



**NOO  
RAAJJE**

## **Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Subcommittee**

**Meeting no: 02**

***Noo Raajje Program***

**Summary Minutes**

**Date:** Tuesday, 02<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

**Time:** 09:00 am – 10:00 am (Maldives Time)

**Venue:** (*Virtual*)

**Attendees:** *The Noo Raajje Program's 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Subcommittee Meeting was held with the virtual presence of 28 participants from various sectors including technical staffs from Government ministries and institutions, stakeholders from marine research, environmental and conservation organizations, representatives from surfing and diving communities, representatives from tourism sector and academia who have voluntarily signed up for the Subcommittee. Please see annex for the attendees list.*

**Meeting Chaired by:** Ms. Ilham Atho Mohamed, Assistant Director at Ministry of Environment (MoE).

*Please note that the MSP Subcommittee meetings will be co-chaired by the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure along with Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture on a rotating basis for each meeting.*

### **Welcome Remarks & Review Meeting Minutes Recap**

The Chair, Ms. Ilham Atho Mohamed welcomed the members for the second MSP Subcommittee meeting and gave a brief overview of the meeting agenda.

Following her introduction, the *Noo Raajje* Program Secretariat Ms. Maeesha Mohamed gave a short recap of the 1<sup>st</sup> MSP Subcommittee meeting minutes. The Program Secretariat requested members of MSP Subcommittee to e-mail any comments that they may have on the previous meeting's minutes by Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. She informed the members that anything that has not been discussed during the meeting cannot be added to the minutes and if no further comments are received by Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, those minutes will be considered final. Members were then invited to ask any questions they may have on the previous meeting's minutes before proceeding to the next agenda item.

With no further comments or questions from the participants, the Chair then handed over to *Noo Raajje* Site Manager Ms. Fathimath Nistharan to give an overview of the **Stakeholder Engagement Processes** of *Noo Raajje* MSP Process.

## Presentation on Stakeholder Engagement

Ms. Fathimath Nistharan, presented the **Goals, objectives and guiding principles** of the Stakeholder Engagement processes, highlighting that the MSP Subcommittee members are the right people to provide guidance on how to best engage the stakeholders throughout the MSP Process.

1. The goal of this is to accurately identify and engage all of the parties that will be impacted and needs to be involved in the MSP Process
2. Through the Stakeholder Engagement, the program wishes to provide opportunities for communities to take ownership of the MSP Process and be stewards of their environment
3. Throughout the program, the participant's input will be used to develop and adopt a comprehensive marine spatial plan that will help direct decision makers, users, and stakeholders towards more strategic and efficient uses of marine resources
4. She highlighted that the program would like to involve all the relevant stakeholders in the very early stages of the decision-making process, further emphasizing on the discussions had in the previous meeting to involve all the right people and be inclusive, providing a platform for all voices to be heard.
5. Through this process the program will ensure to respect the diversity of people, their needs, lifestyles and preferences etc and will also ensure to be clear in the purpose of the consultation as well as how the information will be used in the discussions and decision making
6. She further assured to be transparent, communicate the information as clearly as possible and often, as well as to make the documents publicly available whenever possible so that everyone can have access to those information

Mr. Andy Estep, Waite Institute's Science Director then took over to explain the **General Stakeholder Engagement Process** and shared experiences and lessons learnt from the MSP work he has done previously in other countries

7. In the early stages, the program will ensure to map and define stakeholders; he mentioned that some of that will be discussed later in the consultation session of this meeting to solicit the participants feedback as the MSP Subcommittee on who the correct stakeholders to improve in this process
8. During this process it is necessary to determine when and how to engage the stakeholders and as a committee the members of MSP Subcommittee are required to find a consensus on it
9. Subsequently, the stakeholder consultations will begin and it will become a common thread throughout the program crossing various pillars of the program from sustainable fisheries to blue economy into MSP as well. The programs are tightly interwoven with one another and may need to conduct consultations in tandem on various aspects of the program, balancing between all the aspects and ensuring that everyone has enough opportunity to provide feedback

