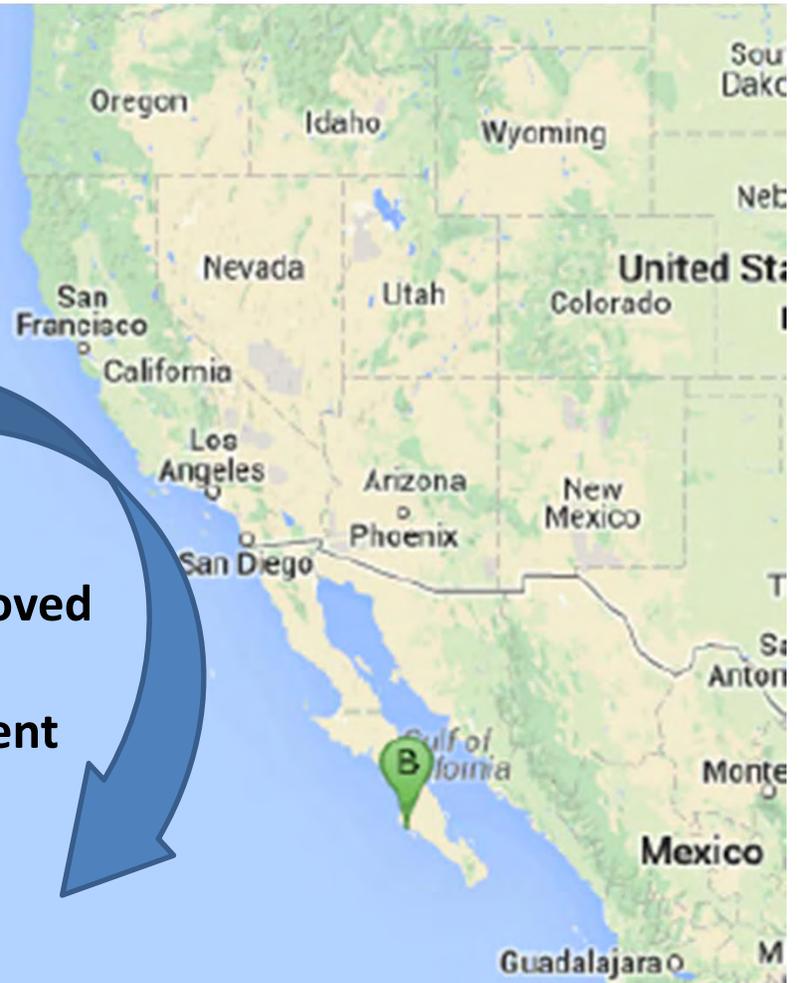


Increased  
bycatch quota

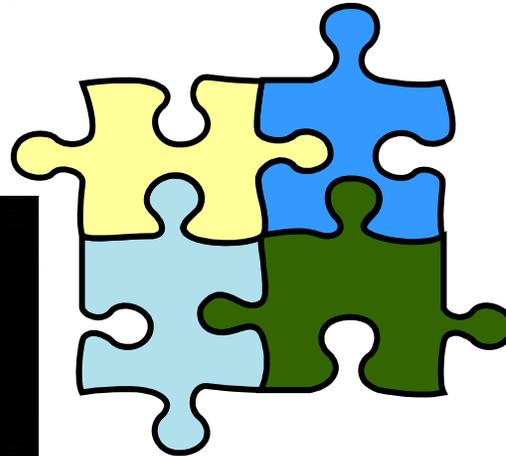
\$ for improved  
fisheries  
management

## MEXICO

- Low value fishery
- Average bycatch rate  $2,500 \pm 500$  turtles between 2003-2010
- Estimated per turtle cost of avoided mortality ~\$800/turtle



