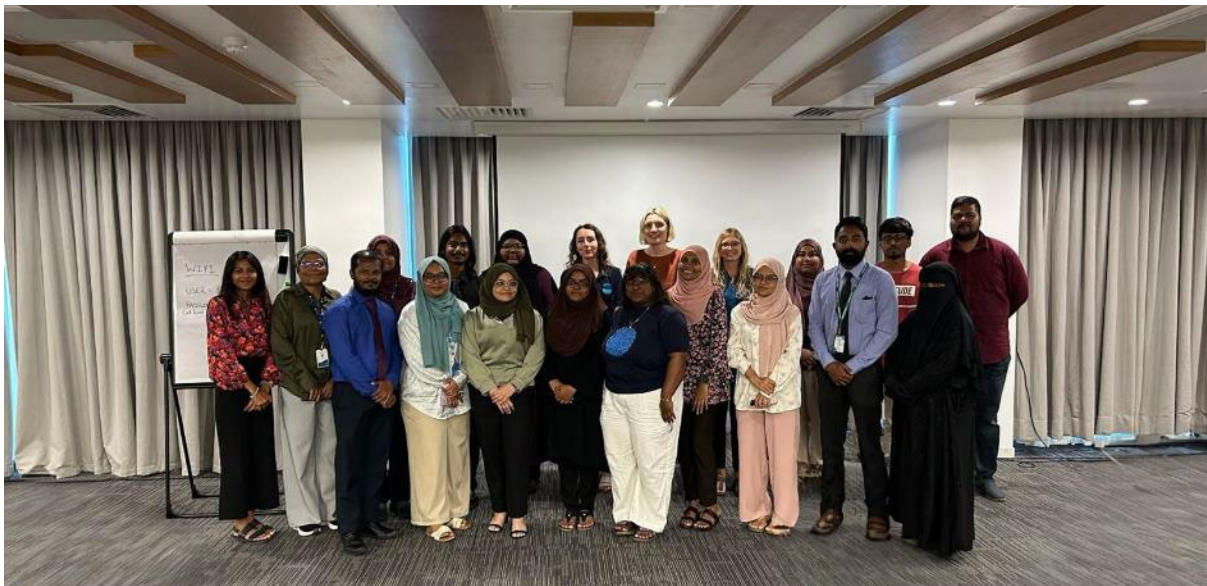


Ocean Country Partnership Programme



Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) Practical Training

Workshop Report
February 2025



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Executive Summary

The Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP) and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE) co-hosted a three-day practical training workshop focused on Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) evaluations from 16 to 18 February 2025. The main focus of the workshop was to complete PAME evaluations for two Protected and Conserved Areas (PCAs) in the Maldives. The workshop took place in Malé and was attended by 22 stakeholders from across Government, Academia and NGOs.

Over the three days workshop participants learnt about the purpose of PAME evaluations, their importance for supporting adaptive management of PCAs and their contribution to informing international targets for measuring the management effectiveness of PCAs globally. Participants gained practical experience by completing two assessments for South Ari Marine Protected Area (SAMPA) and Huraa Mangrove Protected Area using the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool, version 4 (METT-4), one of the most widely used PAME methodologies globally. Participants separated into two groups to focus on one PCA each. An optional field trip to visit Huraa Mangrove Protected Area also took place to support the completion of the evaluation for this site.

The two METT-4 evaluations were successfully completed by the end of the workshop and next steps to address evidence gaps and complete wider stakeholder validation were discussed. The OCP and the MTE will build upon the suggested next steps to ensure each assessment is validated before they are finalised. The results of the assessments will be published and used to support the development of management for each site.

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1. Introduction

The Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP) and Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE) co-led a practical training workshop focused on Protected Area Management Effectiveness (PAME) evaluations in Malé on 16 to 18 February 2025. The training brought together 21 individuals from across government, academia and NGOs to learn about PAME and to conduct two evaluations.

