LMMA forums: effective tools for sharing good practices and solving common problems related to sustainable management of coastal and marine resources

G. Rakotovao
MIHARI Network, Madagascar
guy@mihari-network.org

MIHARI, an acronym which stands for "Mitantana Harena an-dRanomasina avy eny Ifotony", is Madagascar's Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA) network. The network was created as a way of linking up isolated coastal communities to allow community leaders to share ideas and effective models through peer-to-peer learning, as well as to represent the interests of small-scale fishers in national policy development. The network currently includes over 150 LMMA supported by more than 20 partner institutions. One of the core activities of the MIHARI network is the organisation of national and regional LMMA forums. LMMA forums are large gatherings that bring together LMMA community leaders as well as a range of other stakeholders involved with marine resources management, such as NGOs, Government and private sector actors. Forums aim to accelerate learning and uptake of good practice in LMMA implementation, while fostering leadership amongst LMMA communities. Since MIHARI's creation in 2012, 3 national and 9 sub-national forums have been organised. Testimonials and feedback from forum participants tell us that MIHARI members perceive that the forums foster a sense of community spirit and solidarity between LMMA communities. LMMA leaders appreciate the opportunity to share their experiences, success stories and challenges encountered, and potential strategies. LMMA leaders report that the events also provide a unique opportunity to meet and engage in direct dialogue with government officials and other key stakeholders, allowing them to present their priority issues for LMMA development. Feedback from MIHARI members is being used to improve further the effectiveness of future LMMA forums. In particular, the priority is to improve facilitation and format of events to encourage more focused dialogue and learning, as well as ways of enabling LMMA leaders to engage their communities before and after the forums to ensure their priorities are effectively addressed.