

Ocean Country Partnership Programme



OCPP and IUCN Joint Workshop: MPA Management and IUCN Green List Feasibility Assessment Validation Workshop Report

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**Ministry of Environment,
Climate Change
and Technology**



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Introduction

A workshop was organised by the Government of Maldives in partnership with the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to discuss the management and monitoring of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and IUCN Green List Feasibility Assessment Validation. The workshop was held in Malé on 25th January 2023 and was attended by 35 people from a range of organisations and Government Ministries.

This workshop report has been prepared by the OCP team and focuses only on the MPA management and monitoring sections of the agenda delivered by the OCP team. The aims of these sessions were to:

- Provide all stakeholders with an update on OCP Year 2 activities
- Agree whether a national framework for the management of MPAs and OECMs (Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures) would be beneficial to Maldives
- Draft key information that should be included in a national framework (including management plans guidance)
- Identify next steps for the development of a national framework
- Agree how Research and Monitoring plans could be used for MPAs.

Agenda

Table 1. Table to outline the agenda for the OCP and IUCN Joint Workshop: MPA Management and IUCN Green List Feasibility Assessment Validation, January 2023.

Session Number	Title of workshop session	Session lead
1.	Welcome and workshop introduction	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and technology (MoECCT) Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP)
	Introduction to OCP and MPA management plans	
	Group work session 1	
	Groupwork session 2	
2.	Presentation on Research and Monitoring Plans	OCP
	Groupwork session	
3.	IUCN presentation	IUCN
4.	Launch of Protected Area Management Effectiveness Assessment Report - https://jncc.gov.uk/media/7723/ocpp-maldives-pame-report-final.pdf	

Background

Prior to the workshop, the OCP team had circulated three documents for attendees to review. These included:

- Draft Advice on a Maldives National Marine Protected Areas Management Framework

- Draft Maldives National Marine Protected Areas Management Plan Guidance and Template
- Draft Maldives National Marine Protected Areas Research and Monitoring Plan Guidance and Template.

Workshop session summaries

The OCPP team opened the workshop with a short introduction to the OCPP programme and an overview of the recommendations from the Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) evaluations conducted during the technical visit in May 2022. This was followed by an update of the Hanifaru stakeholder meeting and a brief introduction to the guidance and framework documents that had been circulated prior to the workshop. As attendees had not all had the chance to read the documents, a summary of the documents was provided to give attendees the opportunity to respond with suggestions and additional comments for consideration.

Groupwork Session - Vision

The workshop participants were then asked to take part in a series of interactive activities starting with contributing ideas to inform the creation of a vision for the Maldives' marine environment using interactive word cloud technology. Attendees were asked to share 3-5 words on the following questions:

1. Imagine it is 2033, what does the Maldives marine environment look like?
2. How will a network of MPA's and OECEM's help to achieve this?

The results are shown in Figures 1 and 2. In the word clouds, the larger the word, the more times the group suggested it.

Words that were inputted multiple times included beautiful, healthy, resilient, diverse, sustainable. Additional wording included equitable, appreciated, valued, restored. Interestingly, words such as fragmented, somewhat managed, not all dead were also documented.

The second part of the word cloud task asked the group how this vision will be achieved. Common suggestions were enforcement, awareness, monitoring, management, knowledge, communication. Additional suggestions also included financing, coordination, education and resilience.

The outputs from these word clouds will now be used by the OCPP team to draft some proposed options for a vision for the Maldives marine environment for consideration by the Maldives Government.



Figure 1. Group work session 1a – creating a vision. The figure displays a word cloud created by the responses of workshop attendees to the question ‘Imagine, it’s 2023, what does the Maldives’ marine environment look like? The larger the word the more it was suggested by the stakeholders.



Figure 2. Group work session 1b - achieving a vision. The figure displays a word cloud created by the responses of workshop attendees to the question ‘How will the network of MPAs/OECMs help achieve this? The larger the word the more it was suggested by the stakeholders.

Groupwork Session - Management principles

Key management principles are words that define and embed beliefs throughout the MPA management outputs, representing values that are important to the group. Two sets of values were presented to the group, socio-economic and ecological/environmental. The group were then asked to rank these in order of what they felt was most important. (1 – most important – 5 least important).

Ecological Principles

The graph in Figure 3 shows responses from workshop attendees on their priorities for ecological management principles. Ecosystem approach was ranked the most important management principle by the group, adaptive management came out as a second and evidence based was third, interestingly climate change aware was ranked the least important.

