

Ocean Country Partnership Programme

Sri Lanka Marine Protected Areas Best Practice Workshop Report



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For further information please contact:

Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Quay House
2 East Station Road
Fletton Quays
Peterborough
PE2 8YY

<https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/ocean-country-partnership-programme/>

Communications@jncc.gov.uk

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Authors: Jamie Small, Holly Baigent, Hannah Lawson

Cover Photo: Workshop participants at the Marine Protected Area Best Practice workshop held in Colombo 1st-2nd August 2023 by the Ocean Country Partnership Programme and Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.

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Acronyms

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COLBRI	Community Livelihood and Biodiversity Recovery
DWC	Department of Wildlife Conservation
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
OECM	Other Effective Area Based Measures
OCP	Ocean Country Partnership Programme
PAME	Protected Area Management Effectiveness
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-based

1 Introduction

A two-day training workshop on Marine Protected Area (MPA) best practice was organised by the Sri Lankan government's Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) in collaboration with the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP) on 1 and 2 August 2023. The workshop took place in Colombo and focused on building upon the knowledge of DWC staff including Wildlife Rangers working in MPAs across Sri Lanka, as well as key representatives from other government ministries and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The workshop was attended by 44 individuals from 12 government organisations and five NGOs. Please refer to the appendix for more details of attendees.

The objectives of the MPA Best Practice workshop were to:

- Enhance understanding of all stages of the MPA Implementation Cycle.
- Recognise and understand next steps to achieve Sri Lanka's commitment to 30x30.
- Improve understanding of different roles and departments involved in the management of Sri Lanka's MPAs.
- Build understanding of best practice, tools, techniques and lessons learnt for effectively managed MPAs.
- Agree a shared vision for Sri Lanka's MPAs and MPA network.

Table 1. Agenda for the Marine Protected Area Best Practice workshop, held in Colombo on 1 and 2 August 2023 by the Ocean Country Partnership Programme and Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.

Day	Title of workshop session	Session lead
Day 1 (Tuesday 1 August)	Welcome & introduction	OCP & DWC
	Vision for MPAs in Sri Lanka exercise	OCP
	MPAs and Sri Lanka	DWC
	MPA Implementation Cycle	OCP
	Stakeholder engagement	OCP
	MPA design	OCP & DWC
	MPA management	OCP & DWC
	MPA monitoring	OCP
	Wrap up day 1	OCP

Day	Title of workshop session	Session lead
Day 2 (Wednesday 2 August)	Welcome & recap	OCPD & DDC
	MPA assessments	OCPD
	MPA reporting and outreach	OCPD
	Other Effective Conservation based Measures (OECMs)	IUCN
	Importance of monitoring in MPA management cycle – Bar Reef MPA	Professor Sevandi Jayakody PhD
	Vision for Sri Lanka’s MPA network	OCPD
	Objectives for Sri Lanka’s MPA network	OCPD
	Reflections & wrap up	OCPD & DDC

2 Workshop Summary

2.1 Welcome & Vision Exercise

The two-day workshop began with a short introduction to the background of the OCPP followed by a welcome from DWC. An icebreaker exercise was then undertaken to help inform breakout sessions for day two. All participants were asked to submit answers of 3 to 5 words or short phrases for two questions:

Q1. Imagine it's 2033, what do you hope Sri Lanka's marine environment will look like?

Q2. How will Sri Lanka's network of MPAs help achieve this?

Answers were collected using Mentimeter, an interactive online tool accessed via a QR code, and by handwritten post-it notes. All handwritten responses were added to Mentimeter by the OCPP team at the end of day one of the workshop to create word clouds for each question (Figures 2 and 3). Bolder, larger words in the word clouds represent the most popular phrases suggested by participants. The outputs of these word clouds were used in an exercise during day two of the workshop, for further information refer to Section 4 of this report.



Figure 1. Workshop participants listening to a presentation at the Marine Protected Area Best Practice workshop held in Colombo on 1 and 2 August 2023 by the Ocean Country Partnership Programme and Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.



Figure 3. Word cloud created from participant answers to the question 'How will the network of MPAs help achieve this?' (following the first question in Figure 2) at the Marine Protected Area Best Practice workshop held in Colombo on 1 and 2 August 2023 by the Ocean Country Partnership Programme and Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.