# Bycatch credit creation



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Brokerage



Demand  
generation



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# 2012 Pilot

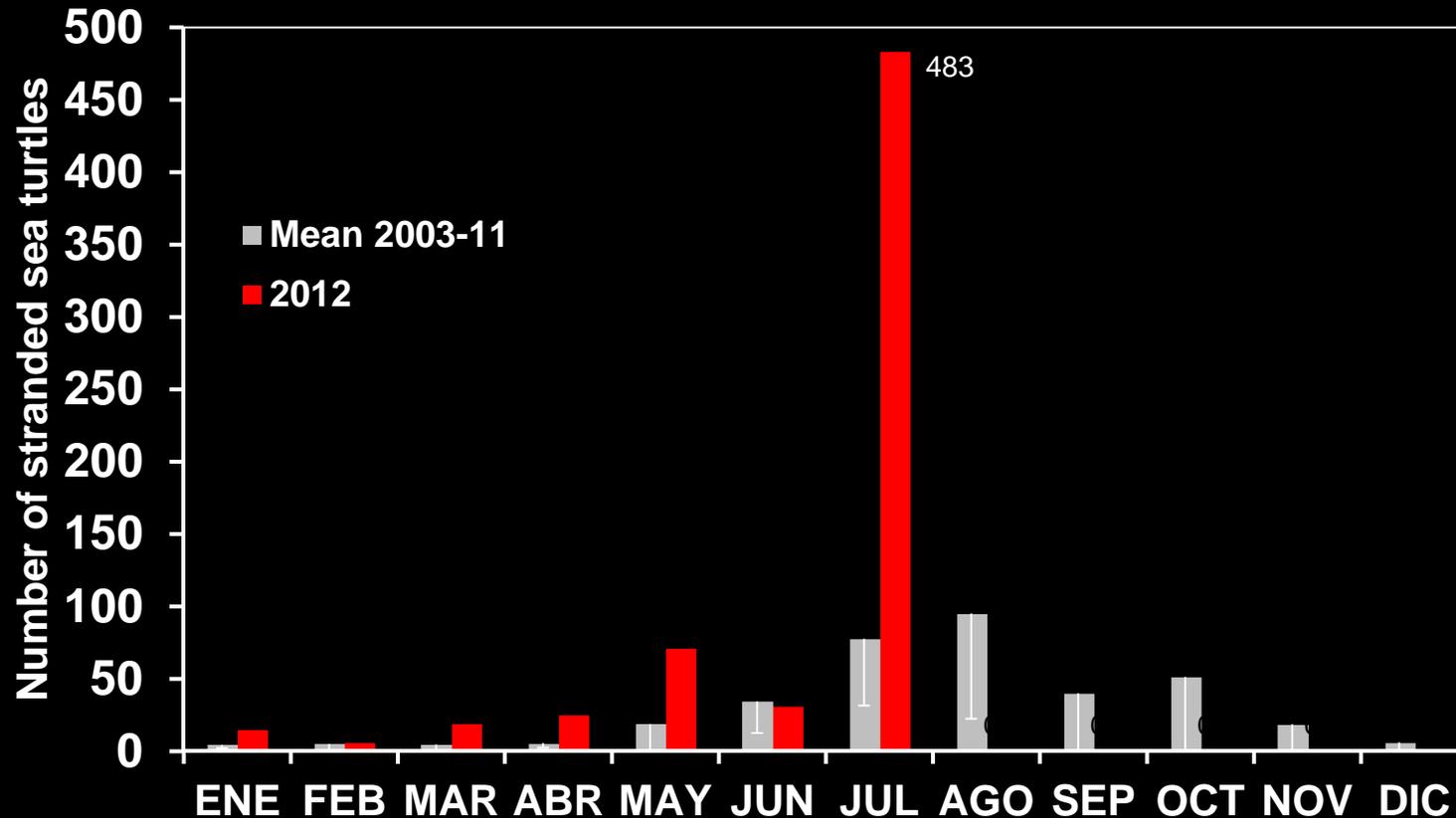


# 2012 Setback

- ➔ In July 2012 the fishers participating in the project withdrew their support
- ➔ Sea turtle bycatch increased 600%
- ➔ State government and local “leaders” took a position against NGOs
- ➔ *Grupo Tortugero* forced to leave Lopez Mateos after 10 years of working in the community



# Loggerhead mortality, July 2012



Peckham *et al*  
2008, unpub data

- 100s stranded = 1000s discarded (Hart et 2006)
- >90 dead accelerates extinction (NMFS BiOp 2008)

