MPA Benchmarking: Promoting Improved Management and Performance Monitoring

Photo credit: ©Conservation International/Rina Bernabe

Establishing marine protected areas (MPAs) is one of the best strategies implemented in the Philippines to promote sustainable management of coastal resources. It is one of the most commonly used tools for marine biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries management. In the Philippines, there are two types of MPAs:

- **Locally-managed MPAs** – relatively small MPAs, managed by people's organizations and supported by local government units as part of their mandate under the Fisheries Code of the Philippines (Republic Act 8550)

- **National MPAs** – part of the protected area system established under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act (Republic Act 7586), managed by the national government (with multi-sectoral management boards) through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)


Photo credit: ©Badi Samaniego

There is a growing number of MPAs in the Philippines (Arceo et al.). However, there is a need to improve the understanding of stakeholders on the effective management of these MPAs.

The MPA Management Effectiveness Assessment Tool (MEAT) is created to answer this need. It was developed through harmonizing previous MPA benchmarking tools used by the Coastal Conservation Education Foundation (CCEF) and the Environmental Governance Project of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Through the MPA Support Network (MSN), CTSP participated in the process of developing the MEAT and supported its initial use in assessing MPAs across the country.


Photo credit: ©Conservation International/Jürgen Freund

This process is also an important contribution to the work of the Philippine National Coral Triangle Initiative Coordinating Committee, which is tasked to measure how much of the country's marine habitats are effectively protected and managed. This is part of the commitment of the Philippine government to the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI), specifically Goal Number 3 of the National Plan of Action (marine protected areas established and effectively managed). The results of the MEAT process will be used as benchmark in monitoring the progress of the achievement of this goal.

Use of the MEAT Results

- To provide baseline information for monitoring the Philippines' MPA targets under the Philippine National Plan of Action (NPOA) on MPA
- To track progress of commitments to the Convention on Biological Diversity
- To provide recommendations for improving MPA management

There are 33 national or MPAs under NIPAS in the Philippines, covering 1,706,141 hectares found in eight provinces. CTSP used MEAT to assess 9 of these MPAs, or 41% of the total area of NIPAS MPAs.

On the other hand, MSN facilitated the assessment of 110 of 1,620 locally managed MPAs, which represents 8% of the total area of local MPAs (393,994 hectares) found in 17 provinces.

Management Effectiveness Criteria

- Law enforcement
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Financing
- Management body
- Information, education and communication
- Legitimization
- Community participation
- Site development

Initial Results

The assessment showed that about 61% of the assessed MPAs or 46% of the total area in hectares were effectively managed. However, it was noted that only 22% of the NIPAS MPAs or about 33% of the total area in hectares were effectively managed. Among locally managed MPAs, about 64% or 14% of the total area in hectares were effectively managed.

Table 1. Management effectiveness of national/NIPAS MPAs.

Management Effectiveness	Number of MPAs	Total Area
Level 0: MPAs need to satisfy the requirements of Level 1	3	16,147
Level 1: MPA is established	3	353,301
Level 2: MPA is strengthened	2	231,742
Level 3: MPA is effectively sustained	1	98,828
Level 4: MPA is effectively institutionalized	0	
TOTAL	**9**	**700,018**

Assessed MPAs under NIPAS:
Palaui Island Marine Reserve, Cagayan
Masinloc and Oyon Bays Marine Reserve, Zambales
Apo Reef Natural Park, Occidental Mindoro
El Nido Managed Resource Protected Area, Palawan
Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, Palawan
Alburquerque-Loay-Loboc Protected Landscape and Seascape, Bohol
Turtle Island Wildlife Sanctuary, Tawi-Tawi
Pujada Bay Protected Landscape/Seascape, Davao Oriental
Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape, Sarangani and General Santos City

Table 2. Management effectiveness of local MPAs.

Management Effectiveness	Number of MPAs (Locally Managed)	Total Area
Level 0: MPAs need to satisfy the requirements of Level 1	26	24,590
Level 1: MPA is established	14	957
Level 2: MPA is strengthened	48	2,922
Level 3: MPA is effectively sustained	21	1,361
Level 4: MPA is effectively institutionalized	1	23
TOTAL	**110**	**29,854**

Table 3. Management effectiveness of all MPAs.

Management Effectiveness	Number of MPAs	Total Area
Level 0: MPAs need to satisfy the requirements of Level 1	29	40,737
Level 1: MPA is established	17	354,258
Level 2: MPA is strengthened	50	234,664
Level 3: MPA is effectively sustained	22	100,189
Level 4: MPA is effectively institutionalized	1	23
TOTAL	**119**	**729,872**

The strengths of the MPAs benchmarked include the presence of legal instrument and engagement of community participation in the MPA establishment process through consultations and public hearings. For nationally managed MPAs, the presence of a management body as mandated by NIPAS Act is an important factor for effective management, while among the locally managed MPAs, the presence of law enforcement mechanisms is a prominent indicator of effective management.

Insights for improved MPA management

To improve on the MPA management of both locally and nationally managed MPAs, there is a need to provide conservation investments on the following activities: 1) monitoring and evaluation; 2) sustainable financing; and 3) information, education and communication programs.

This factsheet is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Conservation International and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

For more information on this initiative, please contact:
Evangeline Miclat, Policy and Development Senior Manager, Coral Triangle Initiative
Conservation International Philippines
#6 Maalalahanin Street, Teachers' Village, Diliman 1101 Quezon City, Philippines
T: +63.2.9248235 | F: +63.2.4356446 | www.conservation.org/philippines | www.cti.pawb.gov.ph

Photo credit: ©Conservation International/Jürgen Freund

For the nationally managed MPAs to become more effective, the following were found to be potential mechanisms for improvement: 1) formalization of local and national government management arrangements with clear delineation of functions, roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and investment share; 2) capacity building for the Protected Area Management Board members on biodiversity conservation, particularly on assessing conservation and economic tradeoffs; and 3) biophysical and socioeconomic assessments for monitoring of management impacts.

For the locally managed MPAs, the mechanisms for improvement include the use of the results of MEAT for planning the development of MPAs as well as the need to highlight the role of the provincial government in consolidating MPA management efforts.

Overall, it is also recommended that Philippine government (through the DENR) should designate a particular unit that will sustain the monitoring and evaluation of the performance of MPAs at least biennially.

Interested MPA managers may download copies of the MEAT Training Toolkit from www.coraltriangleinitiative.org.