2.2 Sri Lanka's MPAs & MPA Implementation Cycle

Following the visioning exercise, DWC presented the context of MPAs in Sri Lanka including threats and impacts to the marine environment, national and international drivers for protection, and an overview of the current status of Sri Lanka's MPA network. This presentation was complimented by the OCPP who introduced the concept of the MPA Implementation Cycle, which is an adaptive five-step cyclical process used to promote successful design and management of MPAs to enable their objectives to be met (Figure 4). The remaining sessions of the workshop focused on each step of the MPA Implementation Cycle and were comprised of presentations and break out groups for participants to discuss answers to questions linked to each presentation.

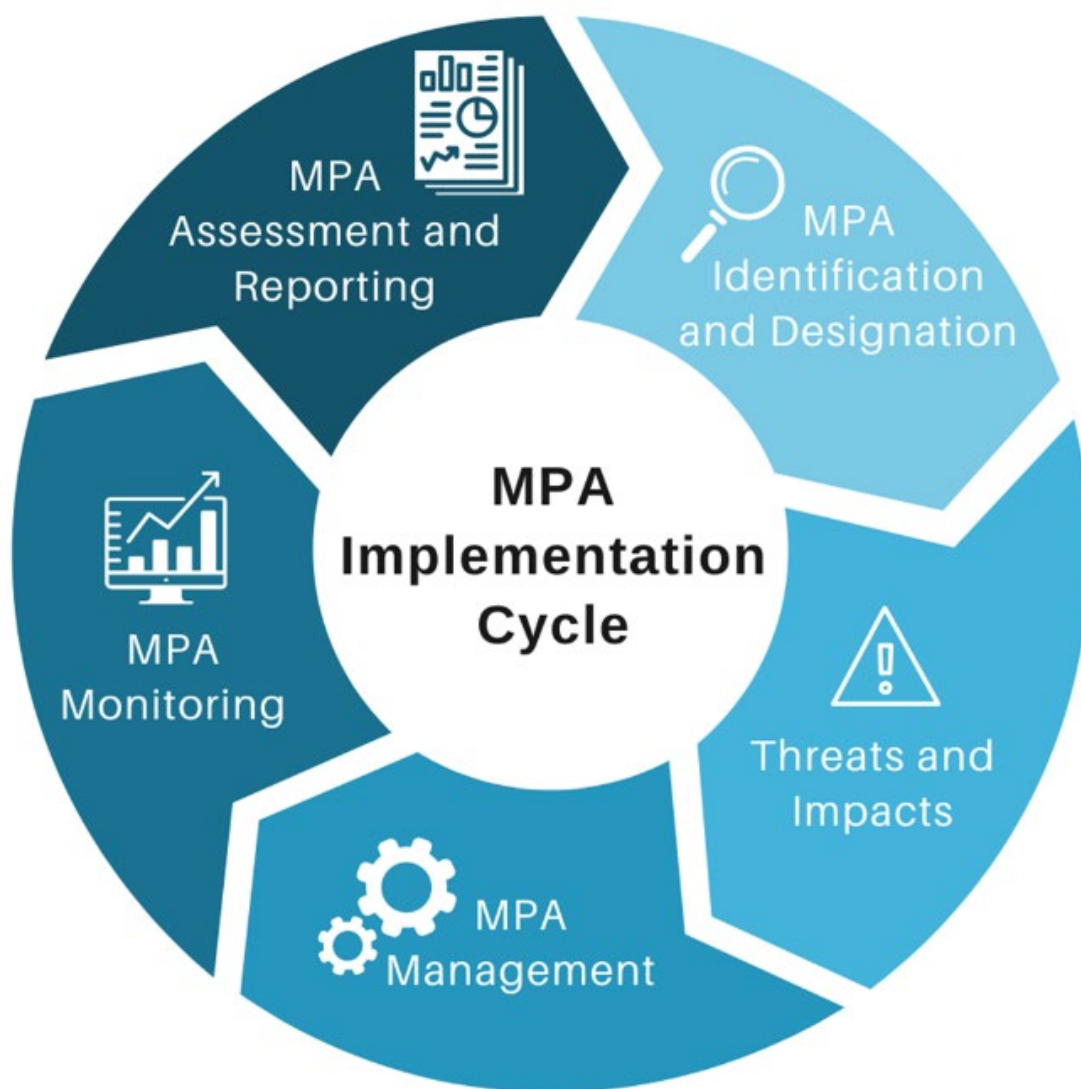


Figure 4. Demonstration of the cyclical process of Marine Protected Area (MPA) implementation from identification and designation of an MPA to assessing and reporting the effectiveness of management.

