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Regional Resource Coordination and Mobilisation Workshop for the Long-term Management and Conservation of MCPAs in South Asia

Workshop Report

**CINNAMON GRAND HOTEL, Colombo-03, Sri Lanka. 27 –28th September
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**REGIONAL RESOURCE COORDINATION AND MOBILISATION WORKSHOP FOR THE
LONGTERM MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION OF MCPAs IN SOUTH ASIA
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA,
27-28th SEPTEMBER 2006**

**DAY 1: WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 27th, 2006
INAUGURATION CEREMONY**

- Mr. S.S.B. Yalegama Assistant Secretary represented the secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka as the chief guest
- Keynote Address was given by Mr. Anura Jayathilake, Director, Global Affairs and Environmental Economics, Ministry of Environment
- Dr. Arvind Boaz, Director General of SACEP provided a welcome address to participants and invitees on behalf of the organising committee, and highlighted the significance of this initiative to SACEP as the largest project undertaken to date, and to the region, in support of the MEA targets and marine resource conservation
- Dr. Kristian Teleki, Director of ICRAN welcomed participants and encouraged an inclusive, and participatory workshop, and maximisation of the regional networking opportunity to develop essential links in support of this project and region wide issues
- Mr. Prasantha Abeyegunawardene advisor to SACEP, delivered a vote of thanks to all concerned

SESSION 1: Workshop Goals and Outputs

The background to the partnership between ICRAN, SACEP, and partners, and the development of the project was presented, highlighting the objectives and scope of the regional project, and defining the structure and specific objectives of the workshop.

It was noted that over 135 stakeholders had been consulted during the development of the project. All participating country governments were consulted in the development of the project proposal, and provided feedback relative to the national situation. Endorsement of project activities was received from governments, and continued involvement was noted as critical to the success of the project, and will be ensured through contact with nominated focal points.

Participants were encouraged to use the workshop as a further opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions on the design of activities. Project activities were designed with an element of flexibility, with respect to the specific details, to ensure that the project would be responsive and adaptable at the time of implementation, and to ensure that all decisions on project actions would be taken with a consensus from the 5 participating nations, to build stewardship.

The first workshop sought to finalise the focus of site based project activities, and gather critical information in support of future project activities. The following objectives were discussed:

- Identification of 5 sites for the implementation of project activities
- Discussion and review of communication between marine and coastal stakeholders within the region and identification of options and priorities for a unifying communication strategy
- Identification of database needs and scenario development
- Identification of possibilities for an electronic discussion forum
- Elaboration of a draft Terms of Reference for the establishment and mode of operation of a regional Task Force
- Identification of appropriate members and affiliations of the regional Task Force
- Selection of an appropriate date for a second regional workshop to finalise draft outputs resulting from this workshop

SESSION 2: Marine and Coastal Protected Area Site Selection

Nicola Barnard of ICRAN highlighted the role of the project in supporting the development of human and technical capacity at existing MCPAs across the region. The suite of activities planned for implementation at 5 sites across the region was presented, alongside a set of ideal characteristics to be demonstrated by potential sites, to support the implementation of these activities.

It was requested that MCPA sites with common resource properties, such as encompassing coral reef and associated habitats in their boundaries, be the focal areas for this initiative to facilitate the replication of effective actions between sites, and focus efforts for a greater deliverable impact through the project.

The selection of one site per country was encouraged. It was noted that all training and capacity building activities would be implemented in conjunction with the selected sites, to address multiple elements of management, enforcement and education, and to encourage the improved operation and outputs at these sites and their use as better management practice examples within countries and across the region.

Working groups, with representatives from all 5 countries, evaluated the appropriateness of nominated sites in accordance with the suggested criteria, and participants outlined the objectives of their activities at sites, and provided updates on progress and status. Short listed sites were then reviewed according to the potential for demonstrable impact that might be realised through the project at each site, as well as the potential for adding value to existing efforts.

It was noted that each site will be allocated equal resources from the project for the implementation of training, enforcement and education programmes. These programmes will be developed in collaboration with local partners and management agencies to ensure a complementary and appropriate local focus and to add value to the existing efforts. Where appropriate, lessons learned will be transferred between sites related to the development and implementation of training.

