



Bridging the gap between scientific approaches and lived realities in Mayotte

MSc Global Challenges for Sustainability
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In Collaboration with: The Lost Compass

MEET THE TEAM AND THE STAKEHOLDER



In collaboration with The Lost Compass

- French conservation NGO based in Sète, France
- Preparing to work in Mayotte for the first time in 2027



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ABOUT MAYOTTE

- Mayotte is a **French overseas department** and **EU outermost region**
- **Cyclone Chido** hit the island in December 2024, causing widespread damage and displacement
- **Impacts were shaped** by pre-existing social vulnerability, ecological pressures, and fragmented governance

This raised a fundamental question for us: how can external NGOs work in such a context without reinforcing existing gaps and mistrust?



(Located between Madagascar and Mozambique)

RESEARCH FOCUS

Central Research Question:

*How has the gap between disaster resilience-oriented discourses and lived realities manifested in Mayotte during recent hazards, and what lessons can *The Lost Compass* draw to engage more effectively with local communities?*

What we focused on:

- **Resilience-oriented discourses:** policy narratives on recovery, preparedness, adaptation
- **Lived realities:** everyday access to water, housing, healthcare, safety
- **The gap:** long-term resilience framing vs. unmet basic needs
- **Cyclone Chido as a lens:** made pre-existing vulnerabilities and governance fragmentation visible



HOW WE APPROACHED THE CHALLENGE

1

NGOs entering a complex post-disaster context

- Social vulnerability
- Environmental degradation
- Fragmented governance

High risk of misaligned or harmful engagement

2.

Defining the core challenge

- Resilience-oriented institutional narratives
and
- Lived survival realities of communities

Good intentions ≠ effective or equitable action

3.

Analysing the challenge

- Social foundations
- Political institutions
- Coastal governance
- Biodiversity and use of scientific knowledge

4.

Designing a response to the challenge

- Translating research findings into NGO-relevant guidance
- Focusing on orientation, reflection, and ethical engagement

Besides producing an academic report, we also asked what would actually help an NGO entering Mayotte for the first time?

KEY RESULTS: THE RESILIENCE-REALITY GAP IN MAYOTTE

Knowledge-Action Gap

- **Scientific evidence** rarely translates into **policy or resilience action**
- **Data** often remains in grey literature or in an **inaccessible** format
- **"Eco-Infantilisation"**
- Lack of **resources** post-Chido

Governance Fragmentation

- Mainland French **crisis management policies** demonstrate mixed effectiveness in Mayotte
- Inconsistent and fractured **institutional response**, leading to **mistrust**
- **NGOs filling state gaps**

Survival-Sustainability Paradox

- Immediate **basic needs** override **environmental priorities**
- Chido exposed already existing **vulnerabilities**
- **Social hierarchies** determine risk

Resilience in Mayotte is constrained not by lack of scientific knowledge, but by institutional fragmentation, limited capacity, and survival-driven realities that prevent science from informing action.

