



**NOO
RAAJJE**

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Subcommittee

Meeting no: 01

Noo Raajje Program

Summary Minutes

Date: Tuesday, 16th February 2021

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

Venue: (Virtual)

Attendees: *The Noo Raajje Program's 1st Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Subcommittee Meeting was held with the presence of 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. Munshidhaa Ibrahim, Senior Fisheries Officer at Ministry of Fisheries Marine Resources and Agriculture (MoFMRA).

Please note that the 1st MSP Subcommittee meeting was chaired by MoFMRA, however, throughout the program, the MSP Subcommittee 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 & Governance Recap

The Chair, Ms. Munshidhaa Ibrahim extended a warm welcome to the MSP Subcommittee members and thanked all for their presence and participation in the first MSP Subcommittee meeting of *Noo Raajje Program*. She also extended a warm welcome to the project team from Waitt Institute.

Following a quick introduction and the agenda, Ms. Munshidhaa briefly explained that *Noo Raajje* partnership program between the Government of Maldives and the Blue Prosperity Coalition, spanning over a period of five years and one of the main pillars of the program is to develop a nationwide marine spatial plan. She also gave a brief overview of the five pillars of the *Noo Raajje* program and the committee structures.

The Chair then gave a brief outline of the MSP Subcommittee **Governance Structure** and the member's responsibilities. She proposed the next MSP Subcommittee to be chaired by the Ministry of Environment.

The Chair then handed over to *Noo Raajje* Program Coordinator Mr. Moosa Zameer Hassan to go over the **Rules of Engagement** for the subcommittee members. Moosa emphasized on the need to have government institutional representation on the subcommittees and encouraged to sign-up if an institution that is relevant to the MSP work has not done it so far. The MSP Subcommittee meetings are anticipated to be held biweekly.

Noo Raajje Site Manager Ms. Fathimath Nistharan then took over to explain the **MSP Subcommittee Responsibilities** in detail.

Presentation on Introduction/ Approach to Marine Spatial Planning, MSP Process and Timeline by Waitt Institute

Mr. Andy Estep, the Waitt Institute's Science Director presented a high-level introduction to MSP Process and the approach to MSP by the Waitt Institute.

1. The MSP Process by Waitt Institute uses a big picture approach to how we manage the ocean that balances all uses and helps to ensure sustainability
2. The approach focuses on comprehensive planning – the intention is to take a holistic picture of how the maritime space is being used in the Maldives and designing plans to optimize that use and benefits from that rather than just establishing networks of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
3. Another main component that Waitt Institute focuses on is establishing MPAs and MPAs within the context of *Noo Raajje* program means full no-take zones where all the habitats and species are completely protected so that the ecosystems can be restored and fisheries can be replenished
4. He then gave an overview of the key principles and the benefits of the MSP Approach by the Waitt Institute highlighting the importance of stakeholder engagement throughout the process and the transparency in decision making
5. Further, a brief explanation of core elements of the MSP Process adapted from the UNESCO global guide for MSP was shared

Ms. Robin Ramdeen, Waitt Institute's Program Manager explained the *Noo Raajje* MSP Timeline

6. She also emphasized on the participatory approach of the MSP Process and highlighted that the members of the MSP Subcommittee will be highly relied upon for guidance on all the work activities
7. She then shared a tentative timeline for the planned activities that will be refined based on the feedback from the MSP Subcommittee members
8. Initially, expecting a biweekly commitment from the MSP Subcommittee members due to the extensive number of activities that are lined up; at different stages throughout the year that commitment could change
9. The MSP Subcommittee members will be making some decisions but ultimately providing technical input and advise to the *Noo Raajje* Governance Committee who will be signing off on things for instance that are shared with the public
10. The next MSP Subcommittee meeting is proposed to be held on **01st March 2021 (Monday)**

11. During April and May the MSP Subcommittee members will spend time on creating and designing MSP Conservation principles, goals and objectives
12. The long-term vision for 2021 is to have a draft Marine Spatial Plan with zones by the end of the year

Q&A and Discussion

The floor was then opened for questions and discussions. Following are the questions/ discussions by the participants and the responses by the *Noo Raajje* team;

Q1: Is there a chance for additional people to volunteer to participate in the MSP Subcommittee?

