BAY OF BENGAL LME

Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Project

MFF-BOBLME project cycle management training workshop
Kovalum, India. 4-10 October, 2010

BOBLME-2010-Governance-03

BOBLME and MFF Second Regional Training Course (RTC-2) *"Applying Project Cycle Tools to Support Integrated Coastal Management"*

Background:

The Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project Coordinator and the Mangroves for the Future (MFF) Secretariat met in the beginning of 2010 to discuss collaboration between BOBLME and MFF through joint activities such as workshops and training courses. The need to build regional capacity in project cycle management (PCM) using the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) was identified as a priority. It was therefore decided to conduct a week long training course on "*Applying Project Cycle Tools to Support Integrated Coastal Management*" in Tamil Nadu, India 4-10 October, 2010 to help build capacity to assist BOBLME and MFF focal country participants. This training course built on the first PCM training course organised by the MFF Secretariat in Indonesia in 2008. MFF India hosted this training course together with the Government of India and the MFF Secretariat (Dr Don Macintosh) and MSSRF (Dr V. Selvam, Director Coastal Systems Research) organised the training course, IUCN India was responsible for.

This short summary is a reflection of the training course from a trainers perspective and provides a brief overview of the conduct, some short falls as well as some very positive observations and finally a few recommendations or considerations for future training courses.

About the Training Course

This training course was intended for natural resource managers and project staff engaged in various aspects of coastal zone management. The course, "*Applying Project Cycle Tools to Support Integrated Coastal Management*" encompassed; lectures, participatory exercises and training in practical tools and methods applicable at the field/project level. The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) and Project Cycle Management tools and methods were presented followed by the integration and consideration of the three cross-cutting themes, Gender, Climate Change and Communications, as well as a lecture on the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) and community participation. This was the first project cycle management training that incorporated al three cross-cutting issues.

Cross-cutting issues

- Coastal Climate Change considerations and Disaster Risk Reduction- Mr. Oliver Abrenilla
- Gender considerations – *Ms. Minna Epps*
- Project Communications – *Ms. Minna Epps*

The MFF Secretariat had placed an emphasis on interactive learning involving practical demonstration and use of the tools and methods in real life situations (field examples, case studies, etc.). This was by

far the best application of the tools at the field level with excellent access to the communities and their full participation in the process of developing the "mock" projects. I addition to the MSSRF staff who acted as local resource persons, we had access to Dr. Thamizoli a renowned Indian social anthropologist which helped facilitate community participation.

Country Representation

The BOBLME project identified two individuals from BOBLME countries (non-MFF countries, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Myanmar). Unfortunately, only one participant from Bangladesh and one from Myanmar were able to join the training course. The added benefit off conducting joint training courses with BOBLME is that they increase and extend the MFF network and collaboration with the fisheries sector as the BOBLME representatives almost exclusively comes from the fisheries sector. In total there were nine participating countries which included all of the MFF member countries except for Pakistan (this was ue to complications in obtaining Indian visas). The course was conducted in English, and the majority of the participants spoke excellent English and was capable of following instructions in English. However, there were some participants who had limited English language skills which may have hampered their participation and engagement.

Conduct of RCT-2 and Participants' Knowledge Uptake

Due to unforeseen circumstances two trainers were unable to attend the RTC-2, namely the lead trainer on LFA and PCM Mr. Tim Greenhow and the trainer for Economic Valuation of Coastal Ecosystems, Ms. Saima Baig. However, MFF Coordinator Don Macintosh fulfilled the role of lead trainer for LFA and PCM successfully as well as retaining the original obligations as the MFF Secretariat representative and course organiser. The trainer on Climate change and Disaster Risk Reduction, Mr. Oliver Abrenilla was also delayed because of VISA complications and was not able to join RTC-2 until the third day. The implications of the above were that the initial schedule had to be amended and changes were made accordingly.