NGO TOOLKIT FOR CONTEXT-SENSITIVE ENGAGEMENT IN MAYOTTE

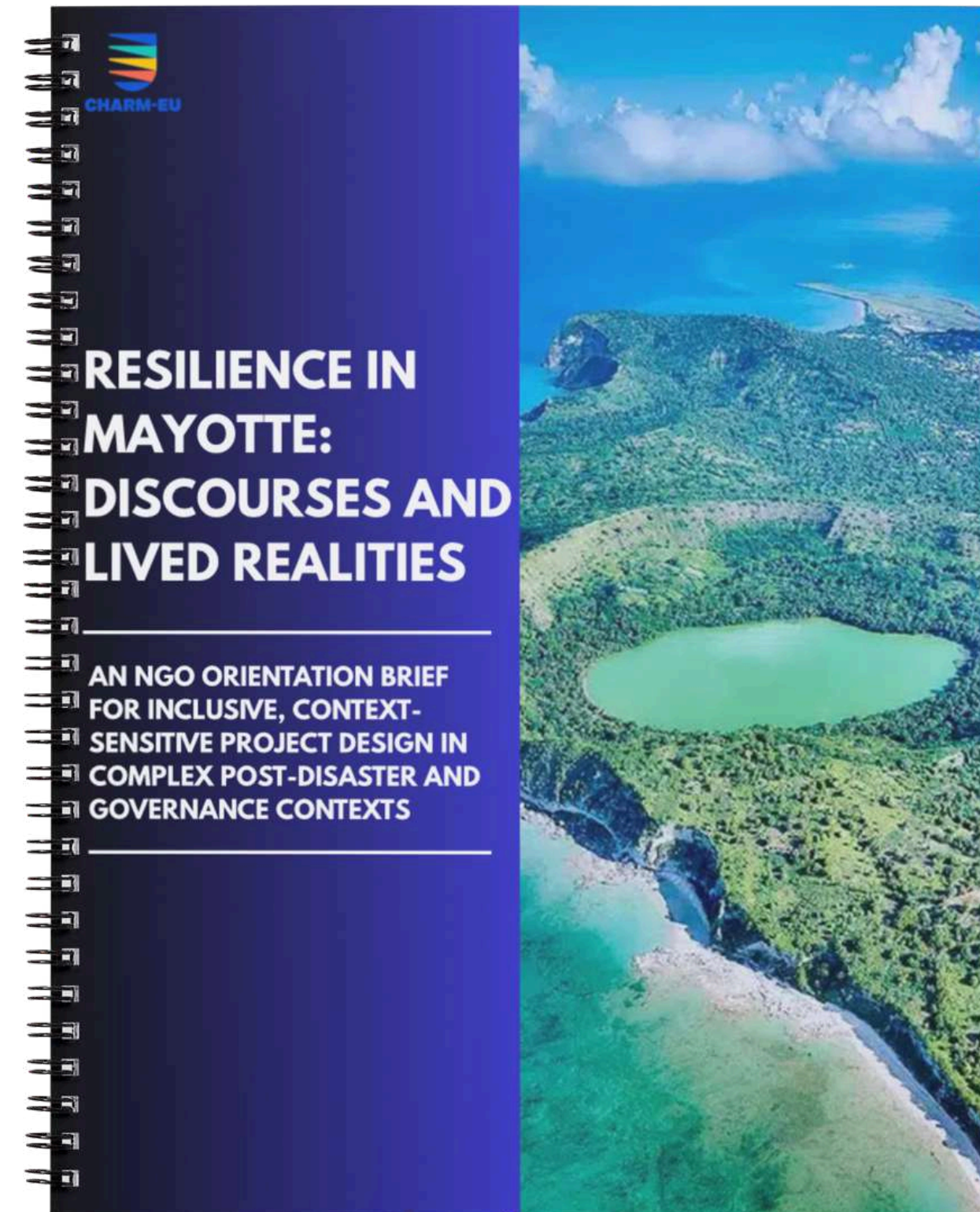
What the Toolkit is:

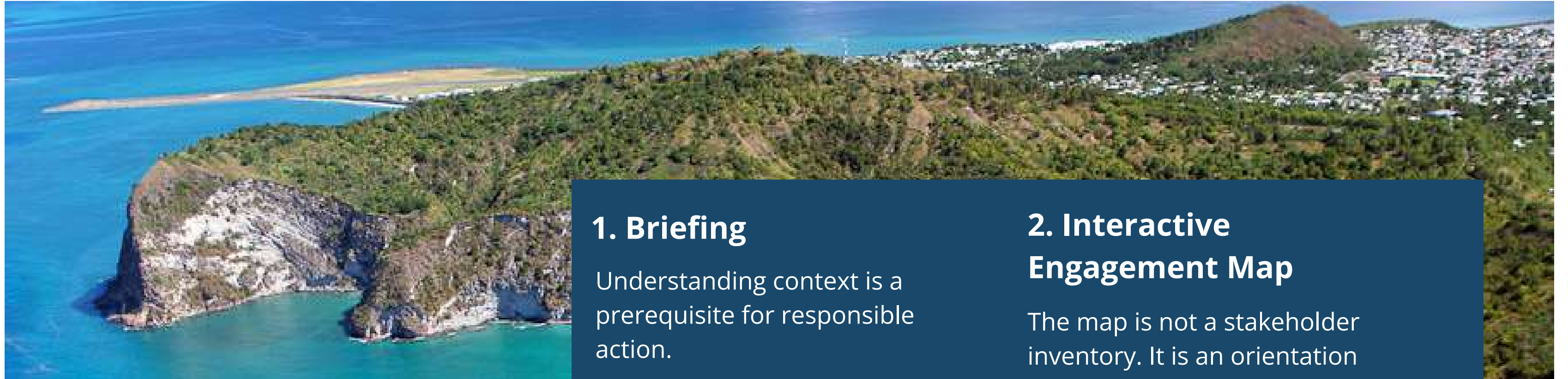
- A practical orientation and decision-support tool
- Designed for NGOs working at the intersection of:
 - Environmental protection
 - Social vulnerability
 - Disaster response

What the Toolkit is NOT:

- Not a comprehensive stakeholder database
- Not a prescriptive “how-to” manual
- Not a substitute for local knowledge

The toolkit translates complex research findings into accessible, usable guidance that supports ethical and informal NGO engagement





TOOLKIT COMPONENTS

1. Briefing

Understanding context is a prerequisite for responsible action.

