



EXPLORING CO-MANAGEMENT IN TANAPAG VILLAGE, SAIPAN, CNMI
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Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance

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From July 2012 through July 2014, a social marketing campaign was designed and implemented by Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance with technical assistance by Rare and financial assistance from Micronesia Conservation Trust to increase knowledge of the rules and regulations of the Managaha Marine Conservation Area (MMCA). The MMCA had been designated a marine protected area in 2000. The Managaha Pride Campaign began with training on Rare's Theory of Change as a way to incorporate strategies to implement a social marketing campaign to bring about behavior change amongst a target audience to achieve a specific conservation result. In order to reduce the threat of poaching and maintain overall fish biomass and parrotfish biomass at the Managaha Marine Conservation Area (MMCA), the Managaha Pride Campaign utilized social marketing strategies to: 1) increase the reporting of violations; 2) increase conversations between and knowledge among community members about the historical, cultural, economic, and biological significance of the MMCA, and 3) increase community support for the fishing prohibition at the sanctuary. Following the end of the island-wide campaign (Phase 1), a more focused effort was planned that would target the village of Tanapag (Phase 2).

With the Phase 1 strategy implemented by the Managaha Pride Campaign to work with the larger community to influence fisher behavior at the MMCA, Phase 2 is an opportunity to go deeper with the Tanapag village to address poaching threats at the site by exploring the concept of co-management and its benefits. An increase in community involvement with village resource management issues was seen as a way to also increase pressure for the managing agency (CNMI Division of Fish & Wildlife) to implement the existing management plan for the MMCA, drawn up since 2005.

With a population of 829 and 270 households, per the 2010 CNMI population census, Tanapag village is a close-knit fishing community within close proximity to the Managaha Marine Conservation Area. Prior to its designation as a marine protected area, the MMCA was a known fishing ground historically for the Tanapag community. Without any input from this important stakeholder group, the site was designated as a marine protected area. As a result, many of the fishermen from the community continue to this day to disregard the rules of the sanctuary. Previous interviews have revealed that the site was not only a historical fishing ground, but also training grounds for village youth. As a community, Tanapag has faced various challenges, including relatively high rates of poverty, much-publicized crystal methamphetamine use, and health issues which include high rates of non-communicable diseases (including cancer and diabetes), infant mortality, maternal morbidity and fetal deaths. In the 1990's a high profile movement formed to successfully pressure the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to address PCB-contaminated soil, thought to be a major contributing factor to the village's health problems.

It is no wonder that with these various challenges facing them, villagers do not assign much weight to the importance of following the regulations governing the nearby sanctuary.

MINA's project seeks to engage the community in ways that would lead to a sense of increased ownership of the resources, to the extent feasible under CNMI law, of the Tanapag lagoon through co-management activities such as resource monitoring and the establishment of a village fishery committee. One desired outcome is a reduction in the poaching activities by members of this community at the sanctuary. More importantly, it is intended that these activities would encourage community cohesion that could bring about a vision for improving their livelihoods, particularly as it relates to their marine resources.

The main activities planned were to engage with the community to not only identify the various relevant stakeholders, but to also increase their awareness of MINA and the purpose of its presence in the community, in the hopes of gaining their trust. The plan included holding two community meetings - one with fishermen and another with representatives from the various community groups - to introduce the theme of co-management and its benefits, as well as beginning the process of identifying important food fishes and crops in the village. Following these would be a workshop involving these stakeholders to explore further their desire to pursue co-management, and if so, determine the steps to plan a community meeting involving a larger cross-section of the community.

