

## **One People One Reef (Hofagie Laamle)**

Assisting Yap Outer (Neighboring) Island communities to manage their reefs and reef resources through collaborative planning and sharing knowledge about reefs.

## **Report of the One People One Reef Outer Islands Reef Management Workshop Colonia, Yap**

6/17/16 09:30-17:30

**Workshop purpose:** The purpose of the workshop was to convene outer island representatives to discuss issues related to reefs and fisheries, and ways to enhance subsistence fisheries, protect reefs and improve management. A major goal of the workshop was for the team from Ulithi to present and discuss their management which has been on-going through the One People One Reef project since 2011. This includes the establishment of successful marine managed areas, limits on gear types, and both temporal (time of day) and spatial (area) restrictions. It also includes a successful program, implemented by the local science teams, of data collected on landed fish.

Our combined team of western scientists and local practitioners will be visiting the Yap outer islands beyond Ulithi in the summer of 2017 to assist communities in the development of management plans. This workshop was an initial step towards communicating the goals of that trip to outer island representatives, as well as better understanding their needs. The visits to the outer islands will focus on those communities which invite our teams and are prepared to implement new management to address resource and reef health issues.

After the successes seen on Ulithi Atoll, with all four fishing jurisdictions implementing individualized management, the One People One reef teams have received funding to assist additional communities – with a focus on the Yap outer (neighboring) islands.

Thirty one people attended the workshop, representing twelve outer islands. See attached for a list of attendees.

### **Workshop conveners:**

John Rulmal JR, Falalop Island Ulithi, and One People One Reef

Nicole Crane, California, and One People One Reef

Sabino Sauchomal, Satawal Island and Yap-Community Action Program

Terrence Fong, Falalop Island Ulithi and Yap Legislature

### **The problems:**

Climate change

Changes in reefs and fish abundance

New fishing techniques  
Loss of traditional management  
Lack of effective management in the face of changing fishing practices  
Lack of understanding about impacts of fishing and village effluent/runoff (etc.)  
Youth not being involved enough  
Lack of knowledge and science behind reef changes

Our main goal in the June 2016 Workshop was to discuss important issues, and for participants to provide feedback and actual planning steps – how could the community be mobilized into management action plans? The workshop was set up to answer these five questions:

1. Is management needed? **Why?**
2. **How** would new management be implemented in your communities; what is needed for successful programs?
3. **Who?** Can you think of a specific set of people who could be mobilized to start the process?
4. **When** would communities be ready?
5. **What** is needed?

Led by the team from Ulithi who are implementing new management, attendees were asked to discuss:

- I. What are the issues and management needs
- II. Is support needed? What kind?
- III. How would it work – who is the management team?

#### I. What are the issues and management needs?

There were several issues that were common to each community being represented, and they fell into 7 main categories:

Declines in numbers and size of needed resources, especially fish.

Participants voiced their concerns with declining fish catches. Also clam declines

Population increases – a concern especially voiced by the community of Satawal Island. On Satawal, the population has increased from approximately 450 people twenty years ago to close to 850 today. This places a strain on the limited marine resources. Satawal, like Fais and in some ways like Falalop Ulithi, is a small island with one connected reef surrounding it. It does not have an extensive reef system, such as is found on an Atoll like Woleai, thus the impacts of overfishing are more immediate. In the Yap outer islands, Satawal and Fais are the two islands with the smallest spatial extent of reef to support the communities. Effective management on these non-atoll associated islands is especially critical.

Ecological changes and damage to reefs – Participants noted that the reefs had been changing over the past years, including:

- New corals showing up and growing quickly (including in critical seagrass habitat)
- Crown of thorns seastars
- Reefs are dying – especially in shallows. Bleaching has been noticed.
- Very warm waters, tied to above.
- Damage to the reefs by people. For example trying to get an octopus – breaking the rocks/reef to get them. Also walking on the reefs at low tide
- Anchors causing damage (such as by the large supply ships)

Misconceptions and lack of knowledge about reefs and human impacts. *Participants voiced the need for a better understanding about reefs, and how people's actions cause problems, the nature of those problems, and solutions (and consequences).* Education and outreach–knowledge building–was a common theme. Some examples included:

- People taking 'short cuts' to catch fish – “let's just get the fish”, and ignoring general practices designed to avoid overfishing. One example is the widespread use of spears and lights at night.
- Lack of knowledge about the interconnectedness of the ecosystem. For example, why catching too much of one kind of fish can cause problems, and what the nature of those problems is. And how people can cause problems with too many nutrients entering the reefs – what the nature of that dynamic is.
- The misconception that 'nature will take care of it'. With a lack of understanding about how individuals can impact the reefs and harm them, comes a belief that somehow nature will balance things out, and we don't need to worry.

\*\* Note: There was discussion about the importance of knowledge; knowledge is power and is traditionally treated as such. Participants discussed that if a certain island does not want to dispense of sensitive information but want their young people to learn, how do they accomplish that? How do they share it for the benefit of their communities – sharing within their islands. Some information is general enough to be shared, some will be specific to each island, and not all communities will want information shared widely.

Youth engagement. There were several young men and women at the workshop. The youth as well as the participants at large, all stressed the importance of youth engaging and being involved in reef management, conservation, and education. They said “we want to help the islands”. Some ideas they came up with were:

- Plant corals so more will grow
- Engage in marine conservation
- Gain more knowledge about marine science, management and conservation
- Creating more interest in oceans and management. They were concerned that there is a lack of engagement by youth
- Identification of problems first – leaders and adults talking – will influence the youth

Meeting basic needs: workshop participants emphasized that outer islanders need help focusing on basic needs. These include access to resources such as food and water. Reefs are an important source of food (the main source for protein), and thus managing them is critical. Access to alternative foods and imports is harder in the outer islands, and imported foods often have health consequences such as diabetes and heart disease.