2. Interactive Engagement Map

The map is not a stakeholder inventory. It is an orientation and engagement tool, meant to be updated on a regular basis.

3. Citizen Science Outline

Citizen science is presented as a relational process, not just a data collection method.

4. Online Library & Contact List

Essential papers evaluating Mayotte's situation are crucial for designing collaborative initiatives.

BRIEFING

- ✓ Key Research Findings
- ✓ Reference tools for NGO projects
- ✓ Clarified context from fragmented sources
- ✓ Informed, context-aware engagement

Briefing : Key Terms

'Hyper-Environmentalism' and 'Eco-Infantilism'

Overview

In their 2024 paper, Georgeta Stoica and Marta Gentilucci present the terms 'hyper-environmentalism' and 'eco-infantilism'.

They discuss a recent surge in French investment in environmental protection projects in Mayotte, leading to the suggestion that this surge is 'hyper' or exaggerated.

This surge has been partially due to Mayotte's departmentalisation in 2011 and the subsequent need to comply with European environmental regulations, strategies, and commitments, particularly those to restore and preserve biodiversity.

The authors suggest that Mayotte is viewed as a 'tropical natural paradise' to be saved by, particularly, European conservationists and scientists who come to Mayotte for short, repeated missions, and staff of the Mayotte Nature Park, the majority of whom spend only a few years on the territory.

This can lead to paternalistic treatment and disregard for local expertise in conservation efforts, termed 'eco-infantilism'.

Briefing : Key Terms

'Resilience Discourse'

Overview

The concept of 'resilience discourse' was developed in the Capstone research and report. This refers to articles and public statements about Mayotte's disaster recovery, centring the idea that this has broadly been successful and thus that Mayotte is 'resilient', without considering the different perspectives and sometimes hidden vulnerability of disadvantaged or struggling residents.

Briefing : Key Terms

Recent Disasters in Mayotte

Overview

Mayotte is subject to recurrent droughts, coastal erosion, and tropical cyclones. Most recently, it was struck by Cyclone Chido in 2024, which was the strongest such event recorded in almost a century. Predating Chido, Mayotte has been experiencing severe drought that has caused intermittent water shortages, with a particularly significant crisis in 2023.

Briefing : Key Terms

Mayotte Survival Realities

Overview

Some Mayotte inhabitants do not feel that international conservation organisations, as well as in many cases, politicians and journalists, do not truly understand their daily realities and struggles for survival, particularly in the wake of natural disasters like Chido and the water crisis. This can lead to resentment and miscommunication, if inhabitants do not feel that their true priorities are understood and factored into new policies and projects, including conservation initiatives.

INTERACTIVE ENGAGEMENT MAP

Consist of four different layers

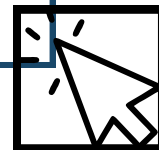
- Social Vulnerability
- Environmental Sensitivity
- Coastal Monitoring Zones
- Existing Actors - Government Authorities

Contains geographically specific information about

- Socio-economic vulnerabilities and disaster-affected areas
- Biodiversity conservation hotspots
- Key NGOs and institutional stakeholders
- Monitoring, coordination, and engagement zones

Designed as an evolving tool, adaptable to new information

Access the map here: [Interactive Map of Mayotte](#)