PROJECT OUTPUTS

Key informant interviews & meetings

Ben Sablan: Project manager has had ongoing discussions with Ben Sablan on co-management. He is an elder fisherman who has fished for 66 years and has held mgmt. positions in both DFW and DLNR and was a former member of the Western Pacific Fishery Council. He has expressed a keen interest in getting the Tanapag community involved in



Ben Sablan

managing their marine resources, especially in light of the impacts to reef health, namely coral bleaching, algal blooms, non-point source pollution, and runoff from two streams, one from a dumping site in the Achugao Watershed above Tanapag. He has discussed working to get the community to support a spearfishing ban at a specific site on the reef abutting the Tanapag lagoon. He has also been working to bring back TAG - Tanapag Action Group - to head this

effort. TAG was part of community efforts to request PCB-contaminated soil cleanup by U.S. EPA and Army Corps of Engineers in the mid-1990's, and he would like for them to be part of co-management efforts. (2001 story update:

<http://www.saipantribune.com/index.php/96af583b-1dfb-11e4-aedf-250bc8c9958e/>)

Sablan has met with former group officers Juan Tenorio, Allan Palacios, Sylvestre Iguel and Jerry Crisostimo to relaunch organization. He believes this group is key to addressing continued PCB contamination flowing from a former dump site in the watershed into the lagoon. At this time, the group has not officially formed.

Talabwoogh StaR Association is a church-based youth group that is very active in the community. “Talabwoogh” is the Carolinian form of “Tanapag,” while “StaR” represents the group’s parish of “Santa Remedios.” We collaborated to assist with post-typhoon cleanups in the village, and they have expressed an interest in getting involved in co-management discussions. They will be participating in workshop once scheduled.

Meeting with health personnel: held meeting with staff of the CNMI Commonwealth Health Care Corporation (CHCC) Maternal & Child Health Bureau on September 15, 2015 and discussed the various health issues and concerns with regards to Tanapag village. Shared plans on c-management workshop and received support and interest in participation by this health agency to contribute to community efforts at improving efforts at family planning and prenatal care to reduce incidents of fetal and infant deaths, which is an issue affecting the village.

Fishermen meeting: held the first meeting on September 19, 2015 facilitated by Ben Sablan with five fishermen to discuss status of Tanapag lagoon and his desire to implement, initially, a spearfishing ban in one specific area of their reef, around the “Faay Reen” fishing spot (see below area in red). Initially, there was some hesitation, as spearfishing is the main fishing method in the village. However, there is an understanding that this method has had a damaging effect on the coral and that a temporary ban would be beneficial. A census identifying fishermen was begun, so far identifying 27 fishermen from Tanapag, as well as the number of years they have been fishing.



CNMI Legislators: met with legislators Vinnie Sablan and George Camacho, both legislators representing Tanapag. They stand ready to assist once the community has organized and discussions are moving forward towards co-management and they have decided on how they would like to proceed with community fishery management efforts. Representative Vinnie Sablan has supported Tanapag Middle School Micronesia Challenge Club's recent efforts in a new school project to plant mangroves at two stream sites in the village. His staff have worked to clear the streams of debris, while also making the sites more accessible to students.

CNMI Regulatory Agencies: Met with Dept. of Lands & Natural Resources Secretary Richard Seman and Division of Fish & Wildlife Director Manny Pangelinan to brief them on efforts in the community. Seman, Pangelinan's boss, has expressed initial support, while DFW director has not committed to anything as of yet. Additionally, communication has begun with the Division of Youth Services to regularly utilize a space in their community center for individual and small group meetings.

Community meeting: Held meeting with 12 members of the community on December 17 at the Tanapag social hall. Very informative discussion took place about observations that the community has made over the years in terms of the condition of the lagoon. These included:

- A drastic reduction in "akadu" (sea grapes)
- Disappearance of "dogus" (a mollusk similar to trochus)
- Damage to the reef as a result of increased foot traffic
- Concerns with new hotel development planned in an adjacent village and the potential runoff from planned earth-moving activities
- Problems with fishermen from other villages, including non-resident workers (*there is no exclusivity in the village to lagoon access, but residents do feel an ownership to the lagoon*), not respecting village residents by fishing without seeking permission
- Dying corals; more specifically, an observation that there is less blue coral (*Heliopora*)
- Stream runoff affecting coral growth
- Coral bleaching / corals losing pigmentation
- Use of poisonous derris root
- Increase in algal blooms
- Impacts on the lagoon from droughts, particularly the expected one this year
- More sightings of napoleon wrasse
- Large schools of catfish that are impacting corals
- More crown of thorns starfish sightings

- L-50 size recommendations not being followed

When asked about what were the important lagoon fish, responses included: blue spined unicornfish, orange spined unicornfish, convict tangs, surgeonfish, octopus, sea crabs, stingrays, sea cucumbers, sharks and sea urchins.



