



Member's report on activities related to ICRI

Reporting period October 2013 – September 2014

1. Updates on your activities.

Project 1

Cornerstone(s) implemented through the project	Check all that apply: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Integrated Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Capacity Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Science & Monitoring <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Periodic Assessment (Review)
Project Title	Project REGENERATE – Enhancing Resilience of social-ecological coral reef ecosystems in the Maldives
Location	North Ari Atoll – The Republic of Maldives
Dates	September 2013 - September 2015
Main Organizer(s)	USAID / IUCN / Marine Research Centre, Ministry of Environment, and Environmental Protection Agency
Main Stakeholder(s)	The communities (fishermen and tourist operators) and users of the reef resources (and its services) in the North Ari atoll
Description of Project (Please elaborate on how the project implements the FFA cornerstones)	The project is to develop a resilience-based management framework to improve the ability of policy makers and stakeholders in the Maldives to understand and address the risks from global, regional and local-scale pressures on their environment. The project will provide the foundation for environmental managers to improve the outlook for coral reef ecosystems and communities dependent on them. It will enhance understanding of social-ecological resilience, improve access to knowledge and increase capacity to manage coral reefs.
Outcome (Expected outcome)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance and expand the spatially explicit reef information that could be used for decision-support planning. 2. Extend current knowledge of our reef fishery that would allow to apply resilience-based managed in the selected atoll 3. Enhance and promote the civil society participation and engagement in coral reef resources management 4. Strengthen and operationalize private partnerships to further extend decentralized marine governance. 5. Finally the project is expected to enhance the generation of knowledge and science associated with marine resources of Maldives to apply resilience-based management.
Lessons learned	<p>Initial phases of this project were complex as aligning the marine conservation priorities of the Maldives Government (GoM), with the expertise of IUCN, and the expectations of the USAID was a challenge.</p> <p>In terms of involving local communities in conservation activities, one of the most important lessons learnt during the past year was that</p>

	<p>people want to be kept updated. Every time an activity is run in a local community (e.g. social or ecological survey), it is important to report to the community the main results/outcomes and introduce possible next steps to show how each activity fit into a bigger conservation plan.</p> <p>Another lesson learnt from working with different stakeholders in local communities is that sometimes the connection between marine species (e.g. megafauna species, fish species, etc.) and the coral reef system is not clear (i.e. the ecological role of marine species in keeping healthy coral reefs is not perceived/understood). It is important to communicate this message (in a reef everything is connected and every species has a role) and make it clear how we can affect this balance with our behaviour (i.e. all stakeholders are responsible for the reef health to a certain extent).</p> <p>From most stakeholders, the project staff understood that there is a great will to learn and take action and be involved in conservation. This can sometimes result in scattered projects that target one island, one resort, one dive center. There is a need to standardise data collection and promote protocols that can be used by GoM to have a better understanding of natural resources in Maldives and create policies to better protect them.</p> <p>In summary, the lessons learnt during the past year were:</p> <p>Improve communication with different participants;</p> <p>Provide different stakeholders with educational tools that will help them have a better understanding of their role in conservation</p> <p>Identify and promote national programs/protocols using standardized data collection techniques (which is being done already through the NCRMF and capacity building within REGENERATE)</p>
Related websites (English preferred)	<p>www.maldivesconservationportal.org (to be up and running by end of September 2014, temporary platforms are: iucnmaldivesprojects.wordpress.com and http://mcp.ravenstage.co.uk/)</p>

Project 2

Cornerstone(s) implemented through the project	<p>Check all that apply:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Integrated Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Capacity Building</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Science & Monitoring <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Periodic Assessment (Review)</p>
Project Title	Wetland Conservation and Coral Reef Monitoring for adaptation to climate change (WCCM)
Location	Malé Atoll, the Republic of Maldives
Dates	June 2012 – November 2014
Main Organizer(s)	World Bank through funding from EU (EU Trust Fund, EU and Australian Aid)
Main Stakeholder(s)	Government agencies, coral reef users, the community and participating tourist resorts
Description of Project (Please elaborate on how the project implements the FFA cornerstones)	<p>The greatest threat to coral reefs is from climate change driven by the burning of fossil fuels. Whilst local actions may help coral reefs to adapt to climate change there is a need for a global response in terms of emission controls.</p>