# Causes

## Immediate causes

- ➔ Shark fishing ban
- ➔ Halibut run
- ➔ Sea turtles closer to shore

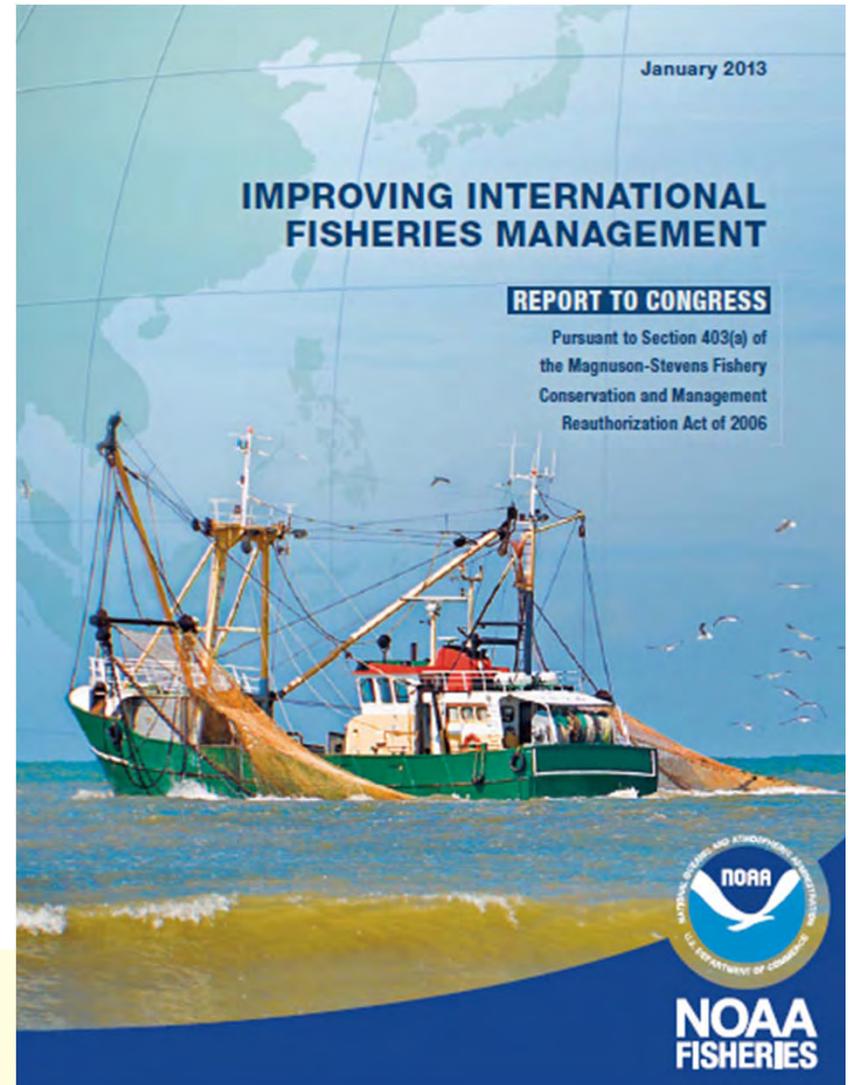
## Root causes

- ➔ Vested interest in maintaining the status quo
- ➔ Local buyers fear competition
- ➔ Local politics, subsidies and votes



# Current status

- ➔ In January 2013, NOAA issued a report to the US Congress citing Mexico on the bycatch of loggerhead sea turtles
- ➔ Potential embargo
- ➔ Mexican authorities deny the problem, are studying the cause of mortality to buy time
- ➔ Conflict has escalated



# Lessons learned

- ➔ Market-based mechanisms and voluntary measures can be fragile and temporary in the absence of rule-of-law
- ➔ Don't underestimate power of perverse vested interests
- ➔ Building political support is vital
- ➔ Short term economic gain is a powerful incentive

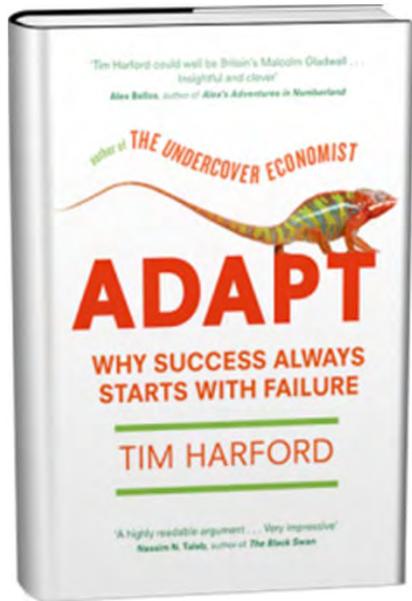


# Beyond Lessons Learned

“A failure is a man who has blundered but is not able to cash in on the experience.”  
— Elbert Hubbard



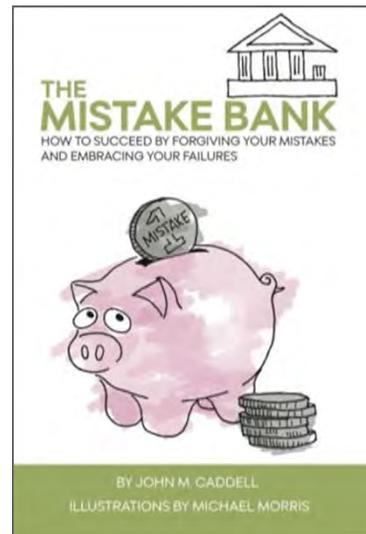
# Learning from failure has become popular:



Adapt, Tim Harford

## Admitting Failure

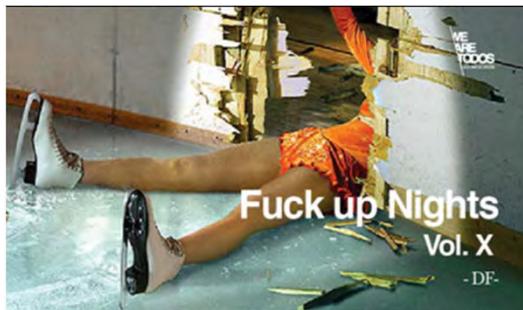
admittingfailure.com



The Mistake Bank  
John M. Caddell

## TED+ SHARING FAILURES

ted.com



fuckupnights.tumblr.com

## FAILture

failfaire.org



# Learning from FMCN Grantees' Setbacks

- ➔ FMCN's 3<sup>rd</sup> "Conservation Week" for grantees and partners: *Semana de Intercambio de Conocimiento para la Conservación (SICC)*
- ➔ Over 140 participants from 50 institutions
- ➔ Focus on learning from failure
- ➔ Goal:
  - Learn from the failures of conservation projects, foster reflection and propose measures to minimize the obstacles encountered by conservation practitioners