Juan Tenorio

At the end of the meeting, it was decided that a meeting be planned with just the youth from the village, primarily high school and college-aged youth. This group was noticeably absent, despite invitations being sent out. Notable community members included Bill Lieto, president of the Tanapag parish council, and Juan Tenorio, village leader, former congressman, and former Tanapag Action Group officer. Tenorio, a very opinionated and vociferous fisherman, stressed the importance of this effort for the community. He went so far as to remind those present of the importance of not letting politics interfere with this effort to bring the community together to address issues affecting the lagoon. This is an issue that has driven a wedge in previous community efforts at addressing their PCB issues, and Tenorio felt that politics could once again interfere with the current efforts underway.

The idea of co-management was very well received. It was again stressed to gather input from the younger fishermen prior to holding a workshop.

Tanapag Middle School: To date, work with TMS, its staff and students has been the highlight of the project to date. Since the 2013-2014 School Year, MINA has been involved with Tanapag Elementary School (TES) (now Tanapag Middle School), in environmental conservation outreach activities as it connects to their natural resources. Through the Managaha Pride Campaign, TES students were involved in helping to design and create components of campaign materials, including the campaign's logo (a Tataga) as well as fish fliers, of which over 2,500 copies were produced and passed out at various island events and locations, including Managaha.

Key to the campaign was the involvement of the community's youth, from elementary through college, from across the island. For close to a year now, close work has been undertaken with school faculty and staff, particularly following Typhoon Soudelor and the resulting large scale cleanups on campus. The exciting part is the 8th graders involved are many of the same students who were involved during the commencement of the Managaha Pride Campaign two years ago.

This school year saw the formation of the TMS Micronesia Challenge (MC) Club, with a goal of learning more about effective conservation practices for the villages in the northern part of Saipan. It is the largest and most popular school club at Tanapag Middle School. Together

with club advisor Acelia Dela Cruz, we have engaged the students in activities: beach cleanups beginning at Tanapag beach and going north to Pau Pau Beach, turtle tagging, an upcoming field trip to Managaha, various guest speakers, and the annual MVA-sponsored MTEC Summit, which will be featuring Palau President Tommy Remengesau. The MC Club is a little over three months old, but its 35 members have done more in this time than all of last school year.

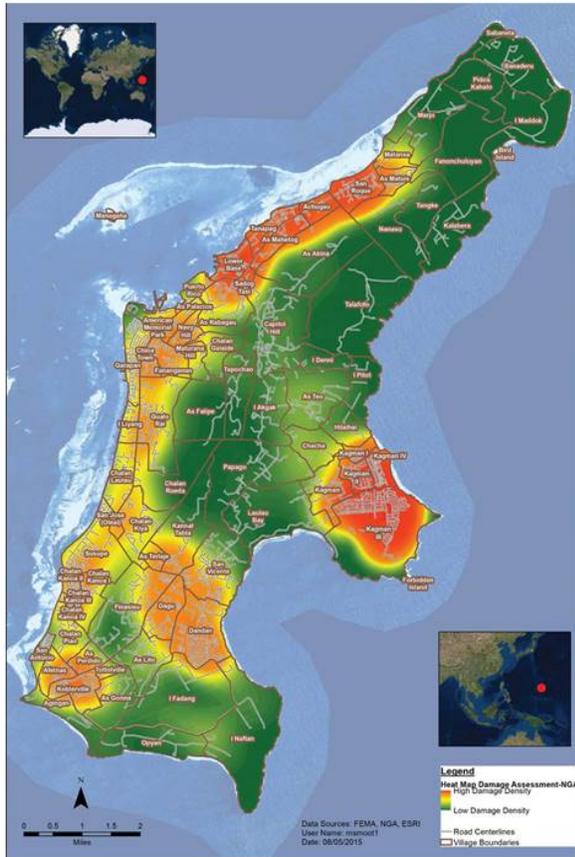


Proposed Micronesia Challenge Club logo. Slogan is in Chamorro, and means “force from the north.”



