

Achieving internationally agreed coral reef targets in the Pacific – Partnerships to strengthen coral reef assessment and ecosystem service approaches for planning, management and financing

Suva Fiji, 4 December 2013, 14:00-17:30

Summary & Outcomes



The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) held a joint parallel session at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas held in Suva, Fiji on 2-6 December 2013. The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP), the Kousapw Palikir Community Group from the Federated States of Micronesia, the ICRI Ad Hoc Committee on Economic Valuation and the IRCP (Pacific Coral Reef Institute) also contributed to the workshop.

The 3 ½ hour workshop was held to discuss internationally agreed targets relevant to coral reefs and how partnerships can contribute to their achievement in the Pacific. The session specifically focussed on two broad topics which were workshopped with participants during break-out sessions: (1) Regional networking for coral reef ecosystem assessment and reporting, including data interoperability as well as enhanced data access; and (2) An

ecosystem service approach to supporting decisions on public and private investments in coral reef management, and use of economic instruments. Findings from these two groups were reported back in a plenary synthesis session.

Coral Reef Partnerships

Following introductions, presentations were provided on two major international coral reef partnerships: the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) and UNEP's Coral Reef Partnership and its work with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) in the Pacific.

The ICRI Secretariat provided an overview of **ICRI** including its objectives, functioning and a history of its foundational documents, which include the Call to Action and the Framework for Action. The ICRI body adopted a *Continuing Call to Action* and a *Framework for Action* at its 28th General Meeting in October 2013, built around ICRI's four pillars of Integrated Management, Capacity Building, Science & Monitoring and Review. Some of the actions identified in the Framework for Action document include the “strengthening of monitoring efforts to document status and trends of the world's coral reefs and dependent communities and sectors” – something particularly needed in the Pacific region; and to ‘promote access to training in financial and business planning tropics’ – both the objects of the workshop. ICRI's on-ground work was illustrated by a ‘success story’: the COTS control project conducted by the Kousapw Palikir Community Group in Micronesia as part of the 2012-13 ICRI grants program.

UNEP presented its **Coral Reef Partnership** with Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and how it may catalyse and support an ecosystem approach to coral reef managements in the Pacific region. At the global level, the partnership provides a community of practice to support exchange of best practice and lessons learned between regions and, where required, to develop new tools and approaches that enable ecosystem based management of coral reefs. At the regional level, adoption and application of tools and approaches can be supported through collaboration with SPREP and other partners. At the national level, uptake of ecosystem-based management approaches will be supported through

information access, capacity building and pilot or demonstration activities implemented with local, national and regional partners.

Presentation title	Presenter
The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI): A Continuing Call to Action & Framework For Action [LINK]	Anne Caillaud, ICRI Secretariat
ICRI success story: from plague to plate – turning crown-of-thorn starfish into compost for vegetable gardens [LINK]	Wagner David, Kousapw Palikir Community Group
Coral Reef Partnership UNEP-Regional Seas [LINK]	Jerker Tamelander, UNEP

Introduction of workshop themes

The two workshop themes of monitoring and sustainable financing were introduced through presentations.

Coral Reef monitoring

SPREP provided an overview of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (an operational network of ICRI) and its history in the Pacific. There were previously 5 nodes in the Pacific being Micronesia (coordinated by the Palau International Coral Reef Center), South West Pacific (coordinated through USAP in Suva, Fiji), Polynesia Mana (coordinated through CRILOBE in French Polynesia), US Pacific (coordinated through NOAA) and Australia. However the nodes have been inactive since 2011 and there is a lack of regional-level support for coordination and engagement that is necessary to maintain a functioning network. There is also a need for facilitation on reporting, enhanced data management and training in the region.

SPREP is currently developing a Pacific Islands Protected Areas Portal which aims to provide practitioners from all Pacific Islands States and Territories with a platform to share all aspects of protected area implementation and management including monitoring. It will be housed on the SPREP website with an opportunity for social networking and advertisement of training/funding etc. The exact functioning and design of the portal still needs to be decided upon but it could potentially provide the infrastructure needed to consolidate the GCRMN Pacific network.

Sustainable financing

Concepts of new financing tools for marine conservation were presented. It is believed that biodiversity financing will increasingly rely on the private sector, either as polluter compensation or as beneficiary. A broad range of economic instruments have been developed in that sense, including tourism user fees; Payment for ecosystem services (= beneficiary pays); contamination tax and penalties (= polluter pays) and property rights or private and impact investment. Applied to coral reefs, the many ecosystem services they provide including for fisheries, tourism, shoreline protection and bequest value provide specific opportunities for such instruments. Managers should also optimise costs and revenues of management through sound business plans. Successful examples of this exist (e.g. in the Caribbean) and could be replicated in the Pacific.

Presentation title	Presenter
Consolidating a regional network for coral reef monitoring: the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) in the Pacific [LINK]	Paul Anderson, SPREP
The development of a Pacific Islands Protected Areas Portal and its relevance to regional networking for monitoring [LINK]	Tim Carruthers, SPREP
Financing tools for conservation: overview of new funding strategies [LINK]	Nicolas Pascal, ICRI Ad Hoc Committee on Economic Valuation IRCP

Breakout sessions

The key messages drawn out by workshop participants for each theme (monitoring and financing) are listed below.





Break-out sessions on sustainable financing (left) and monitoring (right).

Sustainable financing (facilitator: Nicolas Pascal/Jerker Tamelander)

Current challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pacific is at a very early stage of adopting and using economic instruments for marine management.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of available economic instruments and how they can be used is limited among most stakeholder groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 (facilitators: Paul Anderson/Tim Carruthers/Anne Caillaud)

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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.



Reporting on key messages from workshop discussions

Recommendations arising from this session will inform and guide ICRI and UNEP in their work focusing on the Pacific, support effective regional partnership approaches, and feed into the Pacific Action Strategy 2014-2020.