2.3 Stakeholder Engagement

Before each step of the MPA Implementation Cycle was explored further, the OCPP presented on the importance and benefits of stakeholder engagement throughout each stage of MPA development and management. Best practice guidance was provided on how to identify and map stakeholders, tailor engagement methods to local situations, and develop an effective stakeholder engagement plan which is monitored, reviewed and amended. Participants were then asked to discuss barriers to communication about MPAs in Sri Lanka and ideas on how to target and engage with all members of local communities about MPAs. To view the outputs of this session, refer to Section 3.1 of this report.

2.4 MPA Design

The OCPP and DWC both presented on the first stage of the MPA Implementation Cycle 'MPA Identification and Designation'. The value of an MPA network versus single isolated MPAs was described alongside principles that should be taken into consideration when designing and evaluating a network. The need for appropriate legislation to enable functional MPAs was discussed and DWC provided an overview of existing legislation for Sri Lanka's MPAs. Finally, the importance of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-based) objectives was highlighted to guide the design, management and evaluation of MPA effectiveness.

2.5 MPA Management

An individual session wasn't undertaken for the second stage of the MPA Implementation Cycle 'Threats and Impacts' as considerations for threats and impacts were incorporated into previous presentations and in the 'MPA Management' session. During this session participants were given an overview of why, what and how to manage MPAs. A range of management principles to consider were discussed and the importance of good management planning including the use of management plans. Different management approaches and tools were explored, the role of compliance and enforcement, and the importance of monitoring as a fundamental tool to provide evidence of the effectiveness of the management in place. Participants then focused on brainstorming key successes and challenges related to the development and implementation of MPA management plans in Sri Lanka. Please see Section 3.2 for more information.

Following the introduction to best practice for MPA management, a case study on the management of Pigeon Island National Park was presented by DWC.

2.6 MPA Monitoring

The final session on day one focused on best practice for monitoring MPAs. The OCPP provided an overview on what and why monitoring is important before reviewing different methods and approaches to monitoring, challenges associated with monitoring, and the use of indicators. Participants were then asked to discuss and list within their breakout groups factors that could be monitored to help evaluate the success of an MPA (see Section 3.3).

2.7 MPA Assessments & Reporting

Presentations during day two focused on the fifth stage of the MPA Implementation Cycle 'MPA Assessment and Reporting' as well as an introduction to OECMs and a case study on Kalpitiya Bar Reef MPA. The OCPP led the first session on MPA assessments and provided an overview of the purpose and need for assessments before exploring the breadth of different assessments available for MPAs. Participants then discussed what assessments were currently being used in Sri Lanka for individual MPAs and wider national reporting needs. The second half of the MPA assessments session focused on Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME). The different methods available to evaluate management effectiveness were reviewed and case studies showcasing different approaches from across the globe were shared. During this session participants were also asked to discuss in their breakout groups what PAME evaluations could be used for in Sri Lanka. Refer to Section 3.4 for more details.

Following an overview of MPA assessments a short presentation on reporting and outreach was given to wrap up the final element of the MPA Implementation Cycle. The importance and benefits of sharing information with stakeholders and the different methods available to do so effectively was covered. A range of case studies from Sri Lanka and elsewhere for educational programmes, scientific reporting and MPA awareness outreach was then shared with participants.

2.8 OECMs

To build a greater understanding of OECMs that could be used alongside MPAs to protect Sri Lanka's marine environment, the IUCN provided a virtual presentation entitled 'Marine OECMs, what are they? How can they contribute to an MPA network and the 30x30 agenda?'. The presentation introduced the concept of OECMs and how they can significantly contribute to national biodiversity goals and global targets (e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and 30x30).

