

Building and Enhancing Sectoral and Cross-sectoral Capacity to Support Sustainable Resource Use and Biodiversity Conservation in Marine Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (Cross-sectoral Project)

Policy Framework: Cross-sectoral ABNJ Management

Introduction

The complex and varied threats to marine areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) demand an integrated, coordinated management approach involving all relevant actors. Proven strategies, like cross-sectoral management and governance, support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in these areas.

The Common Oceans [Cross-sectoral Project](#) aims to facilitate this by:

- Developing a training program for national and regional officials in the Southeast Pacific and Pacific Islands regions to enhance capacity for cross-sectoral cooperation on ABNJ issues.
- Co-designing a policy and competency framework for cross-sectoral ABNJ governance with regional and national stakeholders. This framework will guide project activities, support professionals in the field, and help formulate performance objectives for personnel involved in ABNJ management.

This policy framework, which builds on concepts such as integrated ocean and coastal management (ICOM), ecosystem-based management (EBM), and marine spatial planning (MSP), aims to harmonize the goals of all sectors active in ABNJ. In the context of the new Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction ([BBNJ Agreement](#)), the primary goal is the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity, supported by clear rules regarding incentives, penalties, and implementation procedures.

Goals

ICOM, EBM, and MSP all share goals for the sustainable use and protection of ocean ecosystems that could apply to ABNJ. These goals include:

- Fostering sustainable development while maintaining biodiversity
- Balancing protection and production for prosperity
- Reducing conflicts among ocean users
- Supporting sustainable, safe, secure, efficient, and productive ocean uses
- Addressing cumulative impacts
- Promoting adaptive management
- Adopting integrated assessment and management frameworks
- Developing ocean solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss

Principles

ICOM, EBM, and MSP also share common principles, including those emanating from UN General Assembly resolutions on ocean governance. The BBNJ Agreement identifies principles specific to ABNJ, such as the common heritage of humankind and freedom of marine scientific research, together with other freedoms of the high seas, among others listed in Article 7 of the Agreement.

Rules and Procedures: Planning and Implementation Approaches

Effective integrated and collaborative approaches proven within national marine areas can be adapted for ABNJ governance, focusing on:

- Ecosystem-based management: Conserving ecosystems and managing cumulative impacts.
- Goal setting and capacity building: Developing regional/national goals for cross-sectoral management and building stakeholder capacity.
- Conflict reduction: Establishing equitable benefits among stakeholders.
- Integrated assessment: Considering social-ecological linkages and managing at appropriate scales, including linkages to EEZ management.
- Balancing priorities: Fostering sustainable use for intergenerational benefits.
- Global institutional arrangements: Fostering international collaboration for science-based solutions via the BBNJ Agreement framework.
- Knowledge exchange: Establishing effective mechanisms for well-informed decision-making.
- Leveraging potential: Promoting ocean-based solutions for climate change and biodiversity loss.

Regional and National Contexts

For the framework to be viable, its integrated implementation must accommodate the unique socio-economic, cultural, and environmental contexts of the Project regions and countries. This diversity necessitates a more nuanced, cross-sectoral management approach that includes explicit gender considerations in all analyses.