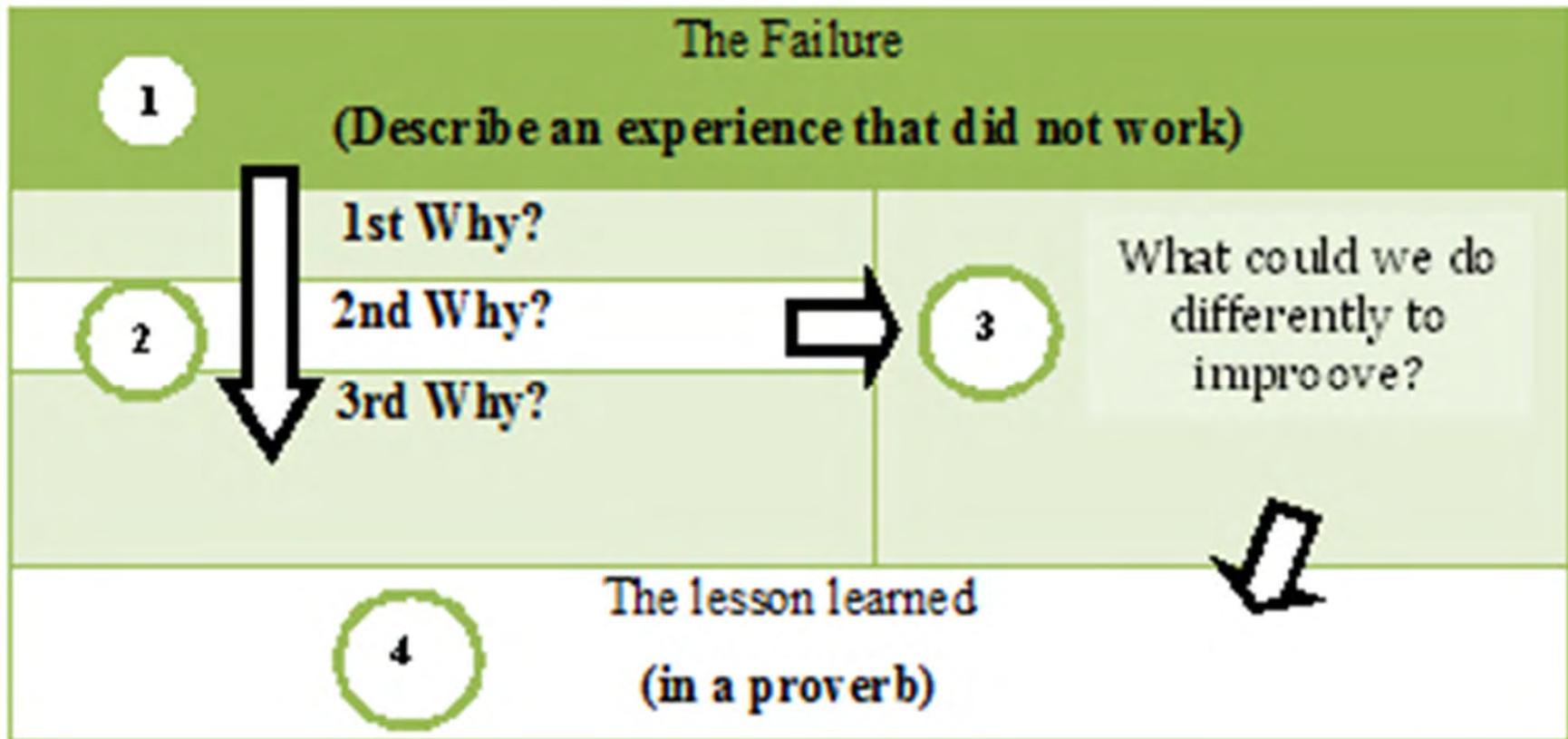


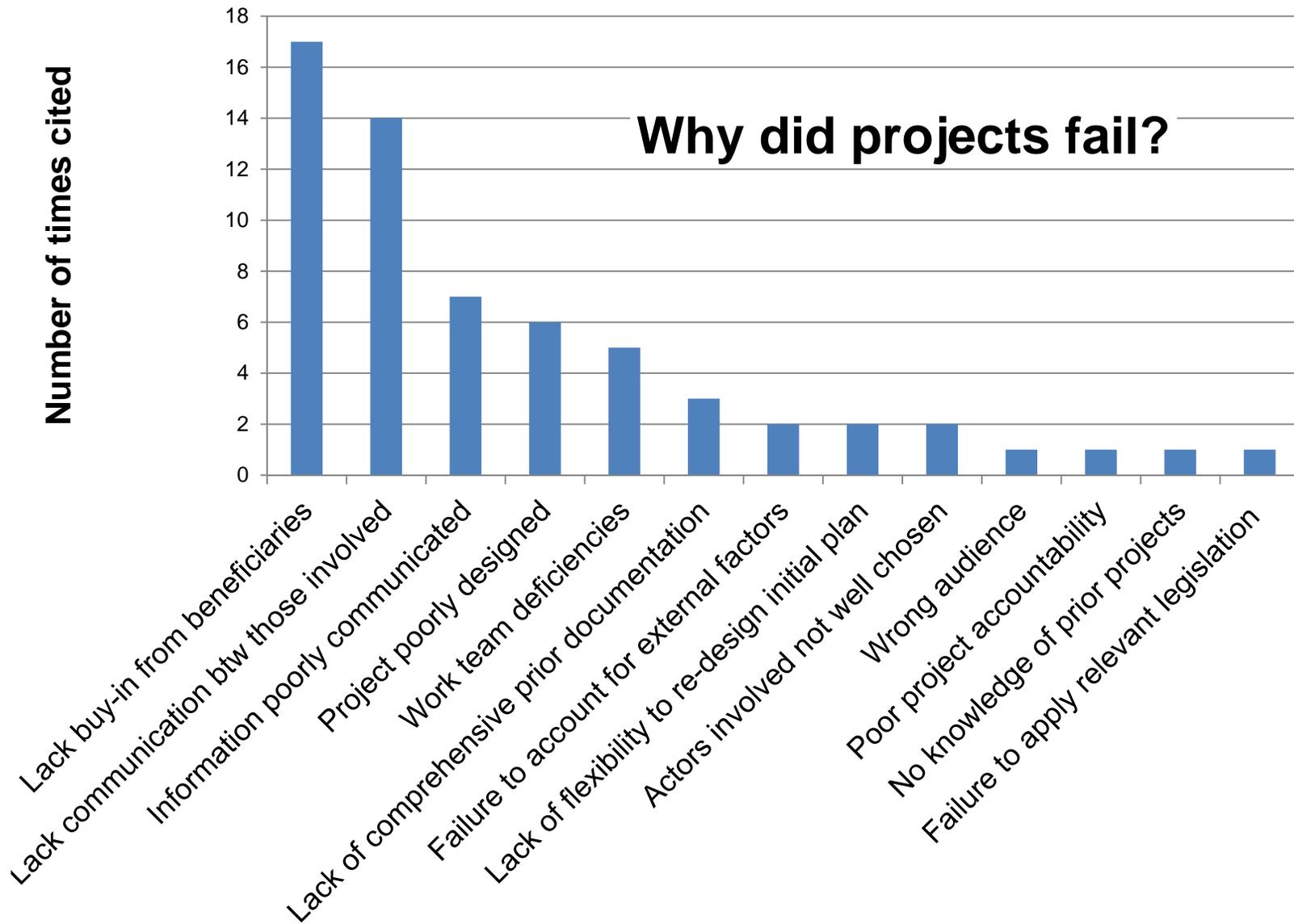
# Dialog Tables Themes

Alternative livelihoods	Climate change	Communication, building awareness and environmental education
Surveillance and enforcement	Payments for environmental services	Defining priorities for conservation
Community development	Monitoring natural resources	
Influencing public policies	Inter-institutional collaboration	