2.9 Bar Reef MPA Case Study

The final presentation of the workshop was provided by Professor Sevvandi Jayakody (Wayamba University of Sri Lanka), who provided a case study on Bar Reef Marine Sanctuary and the work completed under the COLBRI project (Figure 5). The presentation emphasised the importance of monitoring throughout the management cycle of an MPA including socioeconomic surveys as well as ecological and highlighted lessons learnt from activities undertaken at Bar Reef to date.

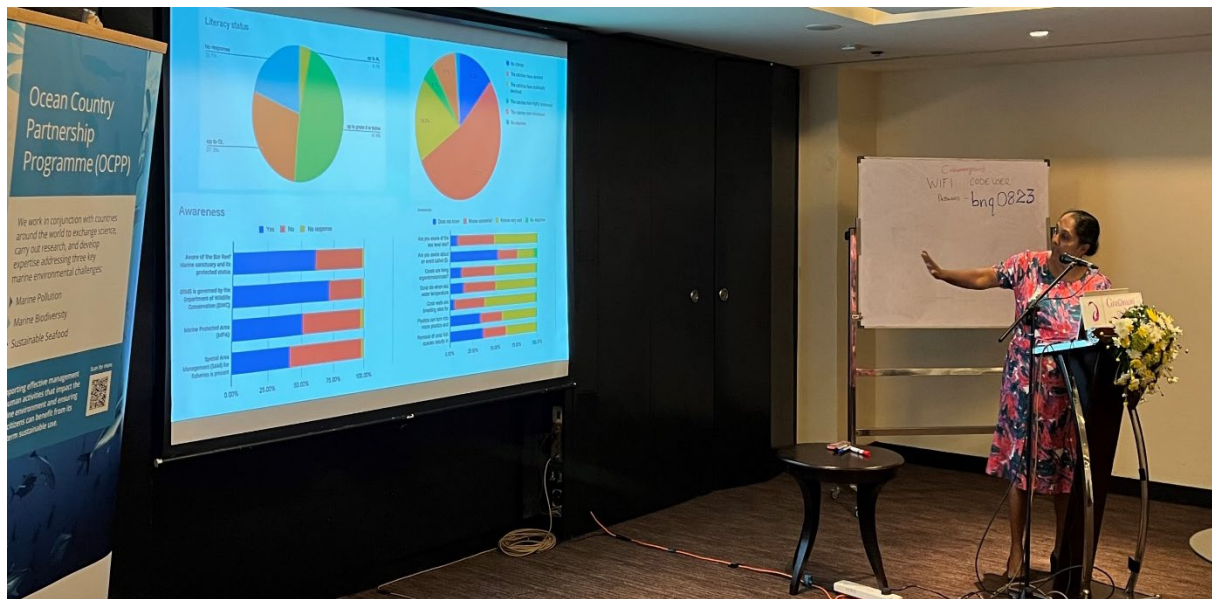


Figure 5. Professor Sevvandi Jayakody from Wayamba University of Sri Lanka presenting a case study on Bar Reef Marine Sanctuary and the COLBRI project.

The two-day workshop concluded with an afternoon of breakout sessions to discuss visions and objectives for Sri Lanka's MPA network based on the word clouds created by participants during day one (see Section 4). There was also an opportunity for participants to discuss and ask questions related to the content covered throughout the workshop before DWC shared reflections and thanked everyone for attending.

3 Summary of Breakout Sessions

Throughout the two-day workshop participants undertook several breakout sessions to discuss different stages of the MPA Implementation Cycle in relation to Sri Lanka’s MPAs. The 44 workshop participants were divided between seven tables and were provided with flip charts to record their discussions before reporting their key findings and/or ideas back to the whole group. The outputs of each breakout session have been summarised in the below sections.

3.1 Stakeholder Engagement

Participants were given time to discuss on their tables “how they can reach and engage with all members of local communities about MPAs?”. Following this, the groups were also asked to identify some barriers to good communication surrounding MPAs in Sri Lanka (Figure 6).



Figure 6. One of the tables completing the stakeholder engagement breakout questions at the Marine Protected Area Best Practice workshop held in Colombo on 1 and 2 August 2023 by the Ocean Country Partnership Programme and Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.