	<p>The coral reef monitoring component of the Project is focused on developing and piloting a web enabled coral reef monitoring framework for evidence based management of the coral reef ecosystem. This will be achieved through the development of a web enabled national geo-database “CoralDatabase” for supporting the monitoring of coral reefs, the provision of information for evidence based management of coral reefs, and the building of capacity to use this system hereinafter referred to as “the Coral Reef Monitoring Framework”.</p> <p>Integrated management: CoralDatabase is a google map supported system. The NCRMF contains a number of standardised protocols for entering information on the state of and management response to specified pressures, for example the “Impact and Management protocol”. The Project is also producing a Bleaching Risk Assessment Tool to be used to identify areas that could be more resilient to climate change.</p> <p>Capacity building: 5 partnering resorts and government stakeholders will be trained to collect data, enter it into the government CoralDatabase and use it for management.</p> <p>Science and monitoring: The NCRMF provides a standardised framework and an integrated data set for evidence based management.</p> <p>Periodic assessment (review): The NCRMF includes ReefCheck and GCRMN indicators. Protocols include “state” protocols” and an “Impact and management” protocol</p>
Outcome (including expected outcome)	Coral reef ecosystem function is sustained through evidence based management so as to secure the social and economic goods and services that the ecosystem provides for the social and economic development of present and future generations.
Lessons learned	<p>Uptake and use of web enabled data management systems requires a well-documented user friendly system, good internet connectivity, significant training and follow-up support.</p> <p>Stakeholders need to see clear social and economic benefits from participation in any system if they are to invest in it and this requires a decadal timeline.</p>
Related websites (English preferred)	<p>www.coraldatabase.gov.mv</p> <p>http://www.marinespatialecologylab.org/brat/</p>

Project 3

Cornerstone(s) implemented through the project	Check all that apply: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Integrated Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Capacity Building <input type="checkbox"/> Science & Monitoring <input type="checkbox"/> Periodic Assessment (Review)
Project Title	Protecting Marine Ecosystems in MFF Countries Using the Green Fins Approach
Location	Male Atoll, Maldives
Dates	Started in 2013 – on going
Main Organizer(s)	UNEPP, MFF

Main Stakeholder(s)	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Marine Research Centre (MRC) and Ministry of Tourism (MoT)
Description of Project (Please elaborate on how the project implements the FFA cornerstones)	<p>The project 'Protecting Marine Ecosystems in MFF Countries Using the Green Fins Approach' started in 2013 and currently on going, with support from the Mangroves for the Future (MFF) initiative.</p> <p>The objective of the project is to support sustainable use of coral reefs and associated coastal ecosystems by encouraging environmentally responsible diving tourism through implementation of the Green Fins approach.</p> <p>Green Fins is an innovative conservation initiative that reduces negative impacts of dive tourism on coral reefs by promoting private sector compliance with a code of conduct to, and raising awareness among regulators, diving companies and their customers. Green Fins was initiated by UNEP and COBSEA and has been developed and implemented through collaboration with Reef-World Foundation as the regional technical partner.</p> <p>The project will be directly executed in two MFF countries where Green Fins has not been introduced, Maldives and Viet Nam, and will support inter-linkages and exchange with countries where activities are ongoing. The project will be implemented in three phases: 1. Assessment; 2. Consultation and Capacity Building; and 3. Implementation</p>
Outcome (including expected outcome)	<p>Enhanced understanding of the diving industry and current relevant environmental policies in MFF countries where the Green Fins approach has not yet been introduced;</p> <p>Functional National Teams established and trained on the Green Fins approach in each target country; Specific activities implemented in Vietnam and the Maldives aimed at the protection and wise management of coral reefs through the promotion of the Green Fins approach with relevant partners and stakeholders; and Method for integrating Green Fins approach into environmental laws and regulations governing tourism industries and natural resource management outlined</p>
Lessons learned	<p>Managing effective policy within dive operations for a sustainable diving and snorkeling tourism industry was found to be not easy. However, the project staff learnt;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Threats associated with the curio trade and possible solutions 2. Waste reduction with particular focus on plastics 3. Promotion of environmental messages to tourists, targeting those markets who are currently difficult to manage
Related websites (English preferred)	www.greenfins.net ; www.mff.org

2. Contribution to the ICRI Plan of Action and GM.

a. Engaging other sectors

The work done by MRC, IUCN and Green Fins with different dive centers at resorts and local community islands could be used as a good example of stakeholders/other sectors being involved in conservation/better management practices to protect the reef and associated life.