Limitations:

As mentioned above, there were less resource personnel available to conduct the training which meant that existing resource persons had to play multiple roles and in some cases may have not only exerted more pressure but also diverted the attention away from original mission/responsibilities. Nonetheless, the course ran very smoothly. The local logistical arrangements were mediocre and several complaints were received from the participants not being informed of the arrangements nor having an agenda to follow. The trainers/resources persons were not briefed on the arrangements for e.g. meals and transportation rendering it difficult to guide the projects groups on how much time they had for each activity, especially in the field as we were unaware of the arrangements. However, the field level group exercises were one of the best that MFF had experienced in its three years of operation. This further demonstrates the importance of planning but more so the site section for projects which in this case was optimal. Although, one would have to bear in min administrative constraints such as obtaining VISAs which in this case limited the participation of some countries.

Integration of Cross-cutting issues

This was the first training curse to include gender considerations and project communications and to some extent Climate Change considerations as it had previously been incorporated as a thematic module rather than steps for integrating it into the project cycle. All cross-cutting issues and lectures were very well received by the participants but was still not adequately integrated into the LFA and the project matrix and subsequently lacking in the monitoring and evaluation systems. Most of the participants had been exposed to climate change issues and its implications but few had experience of integrating these considerations into the project cycle and despite completing the climate change form/template it still did not relate back to the project design. Apart from a few participants LFA as a concept was new to the participants and they had never applied it.

Gender for the most art was a novel subject and some participants struggled with the various concepts and definitions. As climate change has been on the agenda and in the public eye for some years, gender aspects are still to enter this sphere/arena before it can be mainstreamed. As with most issues you are trying to advocate for (in this case gender equality which is the ultimate goal) will need significant awareness raising (increased understanding at all levels) before it can be mainstreamed into the project cycle.

Project communications, however, was somewhat easier to integrate because the participants could relate to better than for example gender. Despite the understanding and appreciation for the importance of project communications, it was still not reflected in the group project proposals and often with no allocated budget or resources for project communications, despite stressing the fact that nearly 65 percent of all development projects fail because of inadequate or complete lack of communications. The project groups had addressed or included gender into their respective projects but purely as a means of activities to empower women or ensuring equal amount of numbers/representatives etc. No project group managed to fully integrate gender considerations despite practice on conducting a gender analysis as part of the overall situation analysis and no gender sensitive indicators were developed/included in the monitoring and evaluation. For the most part, all the cross-cutting were not incorporated into the LFA.

Other observation/remarks

The group dynamics was excellent and exceeded that of previous training courses. A lot of peer-to-peer learning was observed and all the participants actively engaged in practical exercises and demonstrated great aptitude for learning. The different countries and culture have distinct different ways of interacting and learning and some are more familiar and comfortable with interactive learning. Further, there was a great demand and quest for follow up training courses tailored to the national needs and context.

Suggestions for future courses:

- Set the scene with an ice-breaker and follow up with team building exercises once before dividing into groups and one when divided into groups.
- More practical exercises in classroom prior to the field work.

- Move away from thematic modules and dedicate one whole day to each of the cross-cutting issues (Climate Change, Gender and Communications)
- Introduce Social Science research methodology (KI, FG and SQ) as part of the SLA and community participation as many participants had not been involved with first hand data collection (community profile, situation analysis, Material Style of Life etc). Even if this is not relevant or applicable to their daily work it will allow for an appreciation of the necessary data requirements and time needed as well as being able to adequately allocate resources to incorporate these dimensions.
- The group dynamics often changes with the size of the group, it would be wise to limit the number of participants to approximately 30 given the number of resource persons and trainers and facilitators.
- All participants (even those reluctant at first) appreciated the Video camera exercise which required each participant to tell their story (project idea and interventions) in the form of *Issue, Problem and Solution* in 60 seconds. This enabled participants not only to practice speaking on camera, but more importantly to synthesize and give a synopsis of their project in a non-technical and simple language to a general audience forcing them to really think about the "so what?" and Why should I care? Allowing participants to better provide a relevant context and effectively communicate what their project is really about and who is it helping.
- It would further be good to introduce other basic and timely concepts such as PES and REDD (could bring in a resources person particularly on REDD+) as additional tools.
- More time should be allocated to feedback and follow up. Hence after the initial feedback during presentation session and certification ceremony, an additional day/morning should be added to retrospectively alter the projects so that they get an appreciation for how an "ideal" project should look like. This would make the feedback more constructive and the learning greater.
- Finally, it would be worth creating a **Participants' Network** or **alumni** of all MFF training courses.