Keeping northern beaches clean and learning about turtles

Challenges: The biggest setback at this point is the impact of Typhoon Soudelor on the Tanapag community, particularly the destruction of many homes in the village. Several meetings were cancelled as a result of poor attendance, with fishermen sharing that right now people are just too busy rebuilding their homes and lives. The main word to describe the Tanapag community is weary. Rebuilding continues here and across the island.



Typhoon Soudelor damage. Green = low damage density. Red = high damage density. Tanapag village one of those hardest hit.

Another challenge is the absence of a village chief. The only person who somewhat filled this role – Victor Igitol – passed away in 2013. Despite his role, there was, and still is, no unanimous agreement that he indeed was the chief. Presently there are community members who fill various leadership roles, including the church parish council, legislature, and respected elders; but no one paramount leader. As a result, efforts to reach out to the entire community via one person are not possible.

Conclusion

Following six months of project meetings and activities in the Tanapag community, there is clear interest on the part of those stakeholders involved to date in pursuing co-management. Due to the aforementioned ongoing recovery efforts and lack of a village chief, the pace at which the project has moved has been and continues to be slow, but still moves forward. The results of key informant interviews and meetings that have taken place are indicative of the Tanapag community's interest in co-management of their resources, particularly in the lagoon. Through the various meetings held, stakeholders have been clear about their view of status of their lagoon resources, and that, coupled with observations from previous decades of marine activities, changes need to be made if they are to ensure continued resource abundance for their children.

Another result of the meetings is the clear and complex attitudes towards the Managaha Marine Conservation Area. There exists a feeling of exclusion on the part of the community by resource managers at the MPA since the designation of the sanctuary in 2000 that correlates directly with the apathy towards and disregard of regulations. This has manifested itself in the continued poaching activities at the site. MINA's work to date has provided a forum for village members to voice their frustrations with being left out of the initial MPA designation process, and there exists potential to remedy this through the inclusion of this community in overall lagoon management efforts.

As mentioned, community members would like to hear from the youth, and rely on this project to ascertain their sentiments. There are articulate and experienced young fishermen whose voices have not had a venue to express their thoughts and ideas, and the upcoming youth meeting would be a perfect forum to capture their input. Activities resulting from MINA's community work at Tanapag Middle School and the newly-formed Micronesia Challenge Club highlight the potential that can stem from involvement from these stakeholders. Activities performed to date are being noticed by not only the Tanapag community, but those in villages further north (San Roque and As Matuis) as a result of the involvement of students from these villages. Businesses have also begun to take notice – Aqua Resort Club (an established hotel) has already committed \$1,000 for club activities. There is a real pride that is starting to build amongst club members and the entire school community about their role in caring for their environment and natural resources. Building on this pride, support for these efforts can build amongst the youth, which can then translate into further involvement on their part to drive co-management efforts. Tanapag Middle School is an important stakeholder and project partner that can serve as a recruiter for additional community and private sector stakeholders.

MINA's time and effort towards co-management work in the Tanapag community continues. Trust has built slowly. The youth of the village are a vital component of these efforts, and more and more it appears that they will comprise a group of champions that will drive efforts, as their parents and community leaders continue work on typhoon recovery.

Much of the headway made so far by MINA is a positive sign of the trust we have gained through their willingness to continue working with our organization. While the original timelines had to be amended due to the pace at which elder Ben Sablan was willing to work with MINA as well as the realization that there were other critical groups to work with, the typhoon and its resultant impacts further slowed efforts.