Methods for engaging with different stakeholders included a range of formal and informal techniques. Some examples included reaching out to leaders of important and influential groups across the community (village, political, religious, or fishing association leaders), as well as running workshops, stakeholder meetings, awareness programmes, and personal discussions. The potential introduction of a

legal mandate to engage with stakeholders throughout the MPA Implementation Cycle was also suggested. It was raised that there is a need for more trust and connectivity between the government and the different stakeholders within the local communities. To build this connection, stakeholder mapping, followed by a bottom-up approach was recommended to help identify the needs, interests, and concerns of different members of the community.

Numerous barriers to communication were identified by the workshop attendees. Different political associations were identified as a key obstacle leading to reduced collaboration and communication between groups. Language barriers and a lack of resources, such as knowledge, facilities, and income were also identified as major barriers to communication by different breakout groups.

3.2 MPA Management

The MPA Management breakout session consisted of workshop attendees being given 20 minutes to list the key successes and challenges related to the development and implementation of MPA Management Plans in Sri Lanka.

There were a range of successes raised by the different groups, these included DWC's will for change, staff training and attitudes, the ability to bring together stakeholders, baseline data, methodical allocation of available funds, the DWC Marine Unit support, provision of equipment, and promotion of sustainable fishing.

Key challenges from the breakout session included financial support of management plans for successful implementation, stakeholder conflicts, data archiving and access, regulation of fishing activities, management of highly mobile species, conflicts between management plans developed for the same area by different government agencies, lack of top down communication, absence of regular data collection, unclear MPA objectives, unclear demarcation of MPA boundaries, and lack of expertise and human resources.

3.3 MPA Monitoring

Participants were given 15 minutes to consider and list all elements of an MPA that could be monitored and how, to help evaluate its success and management effectiveness. The outputs from the seven groups have been summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of workshop participant outputs from the monitoring breakout session at the Marine Protected Area Best Practice workshop. Participants were asked to list areas of consideration for monitoring the success of MPAs.

Monitoring theme	What	How
Ecological	Biodiversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Status of species - Invasive species - Species richness - Indicator species 	Surveys to establish baseline data followed by regular surveys Maintain an evidence database
	Sedimentation	Periodic measurements
	Water quality	Regular sampling
	Invasive alien species	Impact monitoring
Anthropogenic	Compliance and enforcement/ Illegal activities	Regular patrols Hi-tech monitoring (e.g. radar and drones) Number of offences/ court cases
	Tourism/visitation	Number of permits issued Number of tourists Visitor satisfaction surveys
	Fishing Activities	Number of permits issued Permit patrols Vessel registration Catch per unit effort Bycatch
	Abandoned, lost, discarded fishing gear (ALDFG)	No answer written down
Socioeconomic	Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Benefit sharing - Community structures - Environmental awareness - Living standards - Human immigration - Life patterns 	No answer written down
	Economics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Income distribution - Income diversity 	No answer written down
	Cultural changes	No answer written down

3.4 MPA Assessments

During the session on MPA assessments workshop participants were introduced to the purpose and benefits of PAME evaluations. Participants were provided with a list of uses that PAME evaluations could be used for and asked within their groups to discuss and choose the top three uses they thought would be most beneficial for Sri Lanka's MPAs. Participants were also encouraged to add their own ideas and given time to discuss before feeding back to the group.

The OCPP provided the following list of purposes PAME evaluations could be used for, for workshop participants to discuss:

- Review current MPA management as part of an adaptive management approach.
- Help to develop a management plan.
- Identify threats, impacts, and local needs to improve planning.
- Support effective resource allocation.
- Use to understand enforcement effectiveness.
- Promote accountability and transparency.
- Build stakeholder support for MPA through sharing information and involving stakeholders in management.
- Understand the condition of biodiversity within the MPA.
- Help to identify key research gaps to inform research and monitoring plans.