Robin clarified that this is absolutely possible and emphasized on the importance of having a good MSP Subcommittee well represented by the government as well as the private sector NGOs and relevant stakeholders. If any of the members see that an appropriate stakeholder is missing in the existing MSP Subcommittee, please approach and inform the Program Secretariat (Moosa or Maesha).

Q2: Would there be subcommittee meetings separately such as stand-alone meetings for fisheries component of the MSP?

Robin explained that right now there is no Sustainable Fisheries Subcommittee (one of the five subcommittees of the program) meetings scheduled, however, one can sit on more than one subcommittee of the program. In addition to that, Andy explained that MSP will have to consider fisheries as one of the major components of the MSP process. Therefore, it would be good to receive suggestions and ideas on how to best coordinate the sustainable fisheries pillar of work. Further, Robin explained that Sustainable Fisheries Subcommittee will be tackling non-MSP related fisheries projects and it is safe to say that MSP Subcommittee will discuss about fisheries within this working group as well and ensured that fisheries sector will not be neglected during the MSP Process.

In relation to this, Dr. Mohamed Shiham Adam representing International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF), highlighted that as fisheries is so important for the Maldives there has to be a separate subcommittee to discuss fisheries issues in relation to MSP and for integration of the objectives of both fisheries and MSP pillars of work. Andy clarified that there will be a separate Sustainable Fisheries Subcommittee who will be focusing on the fisheries objectives of the program and the MSP working group will be responsible for reviewing the existing goals and objectives within all of the sectors. It will be the subcommittee leads' responsibility to brief the MSP Subcommittee members on current situation of objectives associated with fisheries, tourism, infrastructures and so forth, so that it can be considered appropriately when the MSP goal setting process is started.

Dr. Shiham further added that there might be instances that fishers or fisher's representative organizations needs to be invited to MSP meetings in order to better understand certain aspects related to fisheries to which Robin agreed and requested to absolutely nominate any stakeholder that the members feel should be included in this MSP Subcommittee.

Ms. Shaahina Ali representing Parley Maldives expressed that fisheries concerns need to be discussed and incorporated before the MSP discussions and highlighted that this is the biggest challenge in planning MPAs. She highlighted that it is important to have a broader participation of resource users, particularly input from fishers to understand why the conflicts are being created. She explained that there is trust issues by the resource users as well as issues in implementing the existing policies. She further emphasized on having the proper representation of resource users in the subcommittee.

Andy highlighted two projects that are underway which could potentially address the issues raised; **(1) Fisheries Characterization** that is being produced by the program partners at EmLab. The objectives of the Fisheries Characterization project are to look at the universe of fisheries within the Maldives from the larger scale to smaller scale to create a summary of fishing activities, areas, create discussions around the market's component and any other salient issues that are around fisheries. The purpose of doing this will be to provide that exact guidance so that when the process of MSP begins the key issues around fisheries, the mandates to be aware of and the areas of conflicts with conducting the MSP as well as administering the fisheries policies are understood. **(2) MSP Compendium** which will be a broader list of references similar to a desktop review of all the commitments, mandates, recommendations that are able to be located freely on the internet or by conducting consultations with experts within the country. The purpose of this is to use it to set precedent for what is already known about MSP related goals and objectives pertaining to the Maldives as well as what is already mandated and some of the key issues that have been identified over time.

Ms. Ilham Atho Mohamed representing the Ministry of Environment contributed to the discussion highlighting that one of the reasons that there is lack of fishers' representation in this subcommittee could be due to the voluntary registration for the subcommittees. She suggests try to identify the right stakeholders and come up with a list of names that the MSP Subcommittee members can then provide input on whether those people are important to be invited for the MSP Subcommittee.

