

Experiences and added value of participatory governance assessments of protected areas in Bangladesh, Laos and the Philippines

Assessment sites

Bangladesh: Sundarbans Mangrove Forest



Location & ecosystem type	Area	Protection status	Conservation / ecosystem service value	Lead agency	People and livelihoods
World's largest continuous mangrove forest located within a massive river delta system between India and Bangladesh	601,700 ha (sanctuaries 317,950 ha, reserved forest 283,750 ha)	UNESCO World Heritage Site, Ramsar Site, 3 national Wildlife Sanctuaries, 3 national Dolphin Sanctuaries, Reserved forest	Crucial role as buffer between land and sea as well as breeding and nursery ground for commercially important fish species, supporting food security	Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD)	No permanent settlements inside the protected area; however a large number of people living in its periphery depend on the mangrove ecosystem for their livelihoods and harvest non-timber forest products and aquatic resources

Lao PDR: Hin Nam No National Protected Area



Large, dissected karst plateau with 31% forested land, wetland, bare rocks and caves located in central Lao PDR	82,000 ha (boundary under revision)	Tentatively listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is designated as National Protected Area (NPA)	Highly biodiverse flora and fauna, especially primate as well as crucial function in water regulating and provisioning services	Agriculture and Forestry Department, Khammouane Province / District Co-management committee (multi-stakeholder body)	No permanent settlements inside the protected area; but an estimated beneficiary group of about 10,000 people in 20 villages around the area rely on it for collecting non-timber forest products for their livelihoods
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Philippines: Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary



Natural freshwater wetland with seven major habitat types located in North-eastern Mindanao, the Philippines	19,336 ha (proposed expansion to 40,943 ha)	Ramsar Site and declared as a protected area under the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act	Great ecological importance and functions as buffer against floods	Protected Area Management Board, a multi-stakeholder body (including local government and indigenous peoples representatives)	Home to 18,000 Manobo indigenous people; 70% of the marsh's population are dependent on the natural resources for sustaining their livelihoods
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- The Sundarbans are the largest continuous mangrove forest of the world © GIZ BD/Parbat Kaiser
- Map of the Sundarbans mangrove forest in Bangladesh © GIZ BD/Hassan Tahir
- Hin Nam No is designated as a National Protected Area and has a highly biodiverse flora and fauna © GIZ Laos/HNN
- Map of Hin Nam No National Protected Area, Lao PDR © GIZ Laos/HNN
- Floating houses of the Agusan Marsh in Lake Pangasinan, Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary © GIZ PH/COSERAM
- Map of the Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary showing the Ancestral Domain Claims and the Proclaimed Protected Area © GIZ PH/COSERAM

Good governance of protected areas



Governance is defined as "the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power and responsibilities are exercised, how decisions are taken and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say" (IUCN 2013). By improving governance, the management of protected areas becomes more effective and equitable.



To be able to assess "good governance" for protected areas, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) identified a set of 14 specific good governance principles based on the five broad good governance principles and 40 key considerations formulated by IUCN (see IUCN's Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines No. 20 on Governance of Protected Areas).

7. Good explanation and paraphrasing of governance principles in locally used terms is essential not to get lost in translation © GIZ BD/Carina van Weelden

8. Guided discussions on good governance principles among relevant stakeholders helps to create common understanding of what is behind the good governance principles; here during a stakeholder workshop in Lao PDR © GIZ Laos/HNN

Broad principles	Specific principles
Legitimacy	1. Recognition of all relevant actors and mutual respect between them
	2. Effective participation of relevant actors in decision-making
	3. Recognition and respect for the rights of all relevant actors
	4. Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for actions affecting property rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities
Fairness	5. Fair and effective enforcement of laws and regulations
	6. Effective and fair processes for dispute resolution
	7. Effective measures to mitigate any negative impacts , especially on poor people
	8. Equitable sharing of benefits according to criteria agreed by relevant actors
Accountability	9. Transparency supported by timely access to relevant information
	10. Accountability for fulfilling responsibilities, other actions and inactions
Performance	11. Achieving conservation objectives as planned
	12. Developing and following a strategic vision and plan grounded in agreed values
Direction	13. An adaptive management approach informed by regular monitoring and learning
	14. Effective coordination with plans and policies of other sectors and levels and collaboration between actors