When combining all break out group results the purposes most frequently identified by participants for how PAME evaluations could support Sri Lanka's MPA network were:

- To review and help develop management plans, including identifying conflicts in concurrent management plans by different government authorities that cover the same area (n = 4); and
- To build stakeholder support for MPAs through sharing information and involving stakeholders in management processes (n = 4).
- PAME evaluations were also seen as being important to help understand the condition of biodiversity within and outside MPAs (n = 3); and
- Multiple groups also highlighted evaluations would be beneficial to identify threats, impacts and local needs to improve planning (n = 3).
- The identification of priorities to support limited resource allocation was also highlighted by one group.

4 Sri Lanka MPA Network Vision and Objectives

The final afternoon of the workshop provided an opportunity for participants to discuss and develop draft visions and objectives for Sri Lanka’s MPA network based on the word clouds participants had created from the visioning exercise on day one (see Section 2). The OCPP team took the raw word clouds from day one and summarised the key findings in Figures 7 and 8). This task was undertaken to remove broken sentences from the raw word clouds to make the outputs clearer for participants to work from. It also allowed for key themes to be identified when participants had used slightly different language to describe the same output.

4.1 MPA Network Visions

After a brief presentation covering the purpose of a vision statement and some examples, workshop participants were given time to draft a vision on their tables for Sri Lanka’s marine environment. The summarised word cloud in Figure 7 was displayed on the board to give some ideas of words and phrases that could be encapsulated within the developed visions.



Figure 7 Summary of key words workshop participants added to a word cloud (Figure 2) when answering the question 'Imagine it's 2033, what do you hope Sri Lanka's marine environment will look like?' at the Marine Protected Area Best Practice workshop held in Colombo on 1 and 2 August 2023 by the Ocean Country Partnership Programme and Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.

Visions

- Sound life in sound waters for already born and yet to be born.
- Conservation ensured and community friendly MPAs by 2033.
- Promoting the sustainable use of marine resources, preserving them for future generations and fostering rich biodiversity.

- Sustainably manage the marine environment with susceptible areas maintaining biodiversity.
- To be the best managed MPA network in Asia with the optimum level of marine resource utilisation assured for the community while maintaining sustainability and involvement of stakeholders in management and ensuring free from all kinds of pollution.
- Ensure the conservation of sensitive ecosystems in MPAs while achieving economic sustainability.
- Healthy and vibrant, coastal, and marine ecosystems, supporting all life forms, wisely equitably and sustainably used and enjoyed, leading to social, economic, and spiritual well-being.
- Fostering sustainable marine protected areas for a prosperous future through rich marine biodiversity, equitable benefit sharing, and vibrant healthy ecosystems.

4.2 MPA Network Objectives

Following the visioning exercise participants were then given 30 minutes to draft five objectives to achieve the vision that they had previously developed within their breakout group (Section 4.1), using the words from Figure 8. Participants were also encouraged to incorporate new words to their objectives if needed to support their draft vision. Each table was then asked to share one of their objectives with the wider group.



Figure 8. Summary of key words workshop participants added to a word cloud (Figure 3) when answering the question 'How will the network of MPAs help achieve this?' (following the first question in Figure 2) at the Marine Protected Area Best Practice workshop held in Colombo on 1 and 2 August 2023 by the Ocean Country Partnership Programme and Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.

The draft objectives have been summarised under three themes: conservation, socioeconomic, and governance and management.

4.2.1 Conservation Objectives

- Increase the extent of MPAs by 50%.
- Reduce water pollution through law enforcement.
- Apply comprehensive and well-integrated approaches to ecosystem conservation within MPAs, addressing ecological interconnectedness and promoting resilience.
- Implement evidence-based and scientifically informed management strategies in MPA facilitating data-driven decision-making and enhancing ecological health.
- To conserve marine ecosystems scientific management approaches.
- To control marine pollution using latest available technology.
- Conserve the ecosystems and processes to ensure all coastal and marine biota are maintained as viable populations.
- Enhanced management to enable resilient coastal and marine ecosystems resilient to natural and anthropogenic stress within MPAs.
- Baseline biodiversity information is recorded and inventoried by 2026.