10. The feedback will then be reviewed and incorporated by the appropriate committees or advisory groups. This cycle will be iterative with varying timelines depending on the part of the program
11. The process will also involve a lot of public education and outreach activities such as marine science related courses that are coming out with the University of California San Diego (UCSD) Extension program, or radio/ tv ads, social media campaigns, and the public education and outreach will take lot of different forms as the program progress
12. Currently, *Noo Raajje* program is at the stage where we map and define the stakeholders, and determine when, how and who to engage in the process. In the coming years the more in-depth consultations will be conducted, incorporating and iterating the feedback
13. He noted that this is a general framework for the stakeholder engagement process but will be tailored to the Maldives based on the feedback from the MSP Subcommittee members (or the any given subcommittee per se) to ensure the involvement of the right stakeholders
14. He gave a general overview of the potential participants that can be involved in the process highlighting that in general the primary participants will be those whose lives are directly impacted by a project and would want to be engaged early in the process. They will also be sought for information related to areas of importance and future demands on ocean space
15. Primary participants may be involved in goal setting, MSP development, implementation, and management
16. The secondary participants are those who may not be directly affected by the project i.e those whose everyday lives are not affected but may have secondary impacts such as technical experts who may have a wealth of knowledge about various sectors or academia who has been studying marine realm overtime
17. Secondary participants can be involved later in the process to help develop or provide feedback on the MSP
18. He then shared the site example from the islands of Bermuda and Azores in the Atlantic Ocean explaining how the stakeholders were engaged and the methods/platforms used to gather feedback from them. He further explained how their governance structures were formulated, their visions, timelines and processes involved to incorporate the stakeholder input

## Q&A and Discussion

Ms. Fathimath Nistharan took over to explain the typical stages of stakeholder engagement processes in the MSP. She explained that similar to the processes carried out in other countries that Andy highlighted, following the **Ocean use surveys and mapping** the first draft of MSP will be developed and after incorporating the feedback from stakeholder groups and technical advisory groups the final draft of MSP will be developed.

Further, she emphasized on the need to identify who the stakeholder groups will be in the Maldives MSP Process and described the typical stakeholder groups that may essentially be involved in the stakeholder engagement process in the Maldives which includes the following categories;

1. Commercial fishers
2. Recreation and conservation users

3. Users of ocean for diving, snorkeling and swimming
4. Users in tourism, boating and other sports activities
5. Utilities, infrastructure and development
6. Recreational fishers
7. Mariculture activities
8. Other?

She then invited the MSP Subcommittee members to share any thoughts and ideas on who the stakeholders that should be involved in those categories and their relevance to the process.

**Following are the questions/ discussions by the participants and the responses by the *Noo Raajje* team;**

Hudha Ahmed representing Renewable Energy Maldives Pvt Ltd noted that it is important to state “Surfing” as a separate group of resource users. Further explaining her point, she highlighted that currently in the Maldives surfing is a big part of income generation and it is a way of life for many people specially youth.

Shaziya Saeed representing Save Our Waves NGO agreed with Hudha and stated that surfing may fall under recreation and conservation or even tourism but it is important to consider surfing separately. Hudha emphasized on her point and said that it should not be considered as a part of recreation but rather should stand alone as a separate category of ocean users.

Mohamed Imad representing Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure identified the military, communication sector for undersea cable and biosphere reserve offices such as Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Office are important stakeholders. He also suggested to include large dredging companies both foreign and local that are operating in the Maldives.

Andy Estep clarified that the categories mentioned above are a schematic suggestion of types of stakeholder groups that could be considered but the program is relying on the participants and members of the MSP Subcommittee to craft the most accurate list of stakeholder groups. Adding to that Fathimath Nistharan highlighted that the suggestions from the participants are very valuable and further clarified that activities such as surfing does not necessarily have to fall under a specific category but rather want to identify what are the kind of activities that people value as stakeholders and resource users. These values can be cultural as well and noted that the members shall not feel there is a limitation on these categories.

Aminath Shaha Hashim representing Maldives Resilient Reefs highlighted that it is important to specify different sectors of fisheries such as reef fish, octopus, lobster, aquarium fish etc. Agreeing with Shaha, Ilham mentioned that there is competition between different types of fishers for space and as they are increasing and as different types of fisheries are taking form of industries it is important to specify them separately. Shaha further added that different users are using lagoon and reef areas for different purposes and if the stakeholder consultations are to be held together with all types of users it might complicate things. She shared her experience from a recent field activity that they carried out in Laamu atoll where they found that a lot of women use the reefs for gleaning during low tides and there were various other groups that uses the reefs for different purposes.