# Methodology





**Types of Failure (62 cases)**

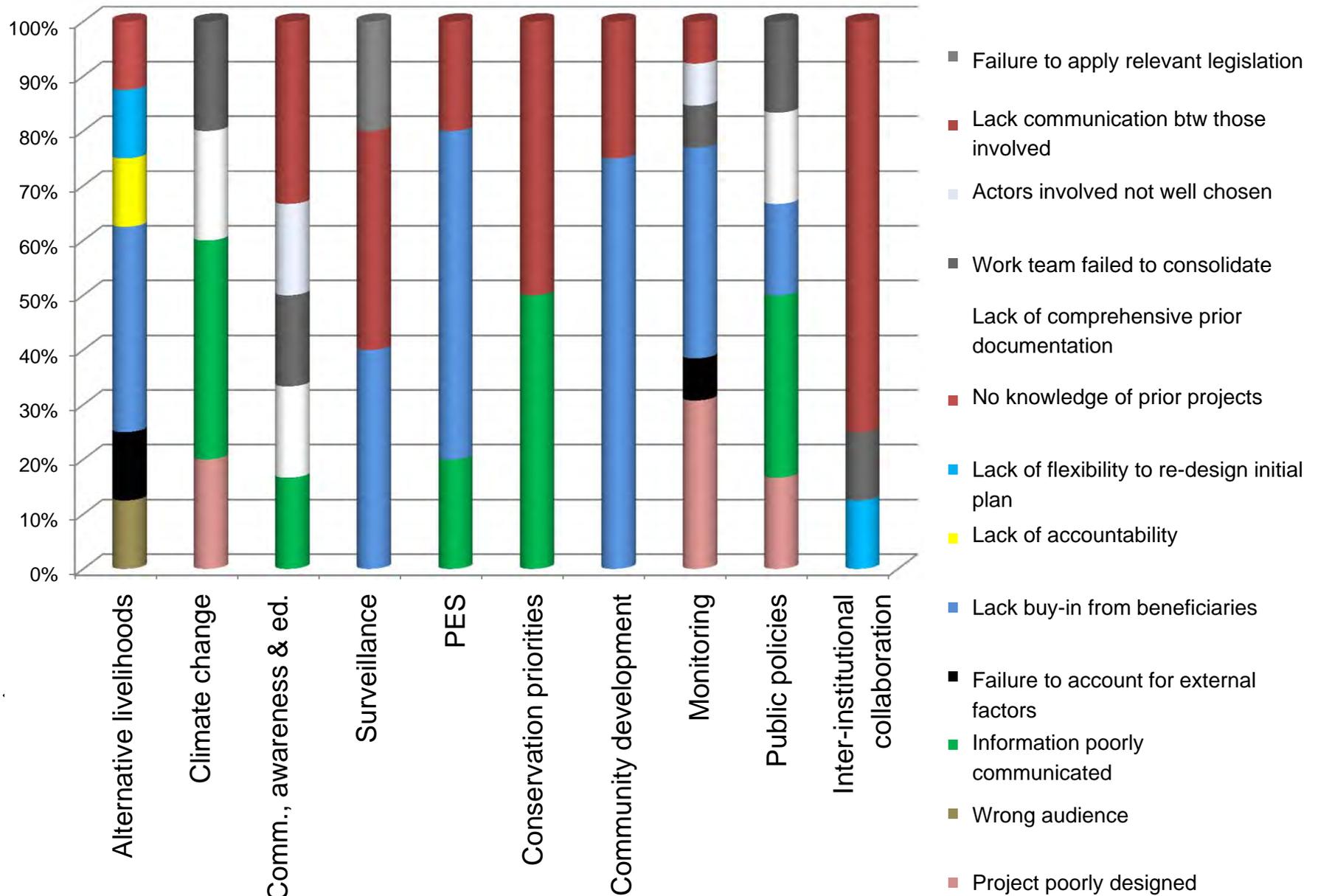




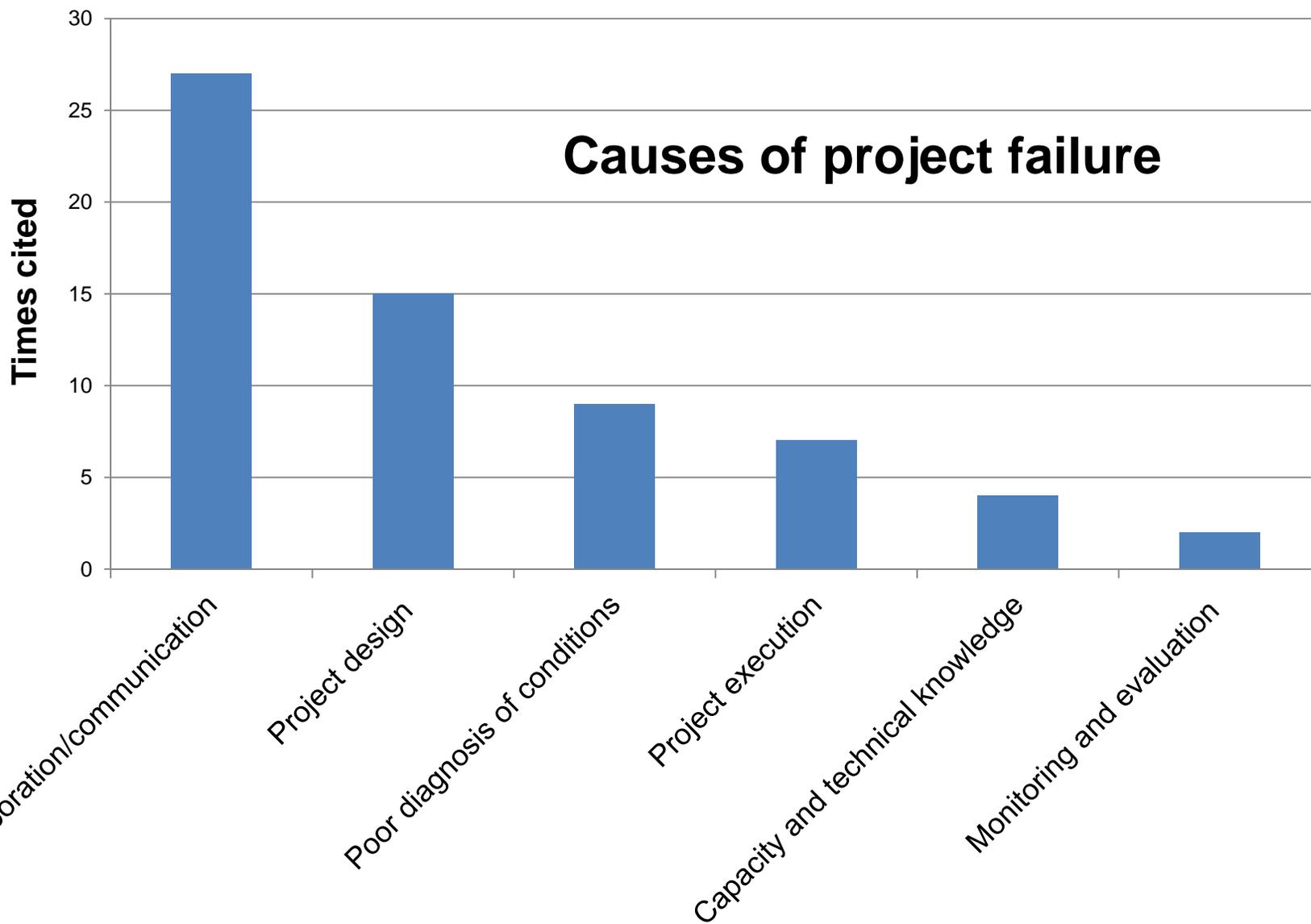
**Types of Failure (62 cases)**



### Distribution of Failures by Topic



## Causes of project failure



Interinstitutional collaboration/communication