Table: 14 Good Governance Principles of Protected Areas

Piloting the governance assessment methodology



Based on the IUCN Guidelines, specific methodologies for conducting site-level governance assessments have been developed. Four SNRD member projects took part in this process by supporting methodology development and serving as pilot sites. The project in Lao PDR developed a tailor-made assessment and training methodology with support of a local NGO and piloted it in 2014, in 2017 the projects in Bangladesh and the Philippines piloted an assessment methodology which is being developed in cooperation with IIED and the Sector Programme Implementing the CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity).

Each pilot site looked at a customised sub-set of governance principles according to its specific motivation to conduct a governance assessment.



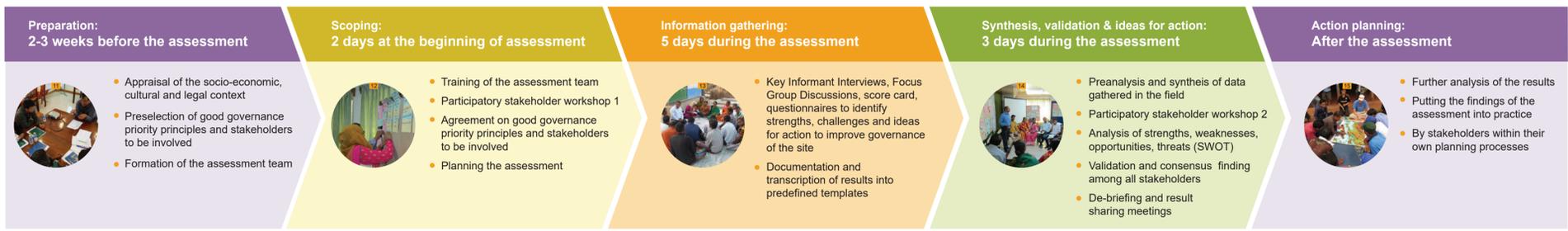
9. Focus Group Discussions with relevant protected area stakeholders are imperative in generating appropriate actions towards conservation and the sustainable use of resources © GIZ PH/COSERAM
10. Participatory workshop with government stakeholders in Lao PDR © GIZ Laos/HNN

Site	Key objectives for conducting a governance assessment
Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing guidance on how to modify the currently practiced co-management approach in order to make it more functional Establishing a baseline as reference for the Forest Department and interventions under other agencies Identifying areas for institutional and capacity development of the Forest Department and major stakeholders Identifying entry-points to enhance coordination among relevant stakeholders
Lao PDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising awareness about governance issues and options among stakeholders Enhancing the understanding of and promoting a meaningful participatory or co-management approach Establishing a basis for an effective partnership between protected area management and local communities through a joint self-assessment Creating a baseline against which progress can be monitored
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating baselines against which progress can be monitored Generating ideas for action, which are accepted and owned by all stakeholders Demonstrating the methodology for potential replication in other PAs

Table: Key objectives of the three pilot sites for conducting a governance assessment

Governance assessment methodology – steps in the process

For every site, the time and resources committed to the process had to be tailored to suit the local context. In Lao PDR, the assessment process was partly different compared to Bangladesh and the Philippines, as the methodology had been specifically developed for the site. For all sites, the assessment steps can be roughly summarised as below:



11. Preparing the assessment and forming the team © GIZ Laos / HNN

12. Analysing stakeholders' interests and influence over decision-making © GIZ BD/Carina van Weelden

13. Focus group discussions at village level © GIZ BD/Cemir Ide

14. Validation of assessment results through a representative group of all stakeholders involved in the assessment process © GIZ BD/IED/PH Franks

15. Planning next steps to put the results of the assessment into practice © GIZ Laos/HNN

Strengths and challenges in current protected area governance identified through the assessments (examples)

