



THE EAST ASIAN SEAS CONGRESS

25 Years of Partnerships for
Healthy Oceans, People and Economies
Moving as One with the Global Ocean Agenda

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TRACK 4: GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

SESSION 4.2

From one to many: managing
MPA networks for a collaborative
and adaptive marine biodiversity
conservation actions

CONVENER:



The East Asian Seas Congress 2018
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Partnership Hub Track 4: Partnership and Governance
**Dialogue 4.2: From One to Many: Managing MPA Networks for a Collaborative and Adaptive
Marine Biodiversity Conservation Actions**

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Introduction

- 1.1. The session highlighted the initiatives of the SMARTSeas PH Project in crafting the national marine protected area (MPA) network policy framework, and the development of monitoring, evaluation, reporting and feedback (MERF) framework for MPA network (MPAN).
- 1.2. The discussion focused on improving the coordinating mechanisms and complementary activities of various institutions working on marine biodiversity conservation in its pilot sites. It also highlighted the importance of shared governance and collaborative management by different stakeholders in conserving biodiversity through establishing MPA network and coming up with decision support tools, which are scientifically grounded.

¹ SMARTSeas PH (Strengthening the Marine Protected Areas to Conserve Marine Key Biodiversity Areas) is a five-year project in the Philippines being implemented by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources with support from UNDP and Global Environment Facility. It aims to arrest rapid degradation of coastal and marine habitats by addressing threats through scientifically grounded conservation measures, improved financial sustainability, and enabling policy framework.

- 1.3. During the session, the Competence Assessment Tool was also launched. The tool is part of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for MPA network to measure effectiveness of the networks in addressing threats, improving conditions of reef and fish communities, and monitoring gains and benefits to people.
- 1.4. Overall, the session was held to provide a venue for management organizations, scientific community, and the general public to share initiatives, innovative research, and ideas to progress current initiatives to a holistic and interoperable system.

Marine Protected Area Network Policy Framework

- 2.1 **Atty. Alton Durbanm** the national policy consultant of SMARTSeas PH, explained the importance of crafting and adoption of a National Policy Framework on MPA networks. He provided a brief background of existing national policies, which served as benchmark for the current framework in implementing coastal resource management and marine biodiversity conservation. He cited both the Fisheries Code of the Philippines (Republic Act 8550 as amended by RA 10654) and the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (ENIPAS Act of 2018). These laws are the primary bases for the national and local government units to establish MPAs.
- 2.2 In the new Philippine Development Plan 2016-2022, the rationalization in identifying MPA and MPA networks was highlighted to ensure that ecological services including ecotourism, climate resiliency, and food security will be sustainably achieved if the country will continue to manage its marine resources sustainably through establishment of sanctuaries and MPA networks.
- 2.3 The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) released a department order on the guidelines in implementing its coastal and marine flagship program, i.e., Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Management Program. One of the components of the program is MPA network establishment. However, there is no guideline or policy that supports the establishment of an MPA network. The DENR and the Department of Agriculture (DA) through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) can issue separate orders. However, for convergence considerations, it is best to issue a joint memorandum circular among three agencies, i.e., DENR, DA-BFAR, and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). It is important to note that DILG has the mandate among local government units that are responsible in managing their municipal waters.
- 2.4 A joint policy issuance will ensure science-based design in establishing an MPA network and will maximize inter-agency cooperation to achieve complementary and efficient use of agencies' resources. This will also harness opportunities for synergies in the conservation and protection of coastal and marine resources.

- 2.5 In the proposed MPA network policy framework, there should be an adoption of uniform guidelines among the three agencies. A declaration of cooperation is an option also to ensure the commitment of the agencies in crafting the joint policy. The outline of the policy framework highlights the constituent MPAs to be networked, rational in networking, design principles, ecological guidelines, mode of establishments, management plan, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, financial sustainability, gender component, and the role of the private sector and the civil society groups.