Per MINA's Terms of Reference, the following have been met:

- Objective: Raise awareness and determine Tanapag community interest in co-management of lagoon area adjacent to MMCA
- Deliverable: Report on process for developing a co-management plan for Tanapag lagoon
- Specific tasks: Conducted multiple key informant interviews to guide at least two village meetings and present opportunity to hold community-wide workshop to introduce, explore and utilize co-management tools and methods.

Next steps

The coming months' efforts show exciting potential for co-management to finally become a reality for this community, for their benefit and as an example to the rest of our island community. Through our partnership with BECQ, Tanapag Middle School was selected as the site for a rain garden installation, which took place in late January, 2016. (See www.saipantribune.com/index.php/tanapag-middle-school-plants-rain-garden/ and www.mvariety.com/cnmi/cnmi-news/local/83476-plant-rain-gardens-save-our-lagoon)

Current discussions have taken place with the middle school principal to hold another community meeting, focused on the youth, in the school's cafeteria. The targeted date for this meeting is the end of February, 2016.

Workshop details continue to be ironed out, in terms of attendees, particularly with village leaders (Ben Sablan, Juan Tenorio, Rep. Vinson Sablan and Rep. George Camacho), community organizations (including Tanapag Parish Council and Talaabwoogh StaR Association), agency partners and Tanapag Middle School. These various stakeholders will be gathered together for community-wide workshop to take place in April, 2016.

Key informant interview summaries

Name	# years fishing	Important lagoon fish	Lagoon benefits	Changes to the lagoon	Marine life that are in short supply	Threats to lagoon	Advantages of MMCA	Disadvantages of MMCA
Fisher 1	66	Grey snappers, emperor, lililuk, unicornfish, rabbitfish, surgeonfish (3 types - mok, libobo, moch), convict fish, squirrelfish	Habitat for seasonal runs of big-eye scad, juvenile trevally and goatfish, nursery and habitat for food fishes	Acidification, coral bleaching, algae growth from NPS pollution (oil, runoff), algal blooms, increase in sandy layers off beach	Haven't observed any that have diminished tremendously but there are more people fishing now than before	Natural threats (typhoons) and pollution from humans	Unsure: Need to see evidence of spillover outside of MPA	MPA boundaries haphazardly done; no baseline studies done during establishment
Fisher 2	30	Parrotfish, unicornfish, peacock & napolean wrasse, emperor fish, goatfish, surgeonfish, mullet	Tourism, training grounds, cultural heritage and survival	Algae growth, motor boat impacts on coral; increase in angler coral	Guili, kabara (hides in seagrass), parrotfish	Spearfishing, outboard motorboats, two streams flowing into lagoon, graywater, war-time dumpsite, use of bleach and derris in fishing	Not sure, need to see proof	No access to fishing grounds, too many tourist/ motorist / marine sports impacts
Fisher 3	25	Emperor, unicornfish, rabbitfish, parrotfish, goatfish, surgeonfish, covict tang, slipper lobster	Training grounds for the youth, food resource	Decrease in corals	Blue beak parrotfish	Sewage runoff, overflow	Abundant fish	Former fishing spot; need to have an open season

Key informant interview summaries

Name	# years fishing	Important lagoon fish	Lagoon benefits	Changes to the lagoon	Marine life that are in short supply	Threats to lagoon	Advantages of MMCA	Disadvantages of MMCA
Fisher 4	41	Grouper, emperor, surgeonfish, rabbitfish, slipper lobster	Food fish supply	Many outsiders going out at night	Grouper, lobster	Runoff, outsiders, drainage	Some control	No answer
Fisher 5	20	All kinds of food fishes	Good location for those w/out boats; lagoon blocks off big predators	Low fish counts, dead and dying coral and increase of algae on coral	Groupers, lobsters, parrotfish in sea grass areas	Pollution, runoff, overfishing, abundance of catfish, no catch size regulating, esp. outside fishers	"Honestly, I don't know, as it has been a prime fishing area for the people."	"We can't fish there!"