The possibilities for match funding from country governments was highlighted and ICRAN committed to review the co financing regulations with the EU, to encourage acceptance of parallel financing to this targeted initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the presentations by the working groups and the subsequent discussion, the following provisional list of sites for the implementation of the project was agreed upon:

- ❖ St. Martins Island, Bangladesh
- ❖ Mahatma Gandhi National Park, Andaman Islands
- ❖ Baa Atoll, Maldives
- ❖ Bar Reef, Sri Lanka
- ❖ Jiwani (Gwater Bay), Pakistan.

SESSION 3: Communications Component

The objectives of the project to identify the key communication challenges faced by marine and coastal stakeholders in the region and to encourage information exchange between MCPA sites, and within and across national boundaries were highlighted. Two possible mechanisms to enhance regional communication were presented:

- The updating of existing, or establishment, of a regional database or centralised information conduit
- The establishment of an electronic discussion forum

Participants worked in groups to discuss the key communication challenges facing marine and coastal stakeholders in the region. Groups were asked to reflect on the broader context of information and communication in marine management, and the implications of this for the design of communication mechanisms (such as the database and the discussion forum). The group were asked to provide guidance to the project in its development of tools and services to assist communication within the region. A breakdown of discussions can be found in Annex 1.

Participants emphasised several key issues that may be relevant to the development of an appropriate communication strategy for the project:

- Different stakeholders have varied information needs, dependent on the purpose of the information, and a range of formats is required to facilitate access. Some stakeholders may also have limited access to certain forms of communication media such as Internet and e-mail. Creative thinking on appropriate modes of communication is required to ensure the relevant information reaches stakeholders and can be utilised.
- The capacity of decision-makers and managers to make effective use of information may be as important as the information itself. It was noted that much of the existing information in the region is not effectively utilised in decision-making processes related to coral reef management. Improving the use and uptake of existing information is a priority, and may precede the use of scarce resources on the generation of more information.
- With respect to communications; participants highlighted a wide range of possible uses for information and communication including; good governance (accountability and transparency), an increased sense of ownership among stakeholders in coral reef management, progress & performance monitoring, public awareness, information exchange and consensus building.

The following points were raised in relation to the development of communication mechanisms through this project:

- Participants highlighted the existing frameworks for regional information management such as the GCRMN Coral Reef Database for South Asia, and discussed the merits of updating and modifying the existing systems versus the creation of a new system, in an attempt to identify a sustainable, relevant, and attractive service.
- Concerns were raised in the validity, exchange and misuse of information and sensitive data, and options such as subscribed users were discussed as possible ways to alleviate these issues.
- To reach a greater range of stakeholders other than researchers and academics, it was deemed more appropriate to have a knowledge base or an information portal, which contains tools and information distilled from data in a useable form.
- Further discussion on a suitable database is required. Capacity building training implemented through this project at selected MCPA sites was considered to provide additional opportunities to garner more information on the database/information needs of managers.
- To facilitate discussion on the database following the workshop, the development of an issue based electronic discussion forum was endorsed. This forum will facilitate communication on issues related to this project. Possibilities for the establishment of the discussion forum will be related to the group in the coming weeks.
- The use of a moderator to distil key information from the electronic forum discussions was endorsed as a useful mechanism to build confidence in the system, and as an option for populating a related information knowledge base.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although further thought and discussion is required among regional stakeholders before a coherent communication services can be developed, several recommendations were agreed upon during the course of discussions:

- ❖ Establish an electronic discussion forum for issue-based discussions, which could, among other things, be used to further develop an appropriate communications strategy for the project.
- ❖ Incorporate the effective application of information for coral reef management into capacity building training under the project.
- ❖ Conduct additional investigations and discussions regarding regional database development.

DAY 2: THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 27th, 2006

SESSION 4: Livelihood Diversification Component

The development, testing and documentation of an approach to enable livelihood diversification activities for people who are dependent on coral reefs, as a means of supporting and strengthening coral reef management, was presented as a key objective of this component. The development and delivery of information to inform and influence policy makers and managers was also highlighted.

The work will be undertaken in collaboration with IUCN and CORDIO, and in partnership with a series of local level agencies that will pilot the work in communities. IMM outlined the background to the component, and introduced the comprehensive Sustainable Livelihood Enhancement and Diversification (SLED) approach to alternative livelihoods.

The importance of drawing on the rich experience available in the region in the field of livelihoods development was emphasised and the subsequent plenary discussion regarding participants' own experience with livelihoods development highlighted just how valuable this approach could be. During the discussion participants related their experiences and identified some of the key lessons that they had learnt (see annex 2 for a full list of points raised).

