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Publication Offers Guidelines, Best Practices for Tropical MPA Management

A new report provides guidance on the planning and management of MPAs in tropical regions, based on lessons learned from six MPA network initiatives in the Coral Triangle region of Southeast Asia. The publication analyzes the MPA networks through their various stages of development, including planning and design, implementation, and evaluation. Best practices for each stage are provided.

The report represents the final phase of the MPA Learning Partnership, a project initiated in 2005 by the U.S. Agency for International Development and four international NGOs (The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, and the Wildlife Conservation Society). The goal of the project was to accelerate implementation of effective and sustainable MPA networks through improved learning and knowledge exchange. In the past year, comprehensive surveys of stakeholders and managers were conducted at the six participating network sites, and workshops were held to understand challenges and share experiences.

The detailed surveys allowed the report's authors to identify the factors most closely related to MPA effectiveness. In cases where increased fish catch in adjacent waters was considered an MPA success indicator, for example, factors such as sustainable financing for MPA management, clarity of MPA rules, and enforcement by community-based enforcers were all strong predictors of such success. "The results from the analyses verify that the social aspects of MPA management are critical to the MPAs' success," write the authors. "There is a definite correlation between increasing benefits to stakeholders and MPA management improvement in each country context."

The Coral Triangle region includes part or all of six countries - Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Timor Leste. The 120-page publication *Marine Protected Area Networks in the Coral Triangle: Development and Lessons* is available in PDF format at <http://conserveonline.org/library/mpa-networks-in-the-coral-triangle-development-and-lessons>. Please note: the report's PDF file is 29 MB in size, so the download may be slow.

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MPA Tip: Managing stakeholders' expectations of MPA success

The following tip is excerpted from *Marine Protected Area Networks in the Coral Triangle: Development and Lessons* (described above), which provides guidance and best practices gathered from six MPA network initiatives in Southeast Asia:

Tip: A problem associated with MPAs and networks is the high expectations that MPAs have created in all of the sites visited. In this regard, a major lesson is that clear objectives and setting of expectations at the beginning is vital. Small MPAs of 10 hectares (ha) will not be able to significantly increase fish biomass or provide larval and fish export to surrounding areas, but they do offer the opportunity for communities and government agencies to engage in management and learn from experience. If management is successful, they can then scale up to larger MPAs and into a network later on. Likewise a 1-million ha MPA will also not achieve significant fish biomass buildup in the short term until management is in place and social aspects have been addressed. There is no right or wrong model, but objectives and expectations must be clear from the beginning. Overly ambitious MPAs with no clear long-term funding may have problems achieving their management objectives over time. Effective MPA networks allow this learning to take place to scale up as the policy environment, social considerations of those affected, and management needs are addressed.

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