CREATING MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAs)

A practical guide to aid community groups in the planning stages of creating marine protected areas

Determine the Goal

Marine protected areas are created with a purpose in mind. Typically there are three types of MPA, those designed for:

- Fisheries
- Biodiversity
- Climate Change Mitigation

The most common are fisheries specific marine protected areas. These are designed to increase the amount of commercially important fish within the MPA, and it's surrounding waters. These protected areas should be placed using appropriate scientific data, should be of a suitable shape and size, and should have a core zone and a buffer zone to maximise effectiveness.

Identify appropriate areas

Using the data provided you must select an appropriate area to protect. It is important to protect an area with high coral cover, and constant reef. Protecting degraded areas will help them recover, but it will take much longer and the fishing benefits won't be as obvious. Choosing the healthiest area is the best option because this area can improve faster, will show much greater fishing output, and this area's recovery will support nearby degraded reefs. Areas of importance are: **Spawning Areas**, **Nursery Sites**, **Resilient Sites**, **Sites of Significant Biodiversity** etc.

The central part of the healthiest area should be designated as the **CORE ZONE**. In this area, no extractive activities can take place and no boats should enter. Whether diving is allowed can be decided by the officials, however destructive practices like touching and removing corals and other marine life are strictly forbidden.

Where the coral cover starts to decline and the reef becomes more patchy, this should be the start of the 50m **BUFFER ZONE**. In the buffer zone activities are regulated, for example, the only fishing permitted is hook and line (excluding long lines) and local spearfishing (without scuba gear).

Choose the Size and Shape

The **SIZE** of the MPA should reflect your goals, For example: Fisheries specific MPA's are typically smaller than biodiversity or climate change MPA's. However choosing the actual size should come down to what you hope to achieve.

When the goal of the MPA is to improve fisheries, ask yourselves, how much fish do you need? If the Barangay is large, with many fisherfolk, then the MPA must be large in order to produce enough fish for the community.

The data collected can give a good idea of how much fish are available per hectare. Using this information you can choose the size of the MPA by deciding how much fish you need for the community, and then choosing a size of MPA that will produce more than that number.

The **SHAPE** of the MPA should be either square or rectangular, any other shape will be difficult to demarcate. The far boundary will be the deepest part and should be no deeper than you can feasibly place and maintain.

Effective Management

In order for eh MPA to successfully meet the goals of the community, it must be properly managed. This mean enforcing rules on access, use and activities that affect the health of the area.

In order to achieve this a plan should be written that outlines the major in-water and on-land threats to the MPA, who is responsible for managing those threats, and the penalties for when the rules are broken.

The community should be fairly represented through this process so that everyone can agree on the actions and understand the benefits of having and properly managing the MPA.