Several key points emerged from this discussion:

- The importance of understanding current livelihood strategies as a starting point for working towards livelihood development and change.
- The importance of linking work on livelihoods with effective environmental management measures, including enforcement.
- The importance of linkages and partnerships with institutions and initiatives that have long-term commitments to working with stakeholder communities - given the complexities involved in working on livelihoods, and the long timeframes often required in order to achieve sustainable results.
- The importance of feeding developed approaches and methodologies for working on livelihood enhancement and diversification into longer-term, on-going initiatives to enhance impacts.

Following the plenary discussion IMM gave a brief overview of the components of this part of the project, which are as follows:

1. Understanding the Context

- Understanding reef dependency

- Understanding what helps & hinders people in enhancing & diversifying their livelihoods
2. **Developing Tools & Approaches (at 5 pilot sites in the region)**
 - Lessons from past & current experience
 - Distilling best approaches & tools
 - Piloting approaches & tools
 3. **Monitoring for Management**
 - Building on existing socio-economic monitoring efforts
 - Making it suited for South Asia context
 - Pilot testing socio-economic monitoring at field sites
 4. **Capacity-Building**
 - Producing guidance & training materials
 - Training & facilitation for partners
 - Informing & influencing management & policy

Jerker Tamelander from IUCN then reviewed the complementary work already undertaken by CORDIO in this field and identified the framework for cooperation between IUCN, IMM and CORDIO, and the added value this collaboration will bring to the region for livelihood diversification in coastal communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This component of the project will be developed in close collaboration with participating institutions but key recommendations that emerged from the discussion included:

- ❖ Identify partners in agencies or institutions that are already in place in the sites chosen for implementation in this component of the project.
- ❖ Establish mechanisms to ensure that the work both builds on past experiences in the region and that it effectively informs future plans and interventions.
- ❖ Ensure that this component of the project is clearly and effectively linked into other project activities.

SESSION 5: Regional Cooperation Component

ICRAN provided support in the establishment of the East African Coral Reef Task Force (EACRTF), and a presentation was made on the experiences and lessons learned from that process, alongside information on the structure and operation of the EACRTF, as the basis for discussions on the enhancement of regional cooperation.

The importance of inter-agency and government cooperation was highlighted as an essential factor to effective resource management, and reference made to the recommendations of the South Asian Caucus at the International Tropical Marine Management symposium in 2002, to establish a specific unit to facilitate the implementation of regional and international coral reef management initiatives.

The potential roles of such a Task Force were highlighted in relation to the project objectives and in the wider context of the region, such as; an improved capacity for a coordinated response to environmental issues, providing institutional linkages required to elevate environmental issues into regional and national political agenda and working towards common regional strategies for marine and coastal resources in support of Multilateral Environmental Agreement targets.

Key points emerging from discussions included the following:

- It was recognised that a wealth of information and training had been developed, and progress made towards improved regional coordination through the existing frameworks of GCRMN, ICRMN, and CORDIO in the region. All participants agreed that this must form the basis to the Task Force, and actions should build upon this effort.
- The establishment of the Task Force was highlighted as an evolving process, which must include member governments at all stages. That said, it was noted that the Task Force should avoid adding additional layers of bureaucracy to the region, and that the membership structure should provide adequate opportunity for the inclusion of coral reef practitioners, scientists and NGOs who have been shown to drive the process in EACRTF experiences. All participants were mindful of the limited timeframe of the project, and the need to ensure timely establishment through an effective and active membership structure.
- The scope of the Task Force was debated and concerns were raised that a coral reef focus may prove problematic for some countries, and be too restrictive, while an expansion to cover marine and coastal resource issues may render the Task Force ineffectual due to the enormity of issues and challenges.
- It was recognised that a regional coral reef focused Task Force could provide support to the management of the 5 MCPAs selected through this project, which encompass coral reef habitats within their boundaries, supporting the EU project goals and allowing for attention to regional wide issues related to coral reef and associated ecosystem management.
- Suggestions were made to use a similar terminology as employed by the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) and the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), which does not preclude those organisations from addressing issues on coral reef associated ecosystems, and wider management issues.
- It was recognised that the structure and the operational guidance of the Task Force will shape the role and the focus of the Task Force, and will also facilitate the final selection of an acronym.
- The SACEP GC meeting in Nepal in January 2007 was highlighted as an appropriate and timely opportunity to seek formal endorsement of the Task Force from participating Governments. It was noted that further discussions are required and that participants will work in collaboration with the Project team to develop the necessary materials in advance of the SACEP GC meeting. A complementary approach was developed to move forward with the endorsement of the Task Force.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Previous efforts to improve regional coordination such as GCRMN, ICRMN and CORDIO should form the basis to the preparations for the Task Force, and be developed to add value to this effort.
- ❖ Each participating Government should be contacted by SACEP to relay the following:
 - The deliberations and outputs of the workshop
 - Referencing previous efforts (GCRMN, ICRMN etc) and the added value this initiative will bring
 - Identifying a representative from the workshop to provide guidance for each Government if required
 - Requesting that the Task Force be constituted
 - Requesting nomination of National Governmental Task Force Nodal Representative

