

Fisheries Management Area (FMA) Scorecard 3rd Rollout Report 2023



FOREWORD


The sustainable management of our fisheries is critical not only for ensuring food security but also for safeguarding the livelihoods of millions of Filipinos who depend on our fisheries and marine resources for sustenance. The Philippines, positioned at the heart of the Coral Triangle, is endowed with an abundance of marine biodiversity. However, the reality of overfished waters and the ongoing challenges faced by our artisanal or small-scale fisherfolk such as illegal commercial fishing, plastic pollution and coastal developments, highlight the urgent need for robust and effective fisheries management.

In response to these challenges, the Fisheries Management Area (FMA) system was established in the Philippines through Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) No. 263, issued by the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) in 2019. This groundbreaking policy delineated the Philippine waters into 12 distinct FMAs, each governed by a Management Body composed of key stakeholders including local government units, fisherfolk, and scientific experts. The FMA system's objective is to promote science-based, participatory, and transparent decision-making processes that ensure the conservation and sustainable use of our marine resources. Oceana, together with our partners, has been at the forefront of advocating for the full implementation of this system, recognizing the critical role of evidence-based approaches in achieving long-term fisheries sustainability.

The Fisheries Management Area (FMA) Scorecard serves as a vital tool in this endeavor. Since its inception, the FMA system has sought to establish a science-based, participatory, and transparent governance framework for the conservation of our marine resources. This Scorecard, developed through the collaborative efforts of Oceana and our partner organizations, is designed to monitor the implementation of Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) No. 263 and to assess the compliance of the 12 FMAs established across the Philippines.

This report marks the third rollout of the FMA Scorecard. It provides a comprehensive evaluation of the progress made by each FMA over the past year, highlighting both achievements and areas where further efforts are needed. Notably, the report reflects significant advancements in the establishment of Management Bodies, Scientific Advisory Groups, and Technical Working Groups across all FMAs. Moreover, it underscores the importance of continued collaboration, capacity building, and the implementation of evidence-based management plans.

The findings presented in this report are a testament to the dedication and hard work of numerous stakeholders—from government agencies and civil society organizations to the artisanal fisherfolk whose daily lives are intertwined with the health of our marine ecosystems. While there is much to celebrate, we must also recognize the challenges that lie ahead. The ongoing impacts of climate change, illegal fishing, biodiversity destruction and environmental degradation require us to be ever more vigilant and proactive in our advocacy efforts. As we look to the future, let this report serve as both a record of our progress and a call to action. Together, we must ensure that the principles of sustainable fisheries management are not only upheld but strengthened, for the benefit of our oceans, our communities, and the present and future generations.


Atty. Gloria Estenzo Ramos
Vice President, Oceana

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In this 3rd rollout of the Fisheries Management Area Scorecard, we express our heartfelt appreciation to our invaluable partners who have greatly contributed to its success:

- Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Central Office
- Department of the Interior and Local Government.
- Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Regional leads/ Chairpersons of the Fisheries Management Area (FMA) Management Body
- FMA Focal Persons
- FMA Management Bodies, Scientific Advisory Groups, and Technical Working Groups

Special recognition is extended to Oceana's Campaign Research Department that spearheaded the rollout, our civil society organization partners who made this Scorecard possible, and to our artisanal fisherfolk whose wisdom guides our actions for the sustainable management of our fisheries in the Philippines. Thank you for your unwavering dedication!