Project design

Poor diagnosis of conditions

Project execution

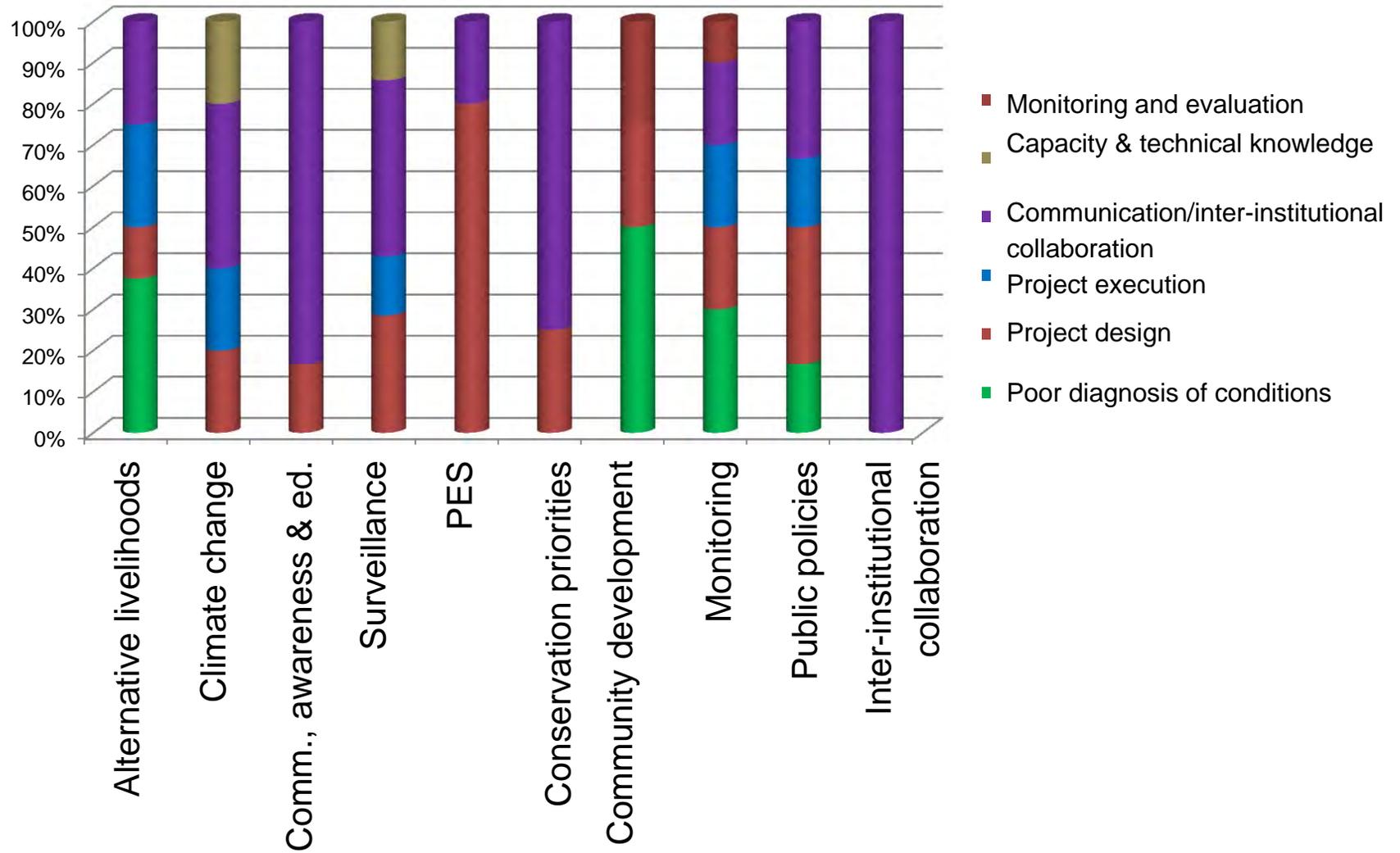
Capacity and technical knowledge

Monitoring and evaluation



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## Causes of Failure by Topic