Marine Protected Area Network Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

- 3.1. **Dr. Porfirio Aliño** of the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP MSI) presented the M&E System for MPA and MPA network. He provided an overview to the current state of MPAs in the Philippines. He noted that in the Philippines, there are over 1,500 locally-managed MPAs, and these MPAs have shown the importance of coming up with functional management bodies and sufficient size to support ecological and social conditions.
- 3.2. Dr. Aliño noted that one of the means to improve the effectiveness of managing these MPAs and also to demonstrate the adaptive mechanisms is to promote the integration of governance, ecological, and social components through MPA networks. This scaling up will attempt to show what are the benefits that can be derived from coordinated actions in the process of setting up local MPA networks.
- 3.3. In the initial process, it is important to create strategic plan. This will help the establishment of MPA network to level off with the following: 1) setting of direction; 2) keeping track in relation to the roadmap; and 3) establishing monitoring mechanism to always determine if the direction is in track.
- 3.4. The M&E System for MPAs and MPA Network will lead in identifying how the indicators correlate with one another, e.g, the inter-relatedness of socio-economic benefits and their impacts to the society is highly relevant to effective governance. One of the examples cited in the governance mechanism is facilitation of incentives based on the improvement in the ecological and biophysical results illustrated during the monitoring.
- 3.5. The system will track some of the linkages between the M&E of governance, socio-economic, and ecological components of a network.

Competence Assessment Tool

- 4.1. The Competence Assessment Tool was presented by **Dr. Hazel Arceo** of University of the Philippines-Cebu. The tool was developed through the UP MSI as the collaborating partner of the Project. It was designed to assess the current competencies (as a strong predictor of conservation impacts) of the MPA and MPA network managers and practitioners.

- 4.2. Providing context on the history of the MPA management in the Philippines, Dr. Arceo said that based on the evaluation conducted 10 years ago, only around 10% of the MPAs had some form of monitoring data. The information was mostly on coral reef. Thus, it paved way to highlight the importance of M&E and why it should be included in the knowledge management system.
- 4.3. The typical M&E process measures the effectiveness and efficiency of how an MPA is being managed. The Management Effectiveness Assessment Tool was developed and have been very useful in advancing the inclusion of different components to look at when assessing the management effectiveness. Of the 1,5000 locally-managed MPAs in the Philippines, only 534 have used MEAT. Based on the result, approximately 38% of the MPAs were effectively managed.
- 4.4. However, Dr. Arceo noted that it is also important to look at the underlying process and systems, particularly on the performance of the management body taking the lead in the management process. It is one of the factors contributing to the non-effectiveness of an MPA. For example, the staff capacity is a very strong predictor of conservation impact. Thus, it is important to look at the competency of individual members of the MPA management body.
- 4.5. There are already available standards both at the regional and international levels in measuring the competencies of protected area managers. However, the dynamics and situation in the Philippines is quite different. There are lots of volunteer MPA managers for the locally-managed MPAs. Based on the regional and international standards, MPA managers are referred to as professional individuals.
- 4.6. Based on the literatures reviewed during the development of the tool, the Project tried to look at the criteria and standards that can be applied, adapted, and modified to suite the Philippine context. After the review and consultation, these criteria were pre-tested and field-tested both for protected areas under NIPAS and the locally-managed MPAs.
- 4.7. The tool came up with about 40 competencies based on the primary roles of MPA managers and 236 criteria, which are categorized in five main components. The roles and responsibilities related to planning, financing, communications, enforcement, and M&E are all indicated. The tool can be used and applied to the categorized personnel ranging from executive roles to skilled staff including “Bantay Dagat”.
- 4.8. The tool includes guide for facilitators who will conduct the assessment. The evaluation will be based on the roles and responsibilities of the particular position in the MPA organizational set-up and not on the designated position as leader or staff of a public office or a people’s organization. The tool can be self-administered or a third-party can facilitate a guided self-assessment. Dr. Arceo also noted that privacy during the conduct of assessment is important since some of the question may invoke sensitivity among the MPA management body members.