Cover Photo: Oceana, Danny Ocampo, Rhea Yray-Frossard

Executive Summary

The Philippines sits at the heart of the coral triangle, which is the global center of marine biodiversity (Carpenter and Springer, 2005). However, it is extremely alarming to find that two-thirds of the country's once-rich fishing grounds are overfished. Moreover, the Filipino fisherfolk, being the front liners in food security, remains the poorest sector in the Philippine society.¹ With the current ecological and social conditions of our fisheries sector, the need to adopt a responsive policy to manage fisheries cannot be over-emphasized. This aligns with one of the major state policies introduced in Republic Act 10654, which amended the Fisheries Code of the Philippines. This sets in place the adoption of the precautionary principle and management of the fishery and aquatic resources, in a manner consistent with the concept of an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and integrated coastal management in specific natural fishery management areas.²

On January 28, 2019, the Department of Agriculture - Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) established 12 fisheries management areas (FMAs) covering all Philippine waters pursuant to Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) No. 263. The FMA system involves all coastal local government units and other key stakeholders as fisheries managers to take on the shared responsibilities alongside the Fisheries Bureau for the conservation and sustainable management of fishery resources in the country.

In support of this policy issuance, Oceana together with partner civil society organizations - Philippine Earth Justice Center (PEJC), Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Zoological Society of London - Philippines (ZSL), Environmental Legal Assistance Center, Inc. (ELAC), NGOs for Fisheries Reform, Inc. (NFR), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) - Philippines, Institute of Social Order (ISO), and Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute Philippines (LAMAVE) - developed the FMA Scorecard to monitor the implementation of FAO 263, assess the level of compliance, and recommend measures for effective fisheries management for the 12 FMAs in the Philippines.

It bears noting that while each FMA has its strengths, challenges, and dynamics, and one FMA could have larger coverage than the other, there are common indicators to verify compliance and level of implementation for all FMAs. These indicators, along with the means of verification, were identified in the Scorecard based on the express provisions of FAO 263.

For the past four years, the Scorecard has been used and presented to various FMA Management Bodies, which have institutionalized the use of this monitoring tool.

In 2023, Oceana initiated the conduct of its 3rd FMA Scorecard roll-out which was participated by the 11 FMAs through the BFAR lead office. Overall, the results show significant progress made by these Fisheries Management Areas as compared to the first and second roll-out. In this report, we look at the progress made, including the challenges, four years after FAO 263 took effect. While there has been significant development by the FMAs, since the challenging years during the pandemic, there is still much to be done. In the 1st FMA Scorecard Report, FMAs have achieved considerable progress in the Initiation Phase despite setbacks brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and Super Typhoon Odette.

¹ <https://psa.gov.ph/content/farmers-fisherfolks-individuals-residing-rural-areas-and-children-posted-highest-poverty>. Accessed 20 December 2023.

² Section 2, of the Republic Act No. 8550, as amended by Republic Act 10654; BFAR FOO-164 series of 2016.

Steady progress was noted during the 2nd FMA Scorecard Report. Presently, the 3rd rollout under this Report shows significant progress among the FMAs in the Philippines. All the 12 FMAs have established their Management Bodies, Scientific Advisory Groups, and Technical Working Groups. Six of the FMAs have adopted and approved the FMA Management Plans. Except for FMA 4 which did not participate in the previous two rollouts, data shows that in 2022, all FMAs are already at the Good or Excellent level of compliance based on the indicators set forth under the FAO 263 provisions. Notably, FMAs 1, 7, 11, and 12 showed major improvements (Figure 1).