Therefore, she thinks it is important to define the fisheries, the types of fisheries and share with everyone.

Responding to Shaha, Andy mentioned that the ocean use survey in this context is very useful tool in ensuring that spatial representation and value of stakeholder groups are addressed both qualitatively and quantitatively within this process. He clarified that the ocean use surveys were a common component of the work previously across other sites and distribution of the ocean use surveys are customizable to any stakeholder group, any fishery sector or any other sectors such as tourism and boating as well. Further, he explained that through the deployment of the ocean use survey it allowed to capture nuance and variability of that entire sector and will be able to map that in physical space, and when the users respond they can identify their areas and assign a subjective set of value points to those area which can all be compiled to develop heat maps by sector, use type etc for each group. This can all be used as foundation as to consider where different groups are using space and how they are valuing them.

Shaha added further to the discussion and suggested to group fishers together (commercial, recreational and subsistence) and focus on different types of fishers.

Munshidhaa Ibrahim representing Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources and Agriculture agreed with Shaha and highlighted that it is important to differentiate between different interests within the fisheries sector. Munshidhaa then requested Shaha to elaborate on “gleaning” that she mentioned. Shaha explained that recently they conducted a Resource Use Survey in all the inhabited islands of Laamu atoll to identify people involved in different extractive activities on the island. She explained that gleaning or collecting shells such as *Golhaa*, lobster and octopus are carried out on the islands very regularly by women and young people during low tide. Such activities are mostly done for subsistence rather than for commercial purposes.

Further adding to that Shaziya Saeed highlighted that such activities of gleaning as a family activity are increasing with the closing of schools and suggested to include Ministry of Education as a stakeholder or the system change is needed.

Shaahina Ali representing Parley Maldives suggested to consider marine commercial transport and logistics, agriculture sector as important stakeholders.

Hudha Ahmed noted that it is important to consider the sand banks that are used by public for recreation. In response to Hudha, Philippa Roe representing the Maldives Underwater Initiative stated there is a distinction between private recreation (for example a resort’s private jurisdiction or rental/ ownership of a picnic island or sandbank) vs. public areas, where anyone can come and use the area and highlighted that this has caused issues in the past.

Dr. Mizna Mohamed representing ENDEVOR NGO suggested sand miners and sea transport facilitators as important stakeholders.

Mohamed Shimal representing the Maldives Marine Research Institute suggested to include Local Government Authorities (Island/ Atoll Councils) highlighting that they have a jurisdiction over management of marine area. Dr. Mizna agreed to Shimal’s suggestion.

**Q1: How do we account for ocean polluters such as garbage dumping?**

Nistharan explained that even though the ocean polluters are not necessarily a “resource user” it is something that can be better managed through stronger guidelines when the MSP goes into a more enforceable or adoptable stage. It is something that those who are involved in enforcement would have to consider and noted that it something that is important to be identified during the MSP Process as a layer such as identify areas that are used for garbage dumping and what are the common areas where ocean pollution is happening commonly.

Andy added that in the past pollution has been considered in a number ways in MSP, for instance when designating priority conservation areas heat maps of ocean pollution can be developed and they maybe used as a criterion to waive for a particular zone type. Enforcement planning will be a part of the implementation process and identifying these areas may not necessarily be a stakeholder group to consider but identifying the areas and sources of ocean pollution maybe the area where policies could be proposed and developed for the program. That may also be an area where enforcement strategy could be developed or an area to develop outreach campaign. Therefore, it may not be a stakeholder group but a consideration that is valuable both to spatially map and to explore and probe the depths of the issue to have positive outcomes from the MSP.

Hudha further explained the reason she asked the question was because it is a large area where even large industries such are tourism are allowed to dump food waste in the ocean and its use of the ocean.

Shaziya expressed her concerns around dumping food waste into ocean by tourism industry and stated that they dump fish/food waste as a recreational activity; feeding rays and sharks. She added that similar activities are done by the fisheries islands like Kanduoigiri and similar activities followed by more parties to attract tiger sharks during dives. She noted that all of these has to be stopped in order our oceans to thrive naturally.

