

Coral Reef Partnerships workshop – December 2013, Suva, Fiji

KEY MESSAGES

Sustainable financing

Current challenges

- The Pacific is at a very early stage of adopting and using economic instruments for marine management.
- Awareness of available economic instruments and how they can be used is limited among most stakeholder groups.
- Enabling conditions in each country/territory need to be better understood and defined to develop appropriate and meaningful systems that work and are culturally and socially acceptable (as well as economically sustainable).

Recommendations

- Further efforts are needed to measure and value coral reef ecosystem services for the purpose of raising awareness among policy makers as well as the private sector,.
- The potential to leverage private sources of funding for reef management in the region must be assessed in more detail, including tourism user fees, payment for ecosystem services; impact offset schemes, biodiversity or carbon credits, social impact bonds, and business plan optimization. This has to be done at different scales, from local to national to regional. This also needs to include strategic identification of instruments that have higher opportunity to work in a Pacific island context. .
- Lessons learned from other regions can be used to identify enabling conditions for using economic instruments in reef management (e.g. relating to tenure arrangements, understanding ecosystem service values, policy and governance frameworks, social sustainability, and capacity required at different levels among different stakeholders).

- Implementation of demonstration projects will be useful to illustrate how economic instruments can be developed and used to support coral reef management. Such projects must prioritize replicability.
- It is essential that the benefits of such projects are monitored and audited to ensure that they are being delivered to partners as intended (equity sharing). Appropriate and robust means of verification and auditing need to be included from the project design stage.

Coral Reef monitoring

Current challenges

- Monitoring of coral reefs remains high priority in countries and in the region but is challenged by a lack of continuity in data collection and insufficient reporting, partly due to reliance on government funding, high staff turnover and resulting lack of capacity.
- A broad range of initiatives collect relevant coral reef data (e.g. Peace Corps, Reef Check, government departments) but there is insufficient collation and reporting at national and regional levels. Too often, data is 'shelved' and never analyzed.
- Some countries conduct little, if any reef monitoring (e.g. Nauru, Tokelau). Where data is collected, it is often only in one or two sites with only one survey a year on average, sometimes due to logistical constraints (e.g. lack of fuel for boat or lack of gear).
- There is a perception that the Pacific is data poor but this is partly due to inefficient use of existing efforts. In some instances, political issues have prevented successful use of monitoring data.
- There is a need to prioritize coral reef monitoring so that it strategically responds to country priorities and informs policy/management; whilst being also useable for regional state of environment reporting and tracking progress

towards targets and MEAs reporting requirements.

Recommendations

- The GCRMN network can only be revived if active efforts to reestablish the strong social network of the past as a peer learning network with regular electronic and face-to-face interactions occur. This would require a regional mechanism for coordination of coral reef monitoring and reporting.
- Regional coordination is a priority need that requires an institutional and programmatic solution rather than project-based intervention. SPREP has a particularly important role to play in this regard, and re-establishing a staff position with responsibility for coral reefs is recommended. This should be matched with support for in-country monitoring activities and associated capacity building.
- Regional infrastructure to support coral reef monitoring is needed, including data management solutions that enhance safe storage of data, access to or use of data for planning processes through search and query tools, and preparation of analytical outputs for reporting. It could also facilitate the social networking and peer learning aspects.
- There is a need to map, document and collate information on existing monitoring efforts and existing data as a first step – whether the data is published or not. This is a critical step towards enhanced utilisation of existing efforts in regional and global reporting as well as national and regional planning and management. This needs to encompass monitoring that may be undertaken by different departments/agencies (e.g. environment, fisheries) as well as a broad range of initiatives by academic institutions, NGOs, community organisations etc. This is also a critical activity to prepare for development of a regional GCRMN report building on the model piloted by GCRMN in the Caribbean.
- A core set of regionally relevant indicators for coral reef assessment and reporting need to be defined, through SPREP and based on regional analysis and reporting by the GCRMN, This can strengthen state of environment reporting in

the longer term, including by enhancing comparability between monitoring programmes. Where possible, this should seek to link ecological (both for coral reefs and associated ecosystems) and socioeconomic monitoring indicators (such as Catch per Unit Effort).

- There is a need for general education and awareness raising amongst key players in the Pacific on the relevance and importance of monitoring, including with the tourism industry which could start to play a larger role.