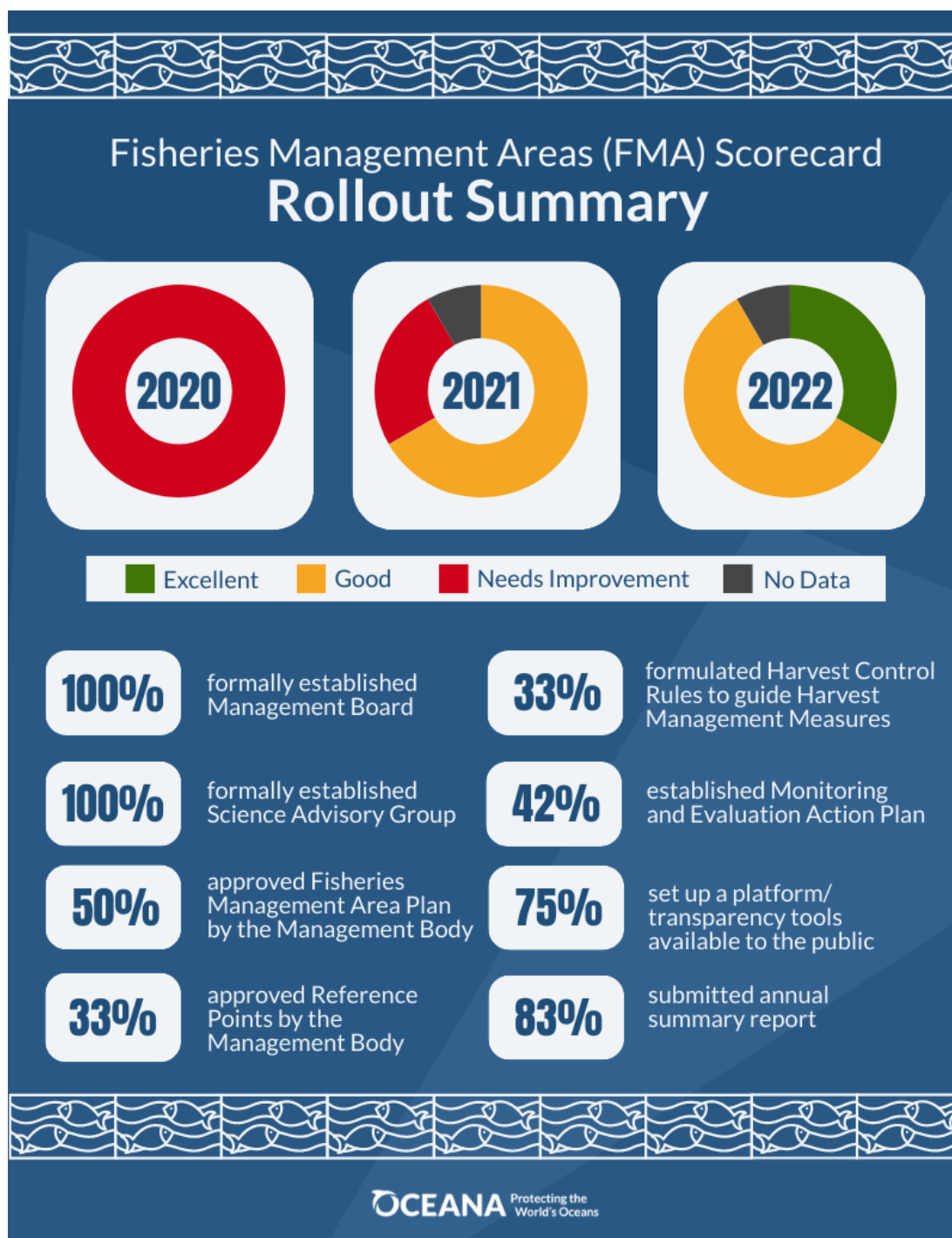


Figure 1. Summary of the 3rd FMA Scorecard Rollout Results. Note: The rollout period was November 2023 - January 31, 2024.

Introduction

While the Philippines is considered the global center of marine biodiversity (Carpenter and Springer, 2005), it is extremely alarming to find that two-thirds of the country's fishing grounds are overfished. Republic Act 10654, which amended the Fisheries Code of the Philippines, declares as a state policy the adoption of the precautionary principle and management of the fishery and aquatic resources, in a manner consistent with the concept of an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and integrated coastal management in specific natural fishery management areas.

On January 28, 2019, the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) issued Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) No. 263 to address the alarming decline in fish stocks brought about by environmental degradation, ineffective natural resources management (Guerrero, 1991), and a host of other anthropogenic pressures including illegal fishing, pollution, and climate change (Figure 2).