**Q2: How does the project affect the stakeholders, the benefits to them or impacts? Clearing this and conveying these to stakeholders in the engagement process can gain more meaningful engagement.**

Andy agreed to the statement and noted that one of the responsibilities of the MSP Subcommittee is to answer such questions. The program is relying upon the expertise of the members of the MSP Subcommittee to inform sensible conservation objectives, zoning objectives, development objectives etc; the program can provide resources to answer these questions but what the program relying on the members are to identify questions like this and to figure out based on the conservation objectives what are the implications for implementing those, to identify what the impacts could be, what are projects or programs that can be developed to derive those outcomes etc. He ensured that even though an exact answer cannot be provided to that at this point as there are no specific objectives set yet, the program is committed to provide resources to answer those questions.

**Q3: Does the project have the scope or have identified strategies to offer alternative livelihood options for resource users who may be affected by the forthcoming conservation interventions?**

Andy noted that it is a consideration the program is interested in and willing to make but as the program is currently in very early stages these are not being defined yet.

He explained that in other sites programs have considered alternative livelihoods and engaged in projects in facilitating those interested in pursuing an alternative livelihood as well so if there are sensible alternative livelihood options that *Noo Raajje* program can be built around, he encourages anyone to submit a proposal or an idea.

**Q4: Can we facilitate exchanges or experience sharing of fishers in other areas where protected areas are already in place such as Seychelles?**

Andy responded that this is something that has been done in many other program sites and have turned out great as sharing is super important. However, there may not always be the budget to do it but if members of the group can scope out such exchanges and experiences and suggest them it is absolutely on the table.

Adding to that discussion, Hudha suggested to have exchanges closer to home for instance share experiences on what happened to shark fishers when shark fishing was banned in the Maldives.

Nistharan posed a question to the members to provide suggestions on how to best engage the stakeholders whether it is best to do it in-person, through surveys, focus group discussions, organizing television and/or radio programs or any other means. She also asked the participants whether it is best to send a form link to fill in with all the information that the members may have on how to best incorporate feedback and respond to stakeholders or whether to do it via email in order to better manage the time of all the participants of the subcommittee.

The participants agreed that in the interest of time an online form will suffice.

Aya Mariyam Rahil Naseem representing Maldives Coral Institute suggested that fishers and other groups often have larger atoll-wide Viber or WhatsApp groups where they discuss areas to fish or avoid etc and these could be useful sources for consultation. Responding to Aya's suggestion, Andy pointed that where such facilitation groups are known it would be very useful for MSP Subcommittee members to introduce such forum spaces collectively. Shaziya agreeing with Aya, emphasized that fishers' main concerns are the sharks and they believe it is increasing in numbers due to the protection and are calling to lift the ban on shark fisheries and allowing shark finning. She added that these WhatsApp/ Viber group platforms should be used to create awareness among fishers and change their mindsets.

Mohamed Imad suggested to use dedicated website, email newsletters, social media platforms, leaflets, sms to obtain feedback and response to stakeholders.

Andy encouraged the members to convene and have discussions separately if that is something that the MSP Subcommittee member feel would be useful to come up with ideas and submit them to Program Administration. He also requested to let the Program Administration know if there is

anything that can be done to facilitate such conversation for example create WhatsApp group for the members to interact.

**Action Points & Closing Remarks by the Chair**

1. Third MSP Subcommittee meeting is tentatively scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021
2. Send out a form link to fill in with suggestions on how to best incorporate feedback and respond to stakeholders
3. Mr. Mohamed Imad confirmed that Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure will Chair the next MSP Subcommittee meeting

Ms. Ilham Atho Mohamed reminded the members to submit any comments on the 1<sup>st</sup> MSP Subcommittee meeting minutes before 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (Monday) so that it can be incorporated into the final minutes. She also noted that in the next MSP Subcommittee meeting the topic of discussion will be around the spatial planning tool: SeaSketch and concluded the meeting by thanking all the participating members and the program partners for attending the meeting.

**Annex:**

1. Attendee's list
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> MSP Subcommittee Meeting Presentation Slides

*Noo Raajje* Program Secretariat  
14/03/2021