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SocMonitor

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Editors: Maria Pena and Mary Allen

Message from our new Global SocMon Coordinator

By Mary Allen

Hello, SocMon colleagues! Thank you for welcoming me into the SocMon network. I am excited and honoured to work with you all and to carry on the role of Global Coordinator.

As I transition into this position, I want to acknowledge a couple of SocMon All-Stars: Peter Edwards, thank you for your leadership and dedication over the years. I'm still learning but I will do my best to continue where you left off and carry SocMon forward. Maria Pena, thank you for being our rock and keeping the SocMon family together during this time of change and extraordinary challenges.

And to all of the regional coordinators (Supin Wongbusarakum, Mike Pido, Vineeta Hoon, Rodrigo Pereira Medeiros, and Arie Sanders), thank you for remaining active and engaged. Now, more than ever, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to our SocMon mission to help coastal managers better understand and incorporate socioeconomics into coastal management programs.

About Me

I assumed this role in January 2020 when I joined NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program as the new socioeconomics coordinator and social scientist. My background is interdisciplinary with a Ph.D. in Coastal Resources Management (human dimensions focus) from East Carolina University (North Carolina), a M.S. in Marine Resources Management and a B.S. in Marine Biology from Texas A&M University at Galveston (Texas). My research has examined a variety of human dimensions (social values, attitudes, norms, recreation specialization, conflict, etc.) and topics such as the proceduarl justice of MPAs and decision-making, impacts of MPAs on fishing communities, social carrying capacity of recreation/tourism, user displacement and resource substitution, ecosystem services and acceptable trade-offs between use and protection of the environment.

Overall, I strive to see that the people-side (social, economic, cultural, etc.) is recognized, appreciated, and better integrated with the biophysical realm, at all levels. So, I am thrilled to be part of a community who shares this same goal. While understanding the ecosystem is important, it is equally, if not more important to understand the people who use and benefit from these ecosystems and resources. I know that the SocMon community gets this. And I know that most others will agree that social science and integration are needed. But when it comes to actually following through, social science and integration efforts still tend to be ignored, dismissed, or out-prioritized. A change in paradigms is never easy and takes time, but we are making progress.

Reflect and look forward

As I look back, I am proud of your feats and triumphs. Since 2003, SocMon has excelled by expanding socioeconomic monitoring across the world's coral

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reefs - providing social science training, developing products and tools for monitoriing and management assistance, being involved with communities to address local management issues. There are many exciting accomplishments to celebrate and it is time we share those stories – put ourselves out there and be proud ofWe are truly at a turning point. This is a time for us to reflect on our successes and weaknesses, come together to share our success stories, and for us to build upon our mission and reclaim our shared purpose. We face new and old challenges, such as COVID-19 and funding to sustain our socioeconomic monitoring efforts. Yet, it is often said that "innovation arises from adversity." If that's true, we're in for some bright times ahead. We can overcome these challenges by expanding our network with new opportunities for collaboration and partnership. We can take advantage of technology to develop innovative methods for monitoring, to diversify tools/products, and to enhance SocMon's visibility. We can explore new issues arising from the pandemic, such as adaptation or changes in behaviour, seafood markets, fisheries, ecosystem health, etc.

I hope to bring a "fresh look" to SocMon, continuing all the great work that's been done, but also finding new and creative ways to improve SocMon. Looking forward to new beginnings!

Mary E. Allen

Outgoing Global SocMon Coordinator's reflections

By Peter Edwards

Hello my SocMon and SEM-Pasifika SocMon Friends!

These are indeed strange times. I wish for everyone health and sanity during this global pandemic. As many of you might be aware, I no longer serve as the Global SocMon Coordinator since I have left NOAA Coral Reef Conservation for another job. My departure was bittersweet as it is no secret that SocMon and the engagement in capacity building, meeting with partners all over the world was one of the highlights of my time at NOAA. I am still working in the environmental conservation field although my scope has broadened beyond coastal and tropical ecosystems.

I wanted to leave a few words of encouragement with you all. Prior to the pandemic, SocMon was struggling to maintain its relevance. This is due to a number of factors which will be highlighted in other documents. However one of the key stumbling blocks was lack of funding support and not enough interest from some of the regions. Notably many of us are busy and have other roles to fulfill but we need to be ready to re-energize our efforts. This covid crisis has put an even sharper focus on the need for sound social science monitoring information to track the impact of the global disruption in our coastal and other nature-based communities. In some of our regions we are lucky to have previous baseline information. There is an opportunity to use the tools at our disposal to assist with gathering critical information that can be used to support alternative livelihood strategies in places heavily dependent on tourism that may have been badly affected. The potential increased reliance on subsistence fishing and harvesting may result in additional pressures on the coastal ecosystems. We need to be able to collect information about how people are adjusting during these times and perhaps this information can be used to find solutions that will protect and preserve the people as well and the coastal environments.

We had a strategic plan which is due for updating. We still have a lot of unfinished business to complete including building new partnerships that will allow us to diversify our funding support since NOAA may be unable to continue with regular and long term support for the work we do. We need to build new relationships with other international partners such as regional development banks, the World Bank, GEF, strengthening our relationship with ICRI and GCRMN

Global are keys to our success. Perhaps a real look at the philanthropic space could provide some dividends. It took a pandemic for some of our more biophysically focused colleagues to come to the realization that conserving these environments matter to people. In fact some of them have become more vocal champions for making the link between healthy ecosystems and healthy societies. We must leverage this moment to ensure the socioeconomic monitoring and other social science tools are integrated into coastal and coral reef management.