Input from Participants and Way Forward

- 5.1. Ms. Anabell Plantilla, Program Manager of BIOFIN provided suggestions to improve the Competence Assessment Tool. Beyond budget allocation, MPA management body members may be assessed and trained on project development, since financing is always a challenge to sustain the MPA management cost. One of the skills that can be assessed is the preparation of project proposal for additional funding.
- 5.2. With regards to Atty. Alton Durban's discussion on MPAN Policy Framework, Dr. Sheila Vergara of ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ACB) shared relevant updates. The Conference of Parties (CoP) during the Conference on Migratory Species conducted last 2017 has facilitated the adoption of an MPA network in ASEAN region. Since the Philippines is one of the signatories, this can be added to the legal basis of the proposed MPA network policy framework in the country.
- 5.3. Mr. Jun Amol of Rare Philippines noted that the country already has existing MPA networks, but they use different terminologies. These include province-wide alliances, some of which are within NIPAS areas. Addressing Atty. Alton Durban, he inquired about the consultation process during the MPAN policy framework formulation.
- 5.4. In response, Atty. Durban confirmed that the process will include public consultation. It will be posted also in DENR sites for inputs. There is a provision there that may not have captured everything regarding the combination of existing networks composed entirely by locally-managed MPAs but different permutations from different region will be checked to improve the list of possible combinations and mechanism.
- 5.5. A representative from the DENR Central Office asked about the post-assessment implications of the tool. From the result of the competence assessment, it was inquired if resources will be allocated for the identified capacity building needs. She also asked if a policy will be developed, recommending the use of the competency assessment tool for sustainability purposes.
- 5.6. In reply, the SMARTSeas PH Project Management Unit explained that the tool is currently being implemented in the five project sites. In addition, the Project also aims to incorporate the competence assessment tool as well as the M&E system in the MPA network national policy framework. It will be proposed to be included in the Implementing Rules and Regulations. Further to that process, we are going to equip DA-BFAR and DILG the necessary technical assistant should the two agencies adopt the tools in their audit system. It will be part of the sustainability plan of the Project towards 2020.

Synthesis and Wrap-up

- 6.1. SMARTSeas PH Project highlights the importance of shared governance and collaborative management by different stakeholders in conserving biodiversity through establishing marine protected area (MPA) networks. Ms. Norievill Espana of SMARTSeas PH Project discussed how the Project used sciencebased concepts as decision support tools in priority-setting and evidenced-based conservation plans both at national and regional levels.
- 6.2. Atty. Alton Durban explained the crafting and adoption of a National Policy Framework on MPA Networks, which was crafted to provide science-based designs for MPA networks and common guidelines to maximize ecological benefits, determine appropriate coordinating mechanisms, and ensure sustainable funding.
- 6.3. Dr. Porfirio Aliño of the UP-MSI discussed the need to set up a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System for MPA to include metric indicators on governance, ecological, and socio-economic that help monitor changes and determine progress in achieving management goals and objectives. Recent efforts show that effectiveness of MPAs has increased from between 10 to 15%, and collective efforts can help achieve management objectives.
- 6.4. Dr. Hazel Arceo of UP Cebu discussed the Competence Assessment tool, which was designed to assess the current competencies (as a strong predictor of conservation impacts) of the MPA managers and practitioners. She emphasized that improved effectiveness of MPA management is linked to individual competencies.
- 6.5. Towards the end of the session, it was noted that in assessing competency in financing, it should include skills in project development, which is useful in leveraging support to sustain MPA management. In terms of policy, the ASEAN has approved an instrument to establish an MPA Network in the region, which can be also used as basis of the proposed National Policy Framework.
- 6.6. In conclusion, the scaling up from MPA to MPA networks in the Philippines and improving their management effectiveness can be achieved by:
 - anchoring the MPA networks to legally-binding policies; and
 - incorporating the M&E system for MPANs and the Competence Assessment Tool for MPA managers and practitioners into governance plans and audits, through the engagement of the relevant government agencies, the LGUs with community- or locally-managed MPAs, and the existing MPA networks/alliances.