Once a Protected and Conserved Area (PCA) has been designated and management developed, it is important to understand whether the management actions are working and achieving what they set out to do. PAME evaluations help to measure and understand the impact of management actions on the PCAs values and tracks progress towards achievement of the PCAs goals and objectives. The results of a PAME evaluation help PCA managers to document achievements, identify and set new priorities to improve future management and enable effective resource allocation, as part of an adaptive management approach.

During the PAME workshop participants gained practical and applied training in how to complete a PAME evaluation using the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool, version 4 (METT-4) for two PCAs. The workshop objectives were:

- Learn what PAME evaluations are and their purpose.
- Gain practical experience using a PAME methodology – METT-4.
- Complete two METT-4 evaluations for:
 - South Ari Marine Protected Area (SAMPA).
 - Huraa Mangrove Protected Area.
- Understand the importance of stakeholder engagement when conducting PAME evaluations and methods to incorporate.
- Identify next steps to finalise METT-4 evaluations.

1.1. Workshop participants

Workshop participants were invited to the training session by the MTE. Participants were selected based on the needs of the METT-4 evaluations which required stakeholders who had knowledge of either Huraa Mangrove Protected Area or SAMPA to support the completion of the evaluations. Overall, 22 participants representing several organisations linked to the PCAs attended the three days of the workshop, including MTE, MMRI, EPA,

Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources, Maldives National University, Maldives Whale Shark Research Programme, Huraa Council and WDC, and UNDP (Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of PAME Practical Training Workshop participants, February 2025.

| Organisation | Number of Participants |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE) | 6 |
| Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) | 1 |
| Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) | 1 |
| Maldives Marine Research Institute (MMRI) | 2 |
| Malé Atoll Huraa Council | 1 |
| Malé Atoll Huraa Womens Development Council | 1 |
| Maldives National University (MNU) | 5 |
| Maldives Whale Shark Research Programme (MWSRP) | 3 |
| United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) | 1 |
| UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) | 1 |
| Total | 22 |

2. Agenda

Training took place across three days and included an optional field trip during the second afternoon to visit Huraa Mangrove Protected Area (Table 2).

Table 2. PAME Practical Training Workshop agenda, 16 to 18 February 2025.

| Agenda Item | Time |
|---|---------------|
| Sunday 16 February | |
| Registration, tea & coffee | 8:30 – 9:00 |
| Welcome & opening | 9:00 – 9:30 |
| Introduction to PAME | 9:30 – 10:30 |
| Break out: – Element 1: Context & Threats | 10:30 – 12:00 |
| Lunch | 12:00 – 13:00 |
| Break out – Element 2: Planning | 13:00 – 14:30 |
| Break out – Element 3: Inputs | 14:30 – 16:00 |
| Monday 17 February | |
| Registration, tea & coffee | 8:30 – 9:00 |
| Break out – Element 4: Process | 9:00 – 10:30 |
| Break out – Element 5: Outputs | 10:30 – 12:00 |
| Lunch | 12:00 – 13:00 |
| Huraa field trip | 13:00 – 17:30 |

| Agenda Item | Time |
|--|---------------|
| Tuesday 18 February | |
| Registration, tea & coffee | 8:30 – 9:00 |
| Break out – Element 6: Outcomes | 9:00 – 10:30 |
| Break | 10:30 – 11:00 |
| Next steps and action plan development | 11:00 – 12:00 |
| Lunch & end | 12:00 – 13:00 |

3. Training session summaries

3.1. Day one

3.1.1. Introduction to PAME

The workshop began with an introduction to what PAME evaluations are including their importance as a tool to support adaptive management of PCAs and their role in meeting international commitments and standards. The process on how to typically undertake an evaluation was explained and an overview given on the extensive range of PAME methodologies available before a deep dive into the METT-4 methodology was delivered. To aid understanding a case study of METT-4 evaluations conducted by the OCPP and MTE in Maldives in 2021-2022 was presented.

3.1.2. METT-4 evaluation groups

Following the introductory presentations participants were split into two even groups, based on their experience and knowledge of the two PCAs that would be the subject of the METT-4 evaluations. Of the 21 workshop participants, 9 undertook the evaluation for SAMPA and 12 focused on Huraa Mangrove Protected Area. MTE staff were split evenly between the two groups and one member of the OCPP team facilitated each table.