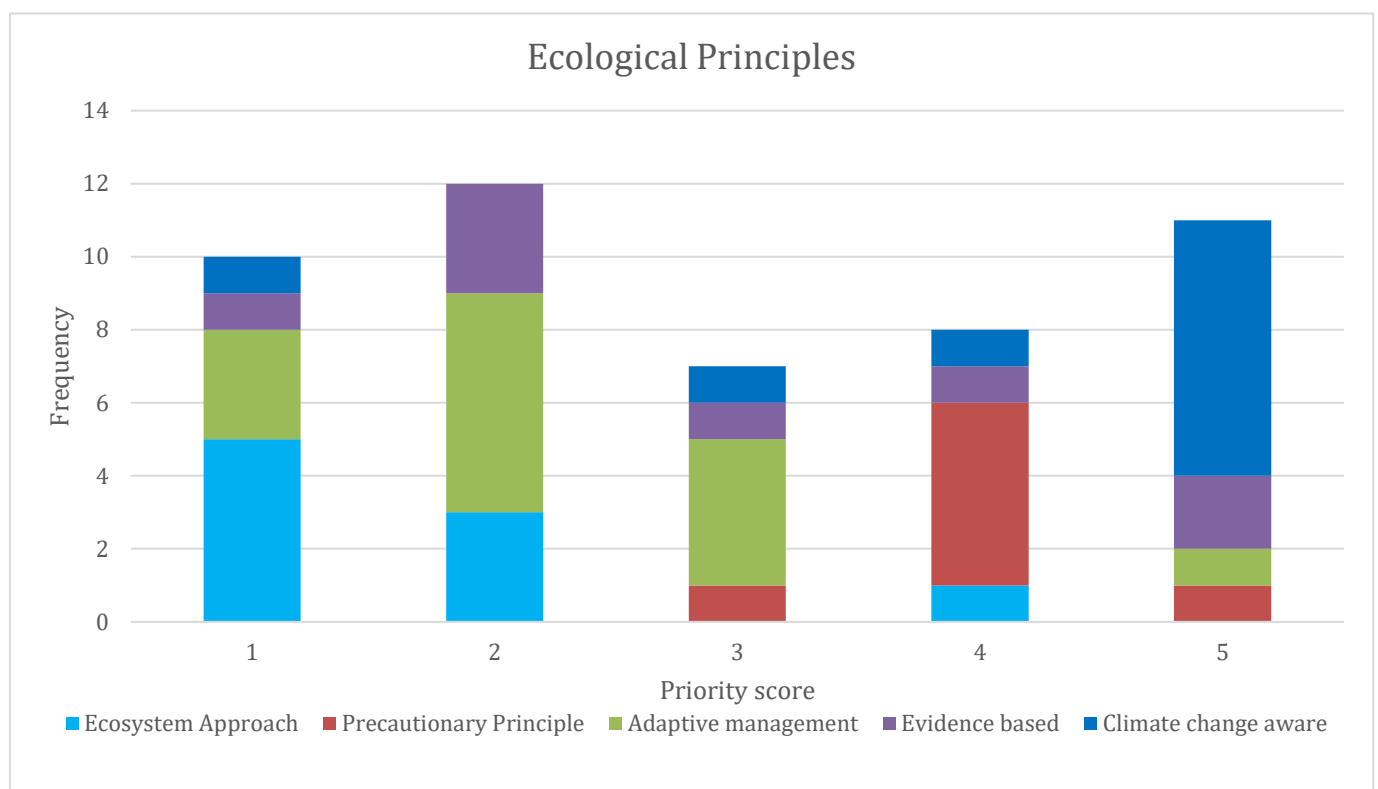


Figure 3. Stakeholder priorities for key ecological/environmental management principles, whereby 1 is highest and 5 is least important.

Social Management principles

Stakeholders were then asked to repeat the same ranking procedure but for social principles. These outputs were more level, with no significant leader in any category. Sustainable development, stakeholder engagement and collaborative were largely equal in ranking with the holistic approach ranking lowest for social management principles.