- ❖ SACEP is the most appropriate agency to liaise with Governments to ensure requests are processed in a timely fashion.
- ❖ Participants shall work in collaboration with the Project team to guide the development of materials (TOR, structure, constitution, etc.) in advance of the SACEP GC meeting in January 2007.
- ❖ SACEP GC meeting to be used as opportunity for formal endorsement of the Task Force with participating Governments.
- ❖ Participants shall work in collaboration with the Project team to update the GCRMN Directory, identified as a good starting point for structure and participation discussions.
- ❖ Participants to reconvene in first quarter of 2007 following the SACEP GC meeting, to review and finalise the composition / structure of Task Force.
- ❖ Task Force to be referred to as the South Asia Coral Reef Task Force (SACRTF) for present purposes.
- ❖ Electronic discussion forum (once operational) to be used as a mechanism to discuss and develop the Task Force.

ANNEX 1

ELEMENTS IN A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY			
Information	Communication	Database	Discussion Forum
<p>Uses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build capacity to use information & link it with other activities <p>Who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different people at different levels have different information needs in different forms <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms and format of information – need to think creatively • Changing how people use information is a paradigm shift – long-term process • Utilise what is there – data is expensive 	<p>Uses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring • Exchanging experience • Learning • Enforcement • Governance • Problem/conflict resolution • Consensus building • Public awareness • Informing & influencing • Building collaboration & partnerships • Building ownership / buy in <p>Who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everybody • Involving different groups in communicating with policy makers • Defining roles of NGOs & CBOs <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many stakeholders excluded from technological communication • Lack of confidence in information being communicated • Restrictions on access 	<p>Uses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on what's there – use links to existing info • Archive / repository • Summarising/ analysing trends • Information for lobbying • Monitoring & evaluation • Knowledge-base • Data needs to be in a useable form & accessible <p>Who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers & policy makers • Indirect use by others <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misuse of data • Good use for scarce resources – used by few people • Sustainability • Balance between managing information & management information • Reliability • Format harmonisation 	<p>Uses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice & experience • Locating & accessing information • Identifying existing forums • Building networks <p>Who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscriber groups • Protect sensitive information <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic & peer-to-peer • Issue-based forums

ANNEX 2

PARTICIPANTS GUIDANCE ON THE APPROACH FOR THE SLED WORK

- Education and awareness of environmental issues
- Education is useful as a way of opening up people's options
- Need to be sensitive to the current opportunities that people have (are there any alternatives there)
- Recognise the influence of Global trends and incentives at the local level
- Develop linkages to governance of the resources
- It is key to ensure that this work is clearly linked into the other components of the project
- Identify whether local solutions are enough to address the issues.
- Be clear about whether SLED leads to positive conservation benefits
- Link environment protection with SLED – integrated approach
- Need to add value to people's livelihoods
- Create linkages
- Need to give people a actual (and a sense) of ownership of the process
- Take time – developing relationships with people needs to be done slowly
- Identify an appropriate entry point for the activities (may not be related to specific resource that you are trying to protect)
- Take a holistic approach that recognises resource use as contributing to multiple aspects of people's livelihoods
- Consider the impacts of such initiatives on the whole of people's livelihood strategies (i.e. income improvement may be to the detriment of education)
- Recognise the changes in allocations of benefits that may come from MCPAs (e.g. fishers – tourism)
- Need to generate continuity
- Recognise past efforts