Each table had one laptop with the METT-4 evaluation spreadsheet on. Before attending the training participants had been asked to bring their own laptops to be able to view additional documents throughout the evaluation process that may support discussions. Several key documents linked to each PCA were emailed to participants ahead of the workshop to view including existing management plans, research reports and regulations.

Each group was encouraged to actively participate in discussions, listen to all views, share evidence and information sources to support the evaluation and discuss actions to improve management. Whilst working through the METT-4 spreadsheet, participants in each group took it in turns to enter information into the different sections of the spreadsheet. This allowed everyone to experience the process of actively completing the METT-4 and also encouraged even participation. One person in each group also noted down throughout the evaluation key gaps or information sources that would need to be sourced and added into the final METT-4.

3.1.3. Completing the METT-4

The METT-4 consists of 6 sections referred to as elements which focus on different aspects of PCA management. These elements were split across the three days of the workshop to complete. At the beginning of each element OCPP staff provided an overview of what it entailed, including details on what specific terms meant and things to consider

when answering questions for that particular element. Each group then worked through the questions, discussing and agreeing upon a score for each question, provided evidence for the score and included actions to improve management. Once the two groups finished a section the next element would be introduced to everyone before breaking out again to complete the next set of questions.

On the first day both groups completed the protected areas attributes tables, which sets out the context of the PCA, undertook a detailed assessment of threats linked to their site and completed the first two elements – Planning and Inputs. The Planning element evaluates the PCA design and management planning and the Inputs element assesses the resources available and needed to successfully deliver management.



Figure 1. Workshop participants working through the METT-4 evaluations for SAMPA and Huraa Mangrove Protected Area.

3.2. Day two

3.2.1. METT-4 continued

The second day of the workshop focused on completing an additional two elements of the METT-4 evaluation spreadsheet in the morning. The first element assessed management processes and is the largest element of the METT-4, comprising of 18 questions. The second element completed by the two groups was Outputs which evaluates the results of management actions. Both groups successfully completed the two sections by lunch time.

3.2.2. Huraa Mangrove Protected Area field trip

In the afternoon an optional field trip to visit Huraa Mangrove Protected Area was provided. Of the 21 workshop participants, 12 joined the trip. Several participants had visited the mangroves a number of times before, therefore opted out of the trip. For those who hadn't visited the site before, such as the OCPP team, it was an extremely informative trip and helped to bring to life the METT-4 evaluation for the PCA. A member of Huraa

Council kindly showed the group around the site, highlighting the different species of mangroves and fauna found there. Management measures and threats to the PCA were also discussed.



Figure 2. Photos of K.Huraa Mangrove Protected Area on Huraa island, Malé atoll, taken during the workshop field trip to visit the protected area.

3.3. Day three

3.3.1. METT-4 continued

The last day of the workshop ran for half a day to finish the last element of the METT-4, Outcomes, which assesses the impacts of management in relation to the PCA's objectives. Once both METT-4 evaluations were completed the OCPP team provided an overview of the results from each evaluation to the whole group.

3.3.2. METT-4 validation and next steps

To finish the workshop a presentation on key next steps to consider for finalising the two METT-4 evaluations completed by the groups was delivered. This included information on how to validate the draft evaluations through incorporating further stakeholder input, how to use the results of the evaluations to improve management effectiveness, and how to communicate the results of the evaluations to stakeholders and management teams, including how to upload results to the Global Database for PAME (GD-PAME).

Following the presentation each group had 30 minutes to develop an action plan to finalise their METT-4 evaluations. This included identifying key gaps to address, validation methods and ideas on how the METT-4 results would be used in the future.

At the end of the session all participants were asked to complete a short feedback survey on the delivery and content of the workshop to support future OCPP engagement activities.

Following the end of the workshop all participants received a certificate of completion and a list of additional resources for further, detailed reading on PAME.