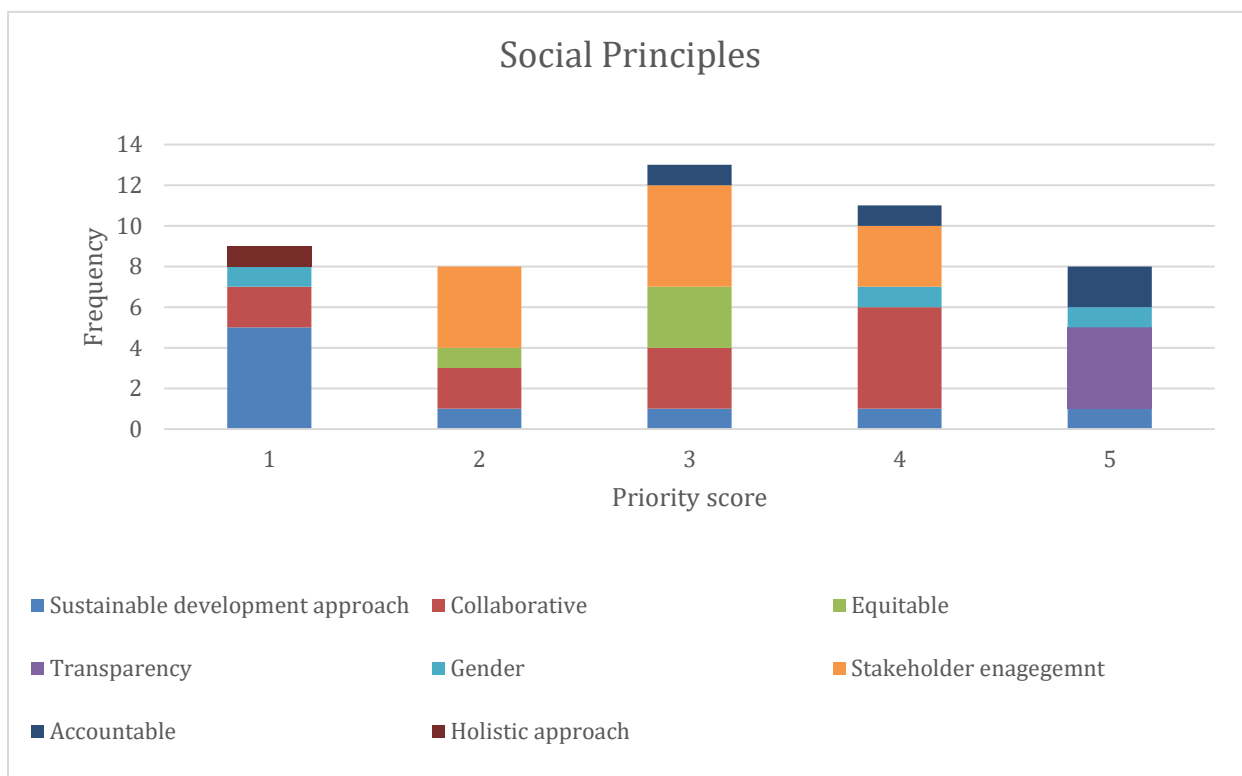


Figure 4. Stakeholder priorities for key socio-economic management principles, whereby 1 is highest and 5 is least important.

These management principles will be included in the Advice on a Maldives National Marine Protected Areas Management Framework. This will help guide how MPAs and OECMs across the Maldives are managed and to aid decision-making by the sites' management authority, to ensure consistency in management approaches and support collaboration between the authorities and local communities.

Groupwork Session - governance, management planning and management of human activities

This groupwork session was designed to gather information and help fill gaps in the knowledge base of OCPP in the Maldives. Stakeholders were asked to choose one of three discussion topics: governance, management planning, and management of human activities. Each of these groups worked with an OCPP group facilitator to help capture information from the group. Key information captured for each topic included:

- **Governance:** lead organisations responsible for governance in the Maldives, what they are responsible for and how they interact with one another and how this is communicated.
- **Management Planning:** do any MPAs and OECM's have site level management plans, what do they look like, what format are they in and who holds them, how are they communicated to the MPA managers and captured by government.
- **Human activities:** what are the main tools to manage human activities, what procedures are in place to trigger EIAs or permitting. Who is responsible for enforcement, are OECM's documented in different ways to MPA's.

Groups worked primarily in one distinct area but were given the opportunity to interact with other groups if they had information to share. Outputs are documented below.

Governance

Workshop participants noted that governance is different for MPAs depending on their location. Decentralisation of management can mean the governance is inconsistent across locations, and can depend on the interest and appetite of Atoll and Island Councils to engage. One option to address this within the development of management plans would be to clearly set out the roles required for MPA management, and the responsibilities associated with them, and then for stakeholders to identify who will lead on each of these roles as part of the development process.