4.2.2 Socioeconomic Objectives

- Reducing the dependency on MPAs by developing the livelihood of surrounding people of MPA.
- Build stakeholder support for MPA through sharing information and involve in management.
- To ensure stakeholder participation in MPA management where community is also included as a stakeholder.
- Improve social benefits, knowledge and skill based, equitable access and the right to enjoy within MPAs with greater stakeholder participation.
- Promote economically viable opportunities within MPAs and share benefits equitably and ensure viability of natural capital within MPAs.
- Livelihoods within the MPA are identified, mapped and registered by 2030.
- Ensured partnerships between community and institution, and alternative livelihoods are created by 2033.

4.2.3 Governance and Management Objectives

- Complete the boundary demarcation and zonation in MPAs.
- Completing all small boats into large boats within 5 years.
- Identify threats, impacts and local needs to improve planning.
- Help to develop a management plan.

- Actively involve local communities in the planning, implementation and monitoring of MPAs, ensuring their perspectives and traditional knowledge contribute to effective conservation.
- Foster collaborations with international organisation, governments, and stakeholders to share expertise, resources, and insights, enriching the management and impact of MPAs.
- Establish inter-agency coordination mechanisms and robust enforcement measures, ensuring compliance with regulations and the enforcement of best practices for the sustain protection of marine ecosystems.
- To make suitable measures to allow marine resource utilisation for all relevant stakeholders in sustainable manner.
- To allocate both human and physical resources at optimum level to bring the MPA network to highest standard of management.
- Establish good governance, legal and non-legal frameworks, and presence of capacitated and cooperative stakeholders for MPAs.
- MPA boundaries are surveys, demarked and declared by 2026.
- Human and other physical resources are acquired by 2028.



Figure 9. One of the tables completing a breakout session at the Marine Protected Area Best Practice workshop held in Colombo on 1 and 2 August 2023 by the Ocean Country Partnership Programme and Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.

5 Conclusion

The MPA Best Practice workshop was well received by participants and provided the space for valuable discussions on the current state of Sri Lanka's MPA network and the MPA Implementation Cycle. It enabled the sharing of experiences and case studies from Sri Lanka and internationally, leading to discussions on the next steps to meet future aspirations.

All participants that provided feedback confirmed that they had expanded their knowledge on MPA best practice and understood in more detail the steps required and tools available to ensure successful MPA implementation. The workshop had helped them identify where the implementations gaps were at their MPAs and identified the tools, stakeholders and/or tasks that would be needed to ensure the success of their MPAs.

The visioning exercise provided a starting point for DWC to work collaboratively with other key government departments and NGOs to develop a shared vision for Sri Lanka's MPAs and key objectives to support that vision.

It is recommended that the draft visions are reviewed by DWC, following further consultation with key stakeholders who were not present at the workshop, to agree a vision that all government departments and NGOs can strive towards within their respective remits.

Once a vision has been defined, key objectives that specifically support the achievement of the vision can be developed collaboratively, ideally based on the draft objectives created by the workshop attendees.

To compliment the presentations and breakout sessions from the workshop, an 'MPA Best Practice Toolkit' will be developed. This toolkit will cover all aspects of the MPA Implementation Cycle, as discussed in the workshop, with additional case studies and links to useful resources. It will be available as a training resource for DWC staff to encourage a standardised understanding of MPAs in Sri Lanka and to highlight practical considerations for MPA designation and management.

Appendix 1

Summary of organisations and number of participants that attended the MPA Best Practice workshop.

Table 3. List of organisations and number of individuals who attended the Marine Protected Area Best Practice workshop, held in Colombo on 1 and 2 August 2023 by the Ocean Country Partnership Programme and Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.

Organisation	Organisation name	Number of participants
Sri Lanka Government	Department of Wildlife Conservation	26
	Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources	1
	Department of Coast Conservation & Coastal Resource Management	1
	Forest Department	3
	Ministry of Environment	1
	Ministry of Fisheries	1
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1
	Ministry of Wildlife & Forest Resources Conservation	1
	Marine Environment Protection Authority	1
	National Aquaculture Development Authority	1
	National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency	1
	Sri Lanka Coast Guard	1
Non-Governmental Organisations	Blue Resources Trust	1
	Environmental Foundation (Guarantee) Limited	1
	International Union of Conservation of Nature	1
	Wildlife and Nature Protection Society	1
	Wayamba University of Sri Lanka	1