

Project Management

Introduction

Management of coral reef projects is similar to managing other natural resources where there is a need to follow a management cycle whose complexity will depend on the objectives of the project and the size of the project. Coral reef management involves the management of people, tools and equipment to meet common objectives including:

1. Realistic planning that entails defining and allocating tasks to implement the objectives, accurate allocation of time for each task, allocation of adequate resources (human, financial and tools) and setting of manageable deadlines.
2. Clarifying people's roles and lines of communication, developing budgets, setting up appropriate controls and schedules for each activity.
3. Monitoring of progress and final evaluation of progress.
4. Timely dissemination of information required for each activity.

A number of issues and drivers affect coral reef management and these must always be considered when designing and implementing management programs:

1. *Reefs are managed by managing human behaviours and expectations.*
 - Projects must engage with communities, interests and agencies whose activities relate to coral reef use or impact.
 - Effective community engagement requires skills and commitment that are not widely available or easily taught.
 - There is a limited pool of experience and capacity in coral reef management.
2. *Coral reefs present a demanding management context.*
 - Coral reefs often occur in remote areas where it is difficult to develop management capacity.
 - There are often high levels of human resource dependency and poverty in coral reef areas.
 - Ecological dynamics and processes of coral reef ecosystems are poorly understood by many or most users.
 - Many impacts come from external or remote activities with no direct social connection to coral reef communities.
3. *The relationship between project activities and human and reef community outcomes may not emerge for a decade or more.*
 - Substantial uptake of changes in human attitudes and values often requires half a human generation or more.

- Significant changes in biological communities or processes of coral reefs may not be apparent for a decade or more.
4. *Management must contend with unpredictable context change.*
- These changes can include natural catastrophes such as tsunamis or cyclones.
 - Political or administrative system changes often occur at time scales shorter than project outcomes.
 - Economic changes can drive changes in coral reef resource use.
5. *Coral reef management usually requires multi-agency coordination.*
- Within governments – fisheries, environment, tourism, etc.
 - Within nations – local, provincial, national
 - Between nations – regional, global

Key Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Coordination

- It is essential to establish an effective coordination mechanism including adequate management structures and operating systems.
- Clear roles and responsibilities are needed for each component of the project including the advisory committees.
- It is essential to establish an effective coordination mechanism to deal with conflicting agencies in multi agency projects.
- Establish all partner agreements prior to implementation.
- Partnerships need continuous support and networking.
- Identify the appropriate implementing agency, i.e. research agencies do not always have the relevant experience.

Planning

- Budgets, timelines and expenditures need to be realistic.

Finances

- Adequate funds and other resources including staff should be in place prior to implementation.
- Flexibility in the allocation of funds (i.e. a mechanism for timely reallocation of funds to meet changes at the local level).
- Sustainable financing mechanisms should be explored and, if possible, tested before the end of the project.

Reporting

- Frequent assessments allow for flexibility and rigorous monitoring of progress but should not detract from implementation of project activities.
- Reporting should be against effective indicators of progress to allow for objective evaluations.
- Avoid reporting that detracts from project core activities, such as to multiple donors that require different formats which may exact management costs.
- Reports should be minimized to what the recipient needs (e.g. exception reports).
- Reports need to clearly define objectives and targets.

Implementation

- IT tools and GIS are useful for integrating multiple factors and agencies.
- Municipal/Local government engagement important for achieving effective implementation.
- Committed, motivated, peer respected individuals essential at all levels of implementation.
- Continued assessment of relationships with partner agencies and communities is required.

Accounting

- Accounting procedures need to be simplified so as not to detract from implementation of project activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Continual assessment of partnerships and rationalization of project objectives with national and regional priorities is needed.
- Adequate time should be given to evaluate projects especially large, complex and regional projects.
- Barriers to change should be identified and appropriate interventions made.
- Collect appropriate monitoring information that allows evaluation of the project.
- External peer review of reports can increase the profile, transparency and respect for the project.