The workshop participants identified the key stakeholders for MPA / OECM management as:

- Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology (MoECCT)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - responsible for ecological monitoring of MPAs under the Environment Protection Act
- Maldives Police Service
- Maldives National Defence Force
- The Coast Guard
- Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture
- Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
- Ministry of Finance
- Maldives National University
- Maldives Marine Research institute (MMRI) - responsible for wider ecological monitoring across Maldives (not just MPAs)
- Ministry of Tourism
- Atoll Councils
- Local Councils
- Resorts
- NGOs.

Management: MoECCT is responsible for designation of MPAs and OECMs. The EPA is responsible for oversight and MPA management. EPA can delegate management responsibility to Atoll / Island Councils, resorts or other authorities where appropriate. Under decentralisation, a boundary is identified around each island designating the jurisdiction of the Island Council; if the MPA falls within this boundary, then management can be delegated to the Atoll / Island Council. MPA management depends on the capacity and engagement of the local councils as to what level of delegation there is, and this often takes place on a case-by-case basis. The workshop participants felt that communication between Island and national decision-makers could be improved to develop a more consistent approach.

Finance/ funding: the workshop participants highlighted that this is the biggest challenge and noted a need to explore models of local funding opportunities.

Conclusion: With the recent move to decentralisation, there is a need to build capacity in the local community to support all aspects of MPA management. It was suggested that this could

be achieved through the development of a toolbox that can be adapted to each MPA. It was suggested that development of a national organogram of those involved in MPA management could be feasible, but locally it is more nuanced and will need to be done on a case-by-case basis. Clearly identifying roles and associated responsibilities is paramount so local users can identify who will take on these roles, and can work to improve transparency, communication and collaboration as a result.

Management of Human Activities

Tourism: this was the main activity discussed. The workshop participants noted that there are several tools in place to manage tourism including permits, licences, codes of conduct, vessel speed limits etc. Local rangers are in place to ensure that regulations are complied with. Workshop attendees outlined the approach that is taken if a breach of regulation is identified, noting the hotline run by the EPA, the roles of rangers, and how the EPA manage non-compliance.

Fishing: fishing is generally managed by the Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture but fisheries management can involve other Ministries. The main activities include domestic fishing fleets, reef and grouper fishing, shark fishing, bait fishing and offshore illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. It was highlighted that in some cases management had not been introduced because the activity is currently sustainable, for example, bait fishing using traditional methods.

Development: Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are triggered if the proposed development is over a certain size. Recent dredging and land reclamation activities are examples of this. Transparent pathways during the decision-making process are necessary in ensuring the balance between development and conservation.

Research: Research within Maldives requires a permit. Any outputs of research are required to be shared with the MoECCT.

Conclusion: The group sessions were extremely useful in developing OCPP understanding of the Maldives, the governance, the communication and the interactions between the different organisations. Themes and areas are beginning to emerge as possible next steps for the Maldives and OCPP partnership.

Monitoring and Research

Environmental Monitoring

The OCPP team then ran a session on MPA environmental monitoring. The aims of this session were to:

- assess the level of ongoing national environmental monitoring
- identify current gaps in environmental monitoring and research effort
- discuss how participants thought an integrated national approach to environmental monitoring and research strategy could be designed and implemented.

Participants were split into four random groups, and with the assistance of facilitators, all groups were asked to address the following three questions.

1. Can you describe what environmental monitoring is currently undertaken at a national scale?
 - What types of monitoring are currently ongoing – environmental/biological?
 - Who undertakes this monitoring – government ministries, agencies and NGOs?
 - Is the monitoring linked to any specific monitoring programmes?
 - How is the data collected reported and utilised to inform management?

2. Can you describe what additional/new environmental monitoring you think is required at a national scale?
 - What types of monitoring – environmental/biological?
 - Why is it required – aims of the additional monitoring?
 - How would it be undertaken – remote sensing/physical monitoring?
 - Who would undertake and be responsible for the monitoring?

3. Based on your answers from questions 1 and 2, discuss how an integrated national environmental monitoring programme could be designed and implemented?
 - How could different monitoring programmes be linked?
 - Who would undertake the different aspects of monitoring?
 - Roles and responsibilities?
 - What additional resources would be required?
 - How could the monitoring outcomes be reported and utilised to inform future management?

A summary of the responses received to each of the questions posed to the four groups can be found below.