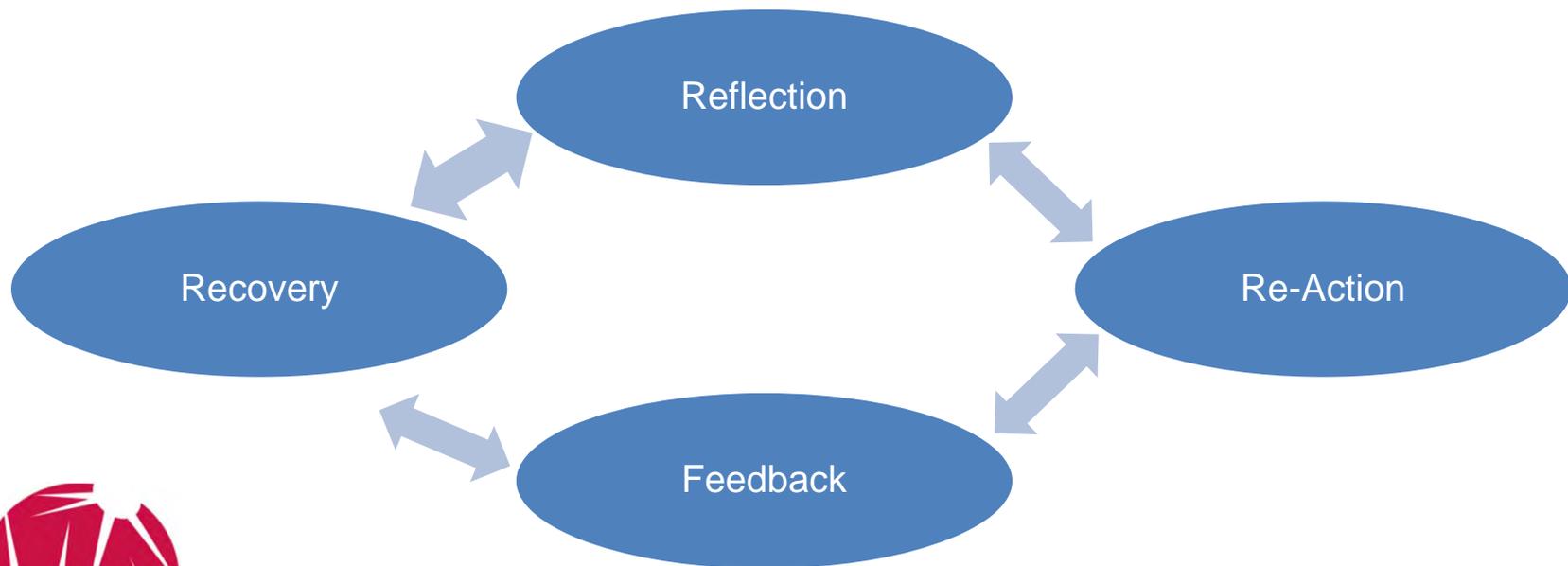
# Thoughts

- ➔ Strong interest in sharing failures
- ➔ Many of the short-comings can be addressed with existing resources (investing in good project design, managing expectations, building capacity)
- ➔ Understanding local conditions and a long term vision seems fundamental for project success
- ➔ Need improve communication, within CSO sector and with other actors/sectors
- ➔ Funders could play a role in addressing many of the underlying causes (longer project horizons, better diagnoses, capacities)



# Next Steps

- ➔ Develop a tool for systematically learning from setbacks
- ➔ Include as a topic in capacity building



# What did the sea turtle teach us?



- ➔ Take risks
- ➔ Learn from setbacks
- ➔ Buy-in from key actors
- ➔ Communication, communication, communication
- ➔ (Can't always align the stars)

**“Mejor un arreglo intermedio,  
que un mal pleito”**

**“Si quieres llegar  
rápido ve sólo, si  
quieres llegar lejos,  
ve acompañado”**

**“Puesto brincado,  
proceso trabado”**

**“Si pretendemos la  
conservación,  
requerimos la  
participación”**

**“No importa de  
que color sea el  
gato, mientras se  
mate al ratón”**

**“En la orquesta  
sin director,  
cada quien  
toca su son”**

**“Árbol que nace torcido,  
hay que entablillarlo”**

**“Que el árbol no te  
impida ver el bosque,  
que el bosque no te  
impida ver el árbol”**

**“Cada chango  
a su mecate”**

**“Hablando se entiende  
la gente, pero si se  
firma, mejor acción y  
mejor conservación”**

**“No siempre la  
línea recta es el  
mejor camino  
entre dos puntos”**