

STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION AMONG MARINE PROTECTED AREA NETWORKS IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN



POLICY BRIEF

Key Outcomes of the Third Meeting of MPA Networks
in the Wider Caribbean

CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA | OCTOBER 28, 2025 | IN-PERSON/HYBRID FORMAT

1. Context and Objective

The **Third Meeting of Marine Protected Area (MPA) Networks in the Wider Caribbean** brought together regional networks, projects, capacity-building initiatives, and technical organizations to strengthen coordination, share lessons learned, and co-create collective actions to improve the effectiveness of MPA management in the region. The meeting was designed as a continuation of the workshop “**Scaling Effective MPA Management in the Caribbean Region**” (Cartagena, October 25–26, 2025), developed in collaboration with Blue Nature Alliance and MPAConnect, to enable follow-up on previous outcomes, avoid duplication, and deepen inter-institutional collaboration.

2. Key Outcomes Lessons Learned

- **Effective collaboration requires structure**, not just willingness: clear roles, shared calendars, and follow-up mechanisms are essential.
- **Diversity is a strength**: including networks, projects, local communities, women, and youth enhances relevance and sustainability.
- **Peer-to-peer practical learning (“learning by doing”)** is highly valued by MPA managers and delivers tangible short-term impacts.
- **Trust is built** through regular interaction, transparency, and open access to knowledge.
- **Coordination reduces burdens**: working collaboratively avoids duplication and maximizes human and financial resources.
- **Financing of MPAs** should be driven by needs identified by MPA managers and funding inputs should be as little burdensome as possible for MPAs



3. Voices from Practice (Testimonials)

"We don't need more new structures, but better connections among what already exists."

— MPA Manager, Cuba

"Rapid mentoring and peer exchanges are among the most effective ways to strengthen local capacities."

— MPACoconnect Representative

"When we share real experiences, learning becomes immediate and applicable."

— CaMPAM ToT MPA Management Alumnus

4. Identified Replicable Practices



COLLABORATIVE WORK BASED ON COLLECTIVE ASSETS

Joint mapping of capacities, experts, tools, and existing experiences within each network to optimize their use at the regional level.



EXCHANGE AND MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

Implementation of **regional mentorships**, technical exchanges, and peer visits, with a strong focus on practical solutions.



INCLUSION AS A CROSS-CUTTING PRINCIPLE

Principle Active integration of local communities, women, and youth in learning processes, governance, and decision-making.

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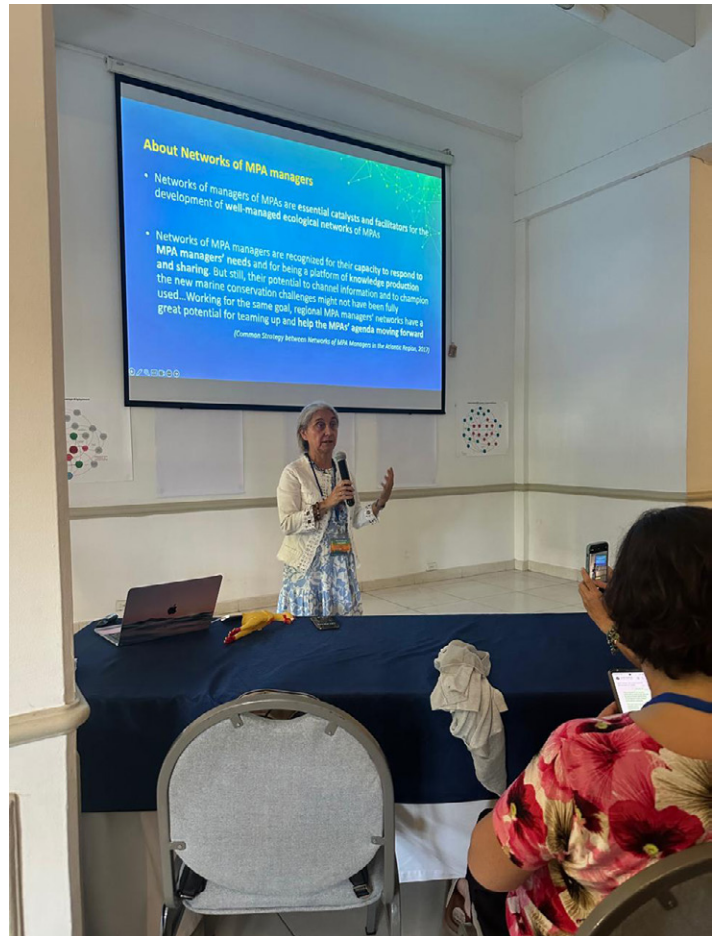
SHARED KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE PLATFORMS

Pilot development of a **digital hub** or open repository to share methodologies, case studies, training materials, and calendars.



COORDINATED AND ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION

Development of **simple communication toolkits**, aligned messaging, and shared visual materials, available in multiple languages



5. Prioritized Actions

SHORT-TERM

(0–6 MONTHS)

- Designate a regional coordinator for MPA networks in the Wider Caribbean.
- Agree on a shared purpose and launch peer exchanges with visible outcomes.
- Activate thematic webinars and improve joint communication.
- Identify and support local MPA champions to strengthen leadership and effective MPA management.

MEDIUM-TERM

(1–2 YEARS)

- Develop a regional communication strategy.
- Implement an open knowledge repository and a formal mentorship program.
- Map capacity and training needs at the regional level.

LONG-TERM

(2–5 YEARS)

- Consolidate a Regional Knowledge Management Hub.
- Strengthen linkages with other MPA networks and contribution to the Global Network of MPA Manager Networks
- Expand toward an Extended Network of MPA Networks in the Wider Caribbean.

6. Why Capacity Development Matters

To scale MPA management effectiveness, we need to manage better.

- Support systems provided by MPA networks, mentorship programmes, and conservation trust funds are essential to maintain and scale management effectiveness.
- Aligning capacity development priorities and learning opportunities across local, national, regional, and global levels creates the connectivity needed to strengthen individual, organizational, and system-wide capacities.

- Achieving the 30x30 target through high-quality, effectively managed and conserved MPAs requires sustained and long-term capacity development programmes.
- As countries expand area-based conservation measures to meet 30x30 commitments, investment in MPA management capacity must grow at the same pace to ensure effectiveness on the ground.

7. Key Message

Effective management of Marine Protected Areas in the Wider Caribbean depends on structured, inclusive, and sustained collaboration, grounded in peer learning, trust, and the use of collective assets.