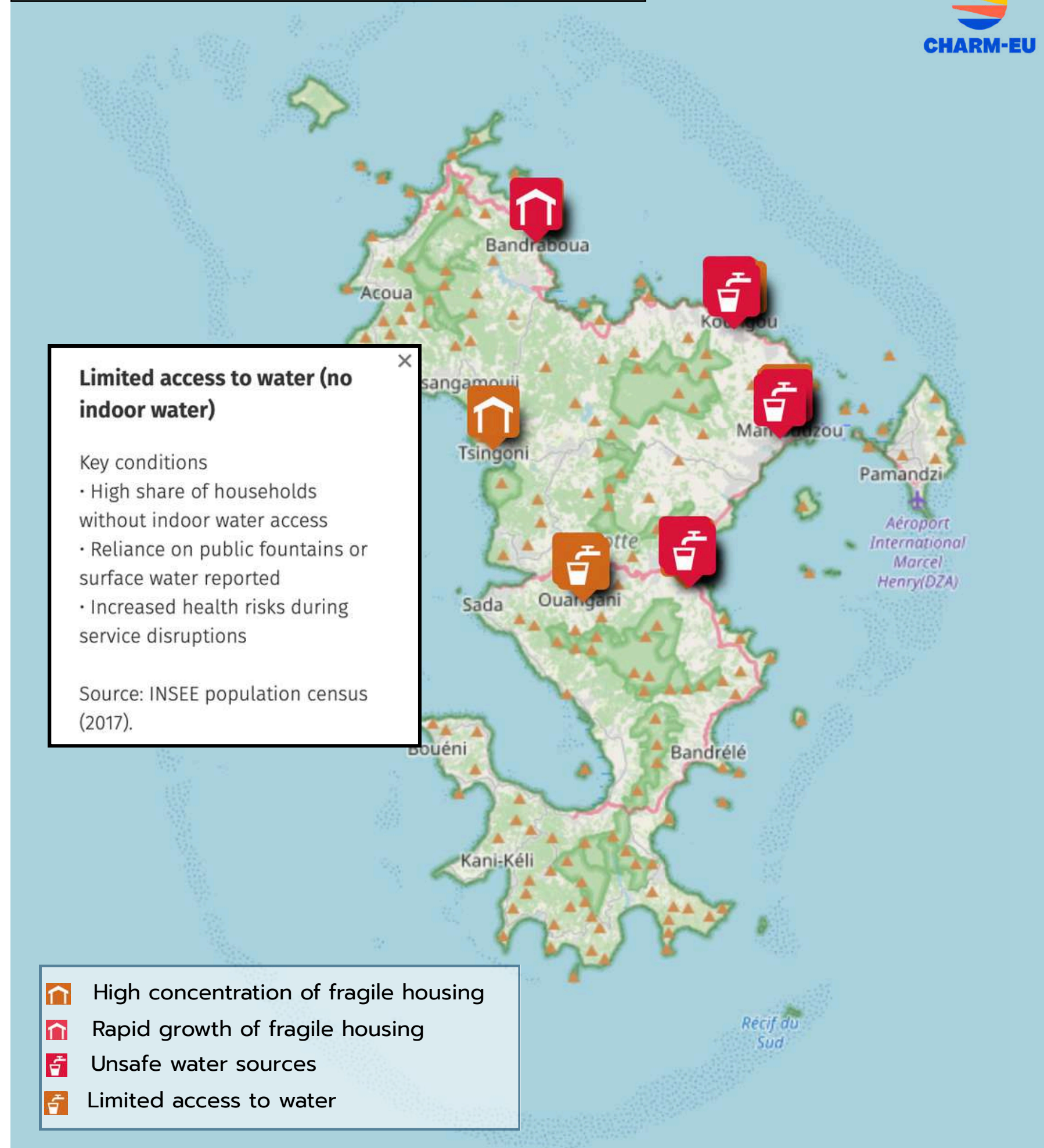
Limited access to water (no indoor water)

Key conditions

- High share of households without indoor water access
- Reliance on public fountains or surface water reported
- Increased health risks during service disruptions

Source: INSEE population census (2017).

- High concentration of fragile housing
- Rapid growth of fragile housing
- Unsafe water sources
- Limited access to water