Project REGENERATE has been working to increase awareness among community members on coral reefs and associated species in the Maldives. For this, a series of public seminars was organized in collaboration with the Maldives National University aiming at spreading knowledge on research carried out in the Maldives aimed on coral reefs and related ecosystems and species. Under Project REGENERATE, a series of workshops were also organized to promote standardised data collection protocols but also best practices.

The concept of Marine Managed Areas is appropriate here and addresses this (but see next section).

b. Reef zoning for multiple use

Location where a zoning plan has been implemented	
Year when the zoning plan was implemented	
Is the zoning plan accepted by the local community?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Did the zoning plan cause conflicts among stakeholders?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Did the zoning plan resolve conflicts among stakeholders?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has there been effective enforcement for stakeholders to follow the zoning plan?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Overall, how would you rate the success of the zoning plan?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very successful <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat successful <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not so successful <input type="checkbox"/> Unsuccessful

[Remark from EPA]

The Baa Atoll is a multiple use marine and terrestrial area that provides for a wide range of anthropogenic uses (e.g. commercial, artisanal, subsistence, recreational and tourism) and is based on an overriding conservation objective to ensure long term ecological sustainability. Therefore the atoll and its biological and non-biological resources are protected, but managed through a zonation system that provides provisions for different uses and activities to be undertaken in the different zones whilst minimising detrimental threats and user conflicts. It is a “living” system and requires regular evaluations and modifications to ensure the long-term objectives are met. Through an intensive stakeholder consultative process it was agreed to adopt and utilise the UNESCO protocols for a World Biosphere Reserve to develop the zonation strategy for the Baa Atoll.

[Remark from Project REGENERATE]

Through long-term partnerships with resorts and local communities, the project envisions the development of one of the world’s first network of managed marine areas through a decentralized governance approach.

The approach for private sector, island resorts is to develop Marine Managed Areas (MMAs), which describes an area with a wide range of protection and management options for the marine environment. The process for developing a management plan for resorts to better manage their marine environment and increase resilience of coral reefs to impacts of climate change are described below:

Producing habitat maps using satellite imagery which are coupled with data on coral cover, diversity, potential areas of high resilience etc. deriving from extensive benthic baseline surveys of the house reef and surrounding reef system, particularly

1. Identifying stressors to the marine environment deriving from resort activities/operations;
2. Introducing global environmental best practices to reduce and eliminate these stressors;
3. Designing and implementing a zonation plan to better manage the marine resources based on information deriving from the assessment of resort activities/operations and habitat maps;
4. Reef monitoring and reporting.

The key to identifying priority areas for conservation or management is to understand the vulnerability of the coral reef system. Regular reef monitoring can help identify localized stressors and avert the loss of biodiversity. A zoning plan for the different habitats and critical areas around the resort house reef will help reduce potential negative impacts. Such areas may include restriction of certain activities, such as fishing, boat traffic, inexperienced snorkelers etc. Continued monitoring will gauge the effectiveness of the implemented best practices in minimizing the stressors and returning the coral reef to its original state and/or enhancing it.

Many resorts are interested in this project as they recognise the need to protect one of their main assets - the adjacent coral reefs, to ensure future prosperity of their business from new and return guests. In addition, our consultation on local community islands have shown that there is a need to extend the concept of reef zoning to local community islands as a tool to help island councils better manage their resources.

3. Publications.

Title (incl. author and date)	Website URL if available	Type of publication (Paper, report, etc.)
Jean Luc, Hammer and Riluan	http://www.biosphere-expeditions.org/images/stories/pdfs/reports/report-maldives13.pdf	

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