Question 1. Can you comment on what environmental monitoring is currently undertaken at a national scale?

The groups discussed and documented many environmental monitoring and research programmes/initiatives that were delivered by the MMRI. These included: long-term monitoring of coral reef habitats, benthic habitat surveys, reef fish population studies, research into grouper aggregation sites, mesophotic zone studies and the new Baited Remote Underwater Video Systems (BRUVS) research. Other data collection programmes that were discussed included fish landings data collected by the Ministry of Fisheries and numerous resorts, hydrographic / bathymetric surveys undertaken by the Ministry of Defense and the potential for data to be harvested from environmental monitoring carried out as part of the current EIA process and MPA baseline assessments.

Additional environmental monitoring was highlighted, including that being undertaken by NGOs, charities, resorts, international conservation bodies and academia, included surveys carried out by Noo Raajje to monitor coral health and water quality and ongoing species (manta rays, sharks, and turtles) and habitat (coral reefs and seagrass beds) focused monitoring and research programmes.

All groups highlighted the importance of the coordination of ongoing and new environmental monitoring and research programmes at a national level. It was apparent from discussions that the coordination of data collection could be improved to ensure it can be used to inform the future management of marine systems within the Maldives.

Question 2. Can you describe what additional/new ecological monitoring you think is required at a national scale?

Feedback from workshop attendees suggested that integration of existing monitoring initiatives into national monitoring plans and collaboration between those responsible for managing activities that could impact marine systems could both be improved. There is no single data portal to collate environmental data at present, although attendees understand that this is being addressed by another project. The groups went on to discuss the need to increase knowledge at a national level in relation to the location and condition of key marine habitats. These included coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds. The groups concluded that the overall responsibility for the development and coordination of an environmental monitoring and research programme could fall within the remit of several government ministries and agencies. However, the groups also thought that the responsibility for the implementation of focused MPA environmental monitoring should be devolved and undertaken at a more local level and could be supported by citizen science programmes and other local stakeholders.

Question 3. Based on your answers from questions 1 and 2 discuss how a national environmental monitoring programme could be designed and implemented?

Workshop attendees felt that the Maldives Government would be best placed to lead and be responsible for the development and implementation of a national environmental monitoring strategy and that this could be achieved through the development of a national monitoring vision, framework and strategic plan. As previously mentioned, the groups thought that individual Atolls Councils should be responsible for the implementation of site-specific environmental monitoring programmes.

All groups were aware that there is an urgent need and requirement to develop a national approach to environmental monitoring that includes MPAs and wider marine systems, if the Maldives are to meet their national and international commitments associated with The Fisheries Act, The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and The Convention of Biodiversity (CBD). To achieve this, there is a need to build and strengthen relationships between national and local governments while also increasing expertise and capacity to deliver a national environmental monitoring strategy.

Work currently underway to identify and designate OECMs in Maldives was highlighted as an opportunity to consider how the monitoring of these sites could be designed in a way that the data and information collected could be directly integrated into a national environmental monitoring strategy. Increasing stakeholder engagement during discussions linked to the development of environmental monitoring programmes could result in a more collaborative approach to the implementation of a national environmental monitoring programme.

PAME report launch

At the end of the workshop, the Report of Protected Area Management Effectiveness Evaluations for three sites in the Maldives was officially launched by the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Technology Shauna Aminath, and the British High Commissioner Caron Rohsler. The report is available at the following URL: <https://jncc.gov.uk/media/7723/ocpp-maldives-pame-report-final.pdf>

Conclusion

The information collected from stakeholders at the workshop has provided a valuable overview of the current context of MPA management and monitoring in the Maldives. The information collated by the OCPP team will prove valuable in integrating into the next iterations of the MPA management plan and monitoring plan documents that are under development. Future versions of these documents will be shared with Government of Maldives Departments for comment to continue engagement and dialogue.

Appendix

Stakeholder attendance list for the OCPP and IUCN Joint Workshop: MPA Management and IUCN Green List Feasibility Assessment Validation Workshop Report. Attendees have been listed by number of participants from each organisation.

Stakeholder Organisation Name	Number of participants
Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Technology	6
Environmental Protection Agency	1
IUCN	7
USAID Tetra Tech	2
Maldives National University	1
Fuvahmulah Nature Park/ Fuvahmulah City Council	2
Addu Nature Park/ Addu City Council	2
Six Senses, Laamu	1
Noo Raajje	1
Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Office	2