	Strengths	Challenges
Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The establishment of co-management structures is an important step in ensuring the participation of villagers in decision making processes After the introduction of the Spatial monitoring and reporting tool (SMART) by the Forest Department forest law enforcement has been perceived as fairer and more accountable by villagers The Forest Department informs resource users how and when to apply for natural resource use permits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The co-management structures are not yet fully functional in the sense that they enable effective participation of resource users in the co-management structures; and their influence in decision making about the Sundarbans and its resources remains weak Low accountability and transparency result in irregularities during forest law enforcement and administration of resource use permits Intra- and inter-government agency cooperation and coordination is insufficiently taking place. This hampers effective conservation and management of the Sundarbans
Lao PDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laws and regulations as well as local rules for natural resource management exist for the protected area; and guardian villages / village rangers are willing to be involved in its management The protected area is included in relevant socio-economic development plans The government of Lao PDR is highly committed to improve overall governance standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional weaknesses in terms of lack of capacity, skills and resources, including lack of interagency coordination and cooperation combined with ambivalent jurisdictions and unclear responsibilities and roles across sectors and scales Unclear zonation of management units (villages) and unclear delegation of authority and governance structures Lack of ownership, culture of cooperation, involvement and understanding among the key stakeholders including women, leading to failure of projects for balancing biodiversity and livelihoods
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of local (indigenous) conservation groups Representation of stakeholders (in theory) in the Protected Area Management Board Localized (and customary) conflict resolution mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limitations of local conservation groups in law enforcement Members of the Protected Area Management Board send alternates without decision-making power to meetings Land disputes regarding overlapping titles in and around the protected area

Benefits from the assessment process itself



- Being a participatory process, in which the stakeholders themselves conduct a self-assessment, reflections on good governance are triggered, thereby initiating change
- External facilitation of the self-reflection helps bring issues to light and makes it easier for stakeholders to accept the presented results
- Training is part of the assessment, therefore facilitators and documenters are capacitated to act as replicators. In Lao PDR the assessment resulted in a "training manual"
- The assessment brings different stakeholders together, enhancing mutual understanding and supporting conflict resolution, as observed in Bangladesh and the Philippines
- Stakeholders, including the community level, generate concrete ideas for action which have the potential to improve the governance situation and are often easy to implement
- Governance assessment tools and successes can be scaled-up or replicated in other protected areas. In the Philippines, replications of the assessment, based on the learnings from Agusan Marsh, are under preparation
- Strategic planning becomes more governance-sensitive when priorities are pointedly set on addressing weaknesses of the governance system from the onset, as in the case of Lao PDR
- Annual monitoring of system performance against good governance principles ensures inclusive and equitable institutional development, thereby serving as a safeguard, as in the case of Lao PDR

19. Separate women's group discussions in village cluster workshops © GIZ Laos/HNN

20. Key informant interviews © GIZ BD/Cemir Ide

Benefits from the actions implemented as a follow-up of the assessment

Given the greater time window to implement actions based on assessment results, the benefits below are drawn from the assessment in Lao PDR conducted in 2014. In comparison, the other assessment sites have only recently started following up with action planning.



- Ownership and empowerment: Delegation of law enforcement authority to villagers, ensuring ownership, accountability and rapid response
- Inclusivity and participation: Delegation of authority to the local communities including women and Indigenous Peoples, who are sensitized about co-management and conservation, empowerment and motivated for action
- Rights and access: Due to the participatory zonation of villages and establishment of rules based on customary rights and practices, conducted in the wake of the assessment, local people are clear about resource and user rights and follow the rules established for different zones of the protected area
- Bottom-up piloting: Decentralized governance with inclusion of local knowledge has led to better relations between the local communities and authorities. Interlinked committees from village to district level increase accountability in the system and advocacy on community-level
- Conflict-resolution: Overlapping titles in and around the protected area was reaffirmed as a key source of potentially violent conflict by all stakeholder groups. This finding revived a dialogue process amongst government agencies and local governments
- Further, conflict resolution mechanisms are created through institutionalization of co-management platforms at different levels

21. Rituals are part of the Manobo knowledge systems and practices. Recognizing these can contribute to more effective biodiversity conservation © GIZ PH/COSERAM
22. Increased ownership and empowerment of local communities can help preserve unique natural habitats and culturally important sites © GIZ Laos/HNN/Lucas Wirt