Management is needed, along with education and knowledge building, to address these critical issues.

Management planning may not be adequate: There was a general acknowledgement that management of reefs and resources needs to be strengthened in many communities – stronger management could benefit the people and the reefs. There were several stories about imposed programs where outside consultants came and gave people a plan and then left – often leaving the plans not used (these stories were not as much about reefs as other programs). Participants were supportive of the idea that each community could make their own reef management plans based on knowledge about the reefs and fishing, and what is currently working and not working. They were also supportive of the idea of a team of scientists that would be available to answer questions in the future (to help support the management).

## II. Is support needed? What kind?

Participants unanimously voiced a need for support to address the issues above. Following were some of their ideas for support:

- Teach about the reefs – technical support for outreach and education, and materials to help people better understand reefs, how human communities impact them, and some ways to reduce or address the negative human impacts to improve reef health and productivity. Participants thought it would be important to better understand reef connectivity, reef types, and how different reefs support different fish.
- Technical support to survey the reefs. Participants thought it would be extremely useful to have a team come to survey their reefs to better understand issues at the local reef level, and communicate those findings to the community so they could use that information to inform their management.
- Training, in particular in methods to collect data on the fish they catch to help them better manage them. Also training in how to conduct seafood consumption surveys and other means to gather information from the community about seafood use.

### III. How would it work – who is the management team on each island?

There was unanimous agreement that management planning and implementation, similar in approach to what has been working on Ulithi, would also work in the outer islands. With added information and knowledge, and the technical support to assist, participants believed that new management could work, and would be very important, although implementation would be difficult. Some ideas about *how* it might work at the local level included:

- Have the management team (local) in place and work with leaders
- The leadership needs to be strong. It's a critical part. It is not the outsiders who will decide – the leaders need to engage. Local leadership is critical
- Include youth
- Train the local teams
- The motivation has to come from the communities, not outside
- It will require collaboration; collaboration between community members, local leaders, and the science technical team
- Curriculum: work with the education department to integrate reefs, management, and conservation, along with cultural heritage and tradition, into the education the young people receive
- Regular meetings – make sure people are on task

There was discussion about local perceptions about 'projects'. Projects come in and die out. The government dictates every aspect of them, but there is little follow through and little on-going technical assistance to ensure success. In addition, many projects come in with an (outside) project leader and team who have pre-conceived plans and approaches. Local people are told what to do, and how to do it, often with little consideration for local knowledge or tradition. Many of these projects fail (these include some agriculture projects, water projects etc.). We need to establish with the community that this is different approach – need a new mentality. They need to see it as *their* project, not a plan brought in. The reward is results for reefs and fish, not money.

There was a general consensus that determining who should be involved in the reef management work should be left up to the communities. That traditional approaches and frameworks need to be maintained. There needs to be respect for traditional practices including knowledge of fishing jurisdictions, boundaries, fishing areas etc. Youth should be involved, and one important way to achieve that is to work through the youth groups that are established on many islands. Youth involvement is a fairly new concept for many communities – traditionally youth work their way up to involvement. This is one area that modern times has necessitated a change. If youth are not involved, they often leave their communities, and the knowledge about traditional governance and management is being lost, so it is a critical time to include them in ways not historically common.

Representatives from Satawal said their communities have begun organizing. A small summit group will present the idea to the Chiefs in preparation to begin working on new management planning with the assistance of One People One Reef.

The team from Ulithi shared the successes and challenges they are having with new management of their reefs. They discussed how important leadership was, and strengthening leadership structures. It was not easy, and forced the community to come together in new ways to address this important challenge of reef management. This work, in addition to enhancing the reef resources, has served as an important mechanism to strengthen communities and leadership overall. It has not been easy however and has required a great deal of work 'on the ground' with communities by the local OPOR teams as well as regular visits and information sharing from the science teams.

John Rulmal discussed the process on Falalop: The community held a summit on Falalop. Hawaii and Yap members were included. The summit lasted one week. They discussed issues (not just reef issues) around the themes of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. They came up with directions, and these ideas were forwarded to the COT and the Chiefs. It provided a framework for prioritizing directions. OPOR and marine management was identified as an area to pursue. This helped create the support to move it forward.

### **Conclusion and summary**

Participants shared concerns and issues about reefs and marine resources faced by each of their representative island communities. Some concerns were unique to each island while others were common to many. Most expressed concerns about the impacts of climate change, fewer fish on reefs, and changes in reefs. Participants also voiced concerns with social structures (weakened leadership in some cases, lack of youth involvement, and a loss of traditional knowledge). Participants agreed that their representative communities would benefit from technical support to help develop management plans and train local teams. But they also shared that the most effective way to do that would be to have communities lead and implement the planning, not be handed a plan. Participants were encouraged by the idea of their communities gaining new knowledge about reefs and fish, a validation of traditional management and taboo, and a technical team willing to remain in touch to help. Youth should be involved, and knowledge should be shared. There was an acknowledgement that the 'intangible' results, such as community empowerment through action to protect their resources, was so important to success. For people to see their own results, to have a say in the plan, and be able to call it their own – custom made by them, and for them.

Finally, this sentiment from the Ulithi team that has been working on reef management: Funding cannot drive this process at the local level. It is not about the money, it is about protecting reefs and resources that protect our people, which is why it needs to be our (your) own.

