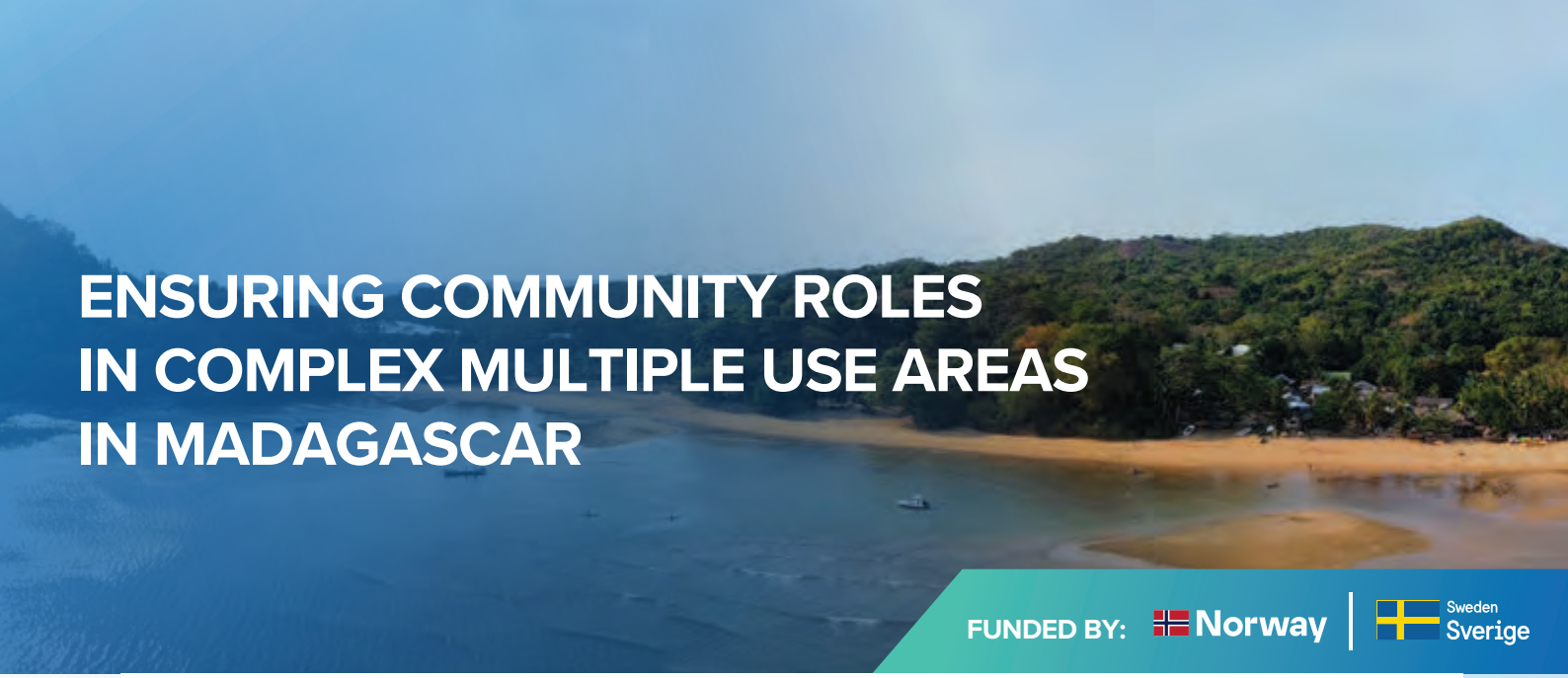

ENSURING COMMUNITY ROLES IN COMPLEX MULTIPLE USE AREAS IN MADAGASCAR

FUNDED BY: Norway | Sweden Sverige

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

CRC COASTAL RESOURCES CENTER

- **Innovator:** University of Rhode Island (URI)
- **Incubation date:** February 2023 to December 2024
- **Beneficiary country:** Madagascar
- **Financial support:** USD 248,255
- **Category:** Academe

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Overview

The University of Rhode Island, Coastal Resources Center, has developed an innovative approach to Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in Madagascar, prioritizing community engagement and empowerment. Their initiative focuses on building the capacity of coastal communities to actively participate in the MSP process, ensuring their voices are heard in the planning and management of marine resources. This approach not only promotes equitable and inclusive decision-making but also enhances the effectiveness of marine conservation efforts. By integrating community perspectives and knowledge into the MSP framework, the project aims to create a sustainable balance between marine conservation, economic development, and community well-being.

The Challenge

Madagascar, a biodiversity hotspot, relies heavily on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) for conservation. However, only 1-2% of Madagascar's EEZ is under formal MPA protection, with most coastal areas being multiple-use zones. Weak law enforcement, competing uses, and ineffective management limit effective marine biodiversity conservation. There's an urgent need to empower communities and integrate them into the MSP framework to enhance conservation and ensure equitable benefits.

The Solution

URI's MSP framework tackled these challenges through three interconnected outcomes. First, it focused on community engagement by empowering coastal communities to actively participate in MSP consultations, ensuring their rights, knowledge, and priorities were at the core of decision-making processes. Second, the framework established an operational MSP for Nosy Be, incorporating legal frameworks, participatory mapping, and spatial planning tools to mediate intersectoral conflicts and guide the sustainable use of marine resources. Lastly, it enhanced marine conservation by improving the effectiveness of MPAs and LMMAs, fostering socio-economic benefits, and promoting biodiversity conservation through coordinated management efforts.

SDG14 Targets:

Other relevant SDGs:

Why this matters

This locally adapted MSP approach bridges the gap between conservation goals and community needs. By positioning communities as stewards of marine resources, the innovation supports sustainable practices that align with Madagascar's national blue economy strategies, offering a replicable model for other regions. This project also contributes directly to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 14.5 (marine conservation).

Results & impact

The project successfully mobilized community associations in Nosy Be, including LMMAs, fisher associations, women's groups, and youth, to form a learning network for Marine Spatial Planning (MSP). Competency-based training programs were conducted, empowering communities with the skills and knowledge to engage in MSP processes, covering governance, stakeholder engagement, management, planning, communication, and advocacy. As a result, community representatives actively contribute to the MSP Steering Committee, providing feedback and ensuring the MSP process is inclusive and responsive to local needs. The local project team has been invited to other parts of Madagascar and the region to share their experiences and insights on replicating the project's success.

To mark the closing of the innovation project, the MSP was successfully turned over in November 2024 to the local authorities and communities of Nosy Be. The 15-year strategic document will guide the sustainable use of marine resources in the region, setting priorities for harmonizing environmental conservation, economic development, and community welfare.

Replicate and scale up

The project plans to replicate its approach by extending the Nosy Be MSP model to other regions, starting with the Menabe region. They will leverage existing networks, such as MIHARI and BATAN communities of practice, for knowledge transfer and capacity building. The scaling plan also includes developing user-friendly tools and software for participatory mapping and integrating economic partnerships between the private sector and local communities. The team is also considering preparing a toolkit to aid in the replication of the project's success elsewhere.

Lessons Learned

URI highlighted the importance of addressing social sustainability concerns by empowering communities and ensuring their active involvement in the MSP process. This includes providing clear explanations, building community confidence, and strengthening community cohesion. Additionally, the project has emphasized the need to recognize and value all existing data and provide partners with training in data management.

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