4. Workshop Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

4.1. Workshop feedback surveys

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to complete a short feedback survey to rate their knowledge of PAME, share their views on the training and to provide suggestions on how the workshop could be improved if repeated in the future. All answers were anonymous.

4.1.1. Knowledge ratings

Of the 22 workshop participants, 17 completed the feedback survey. All participants stated that their knowledge of PAME evaluations in general and their ability to conduct a PAME evaluation had greatly improved following the workshop.

When asked if they felt the training was useful to their role 88% (n = 15) agreed that it was whilst two participants were neutral. Seventy-one percent (n = 12) of participants stated it is likely that they will undertake a PAME evaluation in the future, whilst the remaining five participants didn't know if they would or wouldn't. Examples given on how the training could be incorporated into participants' roles in the future included:

- To conduct further PAME evaluations in the future for different PCAs, including as part of the RREEF project in Addu and Fuvahmulah and for future assessments of SAMPA and Huraa Mangrove Protected Area.
- Apply to improving and revising PCA management plans.
- To participate as a stakeholder in other PAME evaluations.
- Learnings will be used in University lectures and research projects and other conservation projects.
- As part of protected area manager role and the Protected Areas Management Unit at the Ministry of Tourism and Environment.
- To support collaborative planning and compliance for PCAs.
- To create awareness amongst local communities linked to each of the evaluated PCAs.

4.1.2. Participant recommendations

All participants who completed the feedback survey agreed that the content of the training was easy to understand. Of the 12 participants who attended the optional field trip six said it was a useful and welcome addition to the workshop.

A few recommendations were suggested to help improve future similar workshops, these included:

- Greater stakeholder representation including involving more experts from different sectors, greater representation from EPA and addition government ministries such as the Planning Ministry.
- As each table worked from one laptop to complete the evaluations, not everyone was able to view the spreadsheet. In the future it would be beneficial to have two large screens to display the METT-4.
- To improve attendance future workshops should be held in low season. It is unclear whether this suggestion relates to the low season of each PCA or government availability.
- Additional information for some of the terms used in the METT-4 such as 'connectivity' would be welcomed.

Overall participants' views of the workshop were overwhelmingly positive with 71% (n = 12) not providing any recommendations for improvements. Several positive comments were provided in the feedback survey including that many participants found the workshop enjoyable, a good experience, and thought it was well designed and delivered.

4.2. Lessons learned

For future workshops that focus on the completion PAME evaluations with stakeholders the following recommendations could be considered:

- The evaluations were completed successfully within two days. This period would be a suitable minimum amount of time to allocate to future evaluations. Additional time would have allowed for more in-depth literature reviews and reading of research outputs during the evaluation process.
- The workshop originally considered completing three to four evaluations simultaneously. This could be an option in the future but would only work if there was a facilitator with experience of completing the METT-4 allocated to each table. During the workshop each group completed the questions at a slightly different pace which meant it was beneficial to have a facilitator on each table who could provide more guidance specific to the context of each group.
- Sharing the responsibility to input into the METT-4 spreadsheets amongst each group was received well and allowed for hands on experience, whilst also keeping everyone engaged throughout the multiple days.
- To allow everyone in each group to view the METT-4 and the answers as they were inputted into the spreadsheet it would be beneficial to have a large screen per PCA rather than working off a small laptop.
- Working through the sections one by one, with a short introduction to each element helped to break up the discussion times and ensure everyone received the same overview on content.

5. Next steps

The OCPP and MTE plan to address any gaps in the METT-4 evaluations where additional evidence is required before conducting stakeholder validation of the results to ensure the evaluations reflect stakeholder views. Once the evaluations are finalised the results will be uploaded to GD-PAME and a report highlighting the key findings of each assessment will be developed and shared with stakeholders.

Key actions that have been identified to improve management effectiveness for each of the PCAs will be reviewed, prioritised and incorporated into the next stages of management development. For example, the results from the SAMPA evaluation will be used to develop a Conservation Action Plan which will work alongside the newly established Management Regulation for the site.