CITIZEN SCIENCE OUTLINE

A Field Guide for Community-Led Environmental Resilience in Mayotte

■ Inclusive Community Workshops

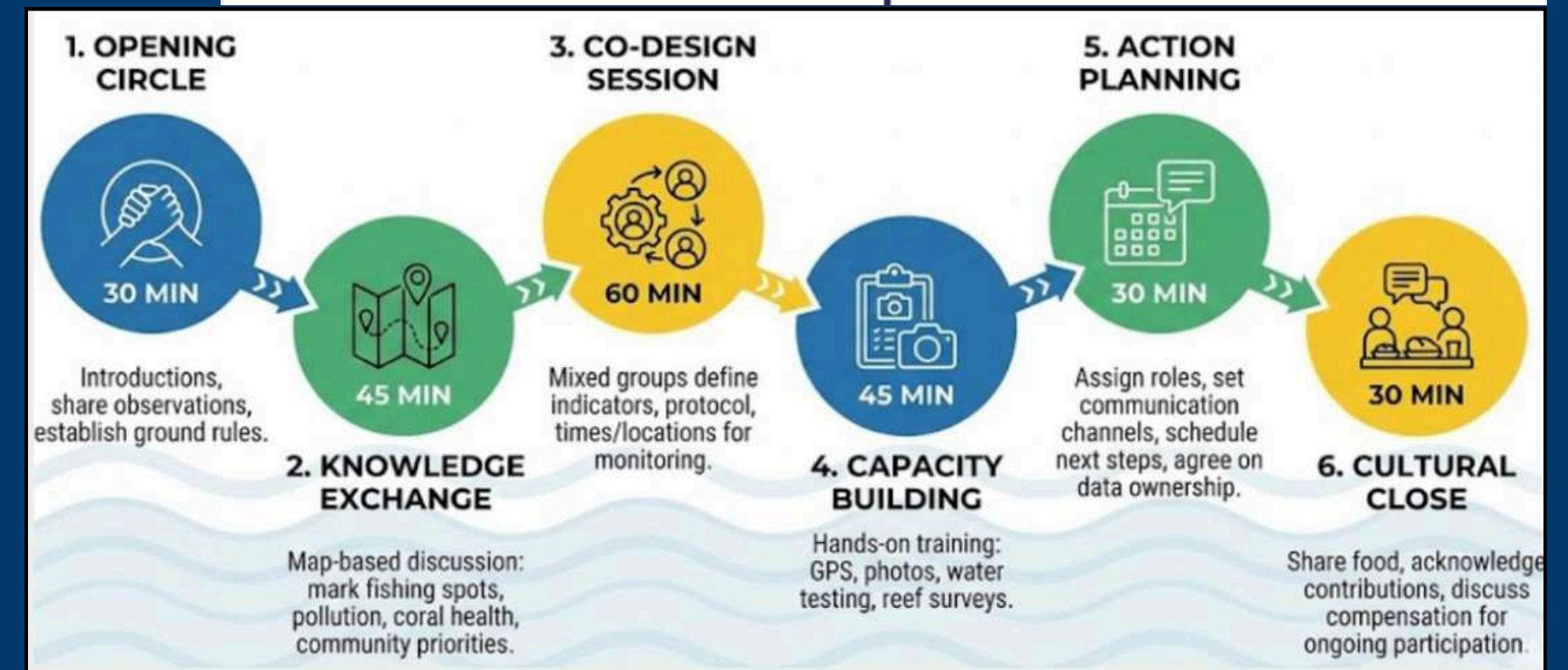
- Pre-Workshop Checklist
- Workshop Structure Template
- Dos and Don'ts

■ Participation Barriers - How to Fix them

■ Accessible Digital Platform Tools

■ Illustrative Pilot Project Timeline

Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What have you noticed about the lagoon?" • Pay for time and travel • Meet in villages/beaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Let me explain climate change to you" • Expect free volunteer labor • Only meet at University of Mayotte



(Workshop Structure Templates)



Given the sensitivity of post-disaster contexts the toolkit follows a **privacy-by-design** approach

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE LOST COMPASS

- Reveals daily **environmental, social, and economic challenges**
- Exposes structural drivers of **vulnerability**
- Highlights the gap between **resilience discourse** and **lived realities**

The toolkit supports The Lost Compass' first project in Mayotte by enabling informed, credible, and effective engagement with local communities.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Positionality of researchers

- *White researchers based in Global North*
- *Not experienced the events discussed*
- *Possibility of biased preconceptions*

Possibility of contributing to harmful stereotypes and perceptions

- *Unable to conduct research in Mayotte*
- *Unable to speak to community residents*

Sensitive interview subject matter

- *Discussing traumatic events*
- *Discussing vulnerability of communities*
- *Discussing politically sensitive issues*

LIMITATIONS

Sample size and access constraints

- *Very limited pre-existing contacts*
- *Language barrier*
- *Minimal respondents meant insufficient sample size*

Remote nature of research

- *Unable to corroborate claims about political atmosphere and resident opinions*

Participant recruitment methods

- *Limited by necessity of using publicly available contacts*
- *No access to most vulnerable communities e.g. rural residents and immigrants*

FINAL REFLECTION

- Our research shows that resilience cannot be assumed or declared. It has to be built on lived realities
- The toolkit is our way of turning critical, context-sensitive research into something NGOs can actually use

We hope that by highlighting the underrepresentation of vulnerable groups in our report and product, we can raise awareness of the need for further research to understand the needs and priorities of these communities better in future

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Thank You!

Access to the NGO Brief



Access to the Map

