Coral Identification Capacity Building Program - CICBP

Enhancing coral identification skills for reef surveys and resource monitoring

THE CORAL IDENTIFICATION CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM IS WORKING TO DEVELOP, REFINE AND EVALUATE THE CORAL FINDER TOOLKIT, A PRACTICAL CAPACITY BUILDING PATHWAY FOR CORAL IDENTIFICATION. IMPROVED CORAL IDENTIFICATION WILL VALUE-ADD TO MARINE ASSESSMENT INITIATIVES, ULTIMATELY LEADING TO BETTER CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OUTCOMES.

Background

The lack of people with the capacity to identify corals is perhaps the single greatest impediment to under-standing reef health and status.

Identifying corals, the keystone animal that builds and sustains coral reefs, remains a dark art despite decades of research and publications.

The **Coral Identification Capacity Building Program** aims to remove barriers to the uptake of coral taxonomy and in turn improve the effectiveness of existing reef monitoring and conservation programs.

Specifically, people will develop the skills required to identify hard corals to genus-level, allowing them to value-add to scientific, natural resource and community monitoring surveys. The Program also opens the door to species-level identification for motivated participants.

In partnership with the **Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network**, the Coral Finder Workshops will train up to 40 local conservation practitioners and scientists in coral identification during February 2010 in Suva.

The Coral Finder

The program is based around the Indo Pacific Coral Finder, a proven, underwater coral identification tool that allows divers to identify hard corals to genus-level using a novel

> The CICBP will develop a learning pathway for people to acquire skills related to coral identification...

"visual decision" approach that works regardless of growth form.

The Coral Finder delivers fast learning, rapid revision and improved reliability and consistency of coral identification. The Coral Finder is available from www.byoguides.com

Supporting resources - the Coral Finder Toolkit

Supporting resources are being prepared for testing and evaluation

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(cont.) during the workshops. These resources are being tailored to the unique needs of specialist (scientific) and non-specialist (community members and volunteers) end-users.

On completion the program will deliver the Coral Finder Toolkit - a disc and web based suite of Teach Yourself resources to build capacity in coral identification for resource monitoring. These resources will enable self-learning by motivated individuals beyond this program into the future.

The Coral Finder Toolkit will have a long shelf life and wide application throughout the Indo Pacific. Through its associated Coral Hub website, the Toolkit will form the basis of an ongoing community focused on how to identify corals in the field.

The next Project Bulletin will report on the results of the Coral Finder Workshops to be held in Suva, Fiji February 2010.

FLMMA

Suva, Fiji

FLMMA - the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network - is comprised of conservation practitioners and includes local communities, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Government departments and learning institutions.

Russell Kelley, CICBP Program Director & Ron Vave, FLMMA, IAS, University of South Pacific

The partnership with the Coral Identification Capacity Building Program is contributing to FLMMA's capacity building efforts for its members, and will enable FLMMA to explore the utility and the use of the Coral Finder Toolkit for inclusion in marine assessment initiatives.

The Coral Finder is available from **www.byoguides.com**

Coral Identification Capacity Building Program expected outcomes:

★ **Improved quality and reliability of coral identification and monitoring information**

★ **An enlarged pool of people capable of collecting / understanding this information**

★ **Wide access to the Coral Finder Toolkit**

★ **Improved conservation and management outcomes**

★ **Contribution to skills exchange / training goals of partners**

★ **Increased return on funds invested**