Q3: Could there be a way that the summary of decisions from the subcommittee meetings are shared with key stakeholders as part of the process so that the people can engage when they feel the need to?

Maesha will be keeping the meeting minutes and will be shared with the members of the subcommittee ahead of each of the subsequent meeting. One of the responsibilities of these subcommittee members is to take the key messages in those discussions back to the community and bring the community feedback back into the subcommittee meetings.

Q4: Fisheries is one of the components that will be discussed in details within the MSP Subcommittee. Is there a way that the two groups could convene some meetings together to discuss those issues?

Robin clarified that currently there is no Sustainable Fisheries Subcommittee meetings scheduled but can definitely be discuss it further within the *Noo Raajje* team. Andy reminded that the stakeholder consultations and establishing a baseline of both scientific knowledge and the knowledge of issues and ensuring an accurate understanding of issues associated with MSP is

essential before beginning to draw the lines on a map. He added that there will be a great deal of stakeholder consultations through this process.

Dr. Charles Anderson, an independent researcher in the Maldives commented agreeing with Dr. Shiham, Shaahina and Marie Saleem that this process will not work effectively without significant inputs from fisheries.

Q5: Currently there are more than 50 PAs (Protected Areas) under the Ministry of Environment and 5 under the Ministry of Fisheries - is there any idea at the moment whether these are going to be merged in the future under the MSP and will their management continue to be separated between the two ministries?

Munshidhaa answered ensuring that the MSP Component of the program will certainly take the existing MPAs and management frameworks into account. In terms of management, due to the differences in reasonings for a PA and the mandates of the Ministries the managements will be handled by the responsible ministry but it is possible to find ways to align these management frameworks and consider it as sort of like a network of PAs within this MSP component.

Agreeing with Munshidha, Ilham added that there are PAs established for fisheries purposes, conservation purposes and tourism purposes as well. She explained that there are PA mandates within the Ministry of Tourism thus managed by separate ministries.

Q5: Will you be sharing an update of other ongoing components of the *Noo Raajje* program with members of this subcommittee? It might be helpful to have those updates to make an informed decision

A program update has already been shared with the existing Governance Committee and the Steering Committee members, however as some of the MSP Subcommittee member's participation was not confirmed until a later stage, they may not have received the program updates. These can definitely be shared with the MSP Subcommittee members along with this meeting's minutes.

Robin added that once there are any big results to share such as the Expedition Reports or Legal Framework Assessment Report, they will be disseminated through the Governance Committee and the Steering Committee. If a member is sitting in a subcommittee, they will be part of the Steering Committee by default, and will therefore receive updates on other pillars of the program as well.

Shaahina further expressed her concern that a lot of stakeholders in the fisheries sector will not be very easy to get on a committee and therefore need to reach out and find ways to get their thoughts in another way. Munshidhaa agreed and ensured that it is a priority of MoFMRA to have fishers' groups and industry to be involved in the decision-making process. She also highlighted that it is one of the roles of the MSP Subcommittee to find ways to engage with the stakeholders.

Nistharan added that through the MSP Process, Ocean Use Surveys will be done which will be a way to obtain certain information from the stakeholders that are not present in the MSP Subcommittee.

Moosa raised a point that in the community level engagements, it is important to have some mechanism to communicate in the local language which would be more effective to bring their participation and input in.

Action Points & Closing Remarks by the Chair

1. A second MSP Subcommittee meeting is tentatively scheduled for 1st March 2021
2. The members are requested to nominate any appropriate stakeholder that are missing in the existing MSP Subcommittee and provide the details to the Program Secretariat
3. Members requested to provide the agenda items ahead of the next meeting
4. The program Briefing Note will be shared with the subcommittee members along with the meeting minutes to provide an overall update of the program

Ms. Munshidhaa Ibrahim concluded the meeting by thanking all the participating members and the program partners for attending the meeting.

Annex:

1. Attendees list
2. Briefing Note
3. 1st MSP Subcommittee Meeting Presentation Slides

Noo Raajje Program Secretariat
26/02/2021