Good luck to you all.

Peter. E.T. Edwards (PhD)

Ocean debris, lockdown, and the Blue Economy

By Vineeta Hoon

Marine debris is now recognized to be a significant resource management issue around the world. Plastics in particular have come to the forefront, as the reality of its reach to the most remote atolls and depths of the oceans are documented, along with the environmental impacts of a material that breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces and its component chemicals, never leaving the ecosystem.

So, when we selected Minicoy Island for a repeat SocMon study in 2019-2020 to compare changes that have taken place since the 2003-2004 study, we factored in marine debris as a variable to be considered for management action. Data were collected utilizing a modified version of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Marine Debris Shoreline Survey Field Guide (Opfer et al. 2012).

This approach utilizes a transect method to collect debris along a section of shoreline, segregate types of waste, and then classify and quantify (count and weigh) the material. A study of waste provides insight into the socioeconomic aspects of the island community, as by doing both a waste analysis and its brand analysis, it tells a story of a consumerist lifestyle. Looking at changes in dietary patterns and the brands that have made inroads into the island economy show that the resident community is quite affluent. At the same time it offers an opportunity to inform the brands about what their packaging is doing to the fragile coral reef ecosystem. This could lead companies to rethink their packaging materials.

The data also served to empower the community, resource managers, and government leaders to take appropriate actions. One of the volunteers who took part in the data collection and analysis was so affected by the findings that she motivated her village Sadivalu to dispose waste responsibly and try to become plastic free. As school uniforms are disposed of every year, she had the novel idea of re-purposing the uniforms to make cloth carry bags, ensuring that these uniforms did not add to the waste on the island.

Covid-19 lockdown and the Blue Economy

The Covid-19 lockdown has had some impact on the way we work. In March, I traveled to Minicoy to address gaps in and complete data collection for the repeat SocMon study and got locked down there for 70 days. The SocMon site coordinator for Bangladesh, who had gone to Bali in March this year to learn about coral propagation, got stuck there for three months. We both had a very positive attitude towards the lockdown, as it helped us assimilate into island life.

After returning to our home base, we continue to try and keep SocMon relevant by reaching out to different networks. On 2nd August, we gave a presentation on SocMon contributions to coral reef

management and pitched for it to be included in the Blue Economy Initiative: Blue Carbon Asset management projects being developed by the Core Carbon X solutions think tank.

SocMon methodology training in Municipality of Magsaysay

By Michael Pido, Marissa Pontillas and Eva Marie Ponce de Leon

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Palawan State University (PSU) conducted the *Training on Socioeconomic Monitoring (SocMon) Methodology in the Municipality of Magsaysay* in Palawan Province, Philippines from 20-29 January 2020. The training was made possible through the NFWF-funded *"Coordination of a Global Socio-economic Monitoring Initiative for Coastal Management III* (SocMon Global III)" project by a sub-grant provided the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies at The University of the West Indies, Barbados. The training is part of one project activity to develop capacity in SocMon.

Two major capacity building activities were undertaken as part of this sub-grant: (1) training of PSU SocMon Team at its PSU Cuyo Campus using the SocMon methodology; and (2) actual SocMon assessment by PSU SocMon Team and community members at Rizal Village (locally called as *Barangay*) in the above municipality (equivalent to a town or a district). The key training objectives were: (1) to provide the trainees with the background and methodological procedures of SocMon; and (2) to apply the SocMon methodology in the assessment of Barangay Rizal.

Some 30 participants attended the training. These largely consisted of academics from PSU-Cuyo and some representatives of the municipalities of Cuyo and Magsaysay, and Barangay Council Members of Rizal Village. Dr. Michael Pido (SocMon Regional Coordinator for South East Asia), Professor Marissa Pontillas (SocMon Survey Specialist) and Associate Professor Eva Marie Ponce de Leon (SocMon Data Analyst) - all from PSU Main Campus in Puerto Princesa City - served as SocMon trainers. They were assisted by two faculty members from the College of Teacher Education: Ms. Eirika Meregillano and Ms. Gianina Decano. The occasion was graced by top political leaders of Magsaysay and Dr. Maria Elena Sadang, PSU Cuyo Campus Director.

Over the one-week training period, a trained pool of users of the SocMon methodology and its field application was developed; primary data were collected/generated at Barangay Rizal SocMon study site; and commitments were obtained from institutional partners to implement SocMon. At present, the collected data are being processed and/or analyzed for report writing. Eventually, the generated data will be submitted to the Global SocMon database for uptake.

SocMon website migration and update coming

By Maria Pena

The Global SocMon website will be migrated from our original host, WorldFish, to another host towards the end of 2020-early 2021. In the meantime, functionality of the website will be significantly reduced. Please bear with us during this time. For information on the global initiative, please contact Dr. Mary Allen at mary.allen@noaa.gov.

We look forward to sharing a new revamped website with you, our global audience, in the not-too-distant future.

Global SocMon would like to extend our sincere thanks to WorldFish for graciously hosting and maintaining the SocMon website for many years.