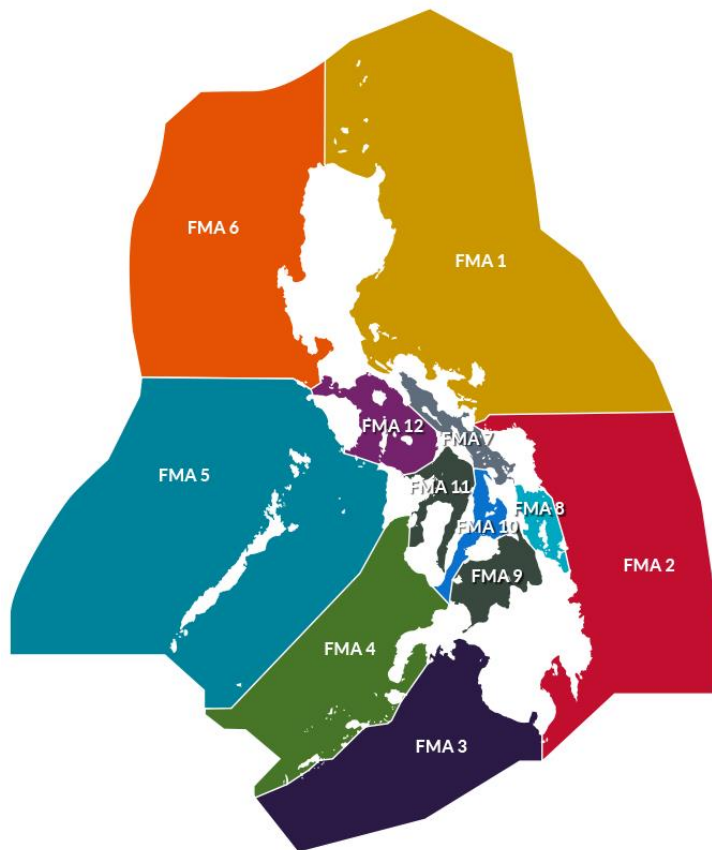


Figure 2. Twelve Fisheries Management Areas in the Philippines under the DA-BFAR FAO 263 series of 2019.

FAO 263 provides the policy and legal framework for the establishment of the Fisheries Management Areas system for the conservation and management of fisheries in Philippine waters. It creates a science-based, participatory, and transparent governance framework and mechanism to restore the ocean's abundance and sustainably manage declining fishery resources while ensuring that coastal communities are equitably benefiting from these. Specifically, to achieve this purpose, FAO 263 divided the Philippine waters into 12 Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs) based on the considerations of stock boundary, range,

distribution, structure of fisheries, as well as administrative divisions after consultation with stakeholders.

In support of FAO 263, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) issued on July 29, 2020, a Memorandum enjoining the support of DENR Regional and Field Offices to the Department of Agriculture -Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources' roll-out of Fisheries Management Areas. Likewise, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) issued on September 17, 2020, Memorandum Circular No. 2020 -121 directing all local government units to participate in and support the Department of Agriculture -Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources' roll-out, under Fisheries Administrative Order No. 263, Series of 2019 on the establishment of Fisheries Management Areas.

In support of this policy issuance, Oceana together with partner civil society organizations - Philippine Earth Justice Center (PEJC), Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Zoological Society of London - Philippines (ZSL), Environmental Legal Assistance Center, Inc. (ELAC), NGOs for Fisheries Reform, Inc. (NFR), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines, Institute of Social Order (ISO), and Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute Philippines (LAMAVE) - developed the FMA Scorecard which seeks to monitor the implementation of FAO 263, assess the level of compliance, and recommend measures for effective and sustainable management of fisheries for the 12 FMAs in the Philippines.

During the 4th Quarter of 2023 and early part of 2024, Oceana conducted its 3rd FMA Scorecard roll-out which was participated in by the 11 FMAs.

In this report, we look at the developments after four years, more or less, since FAO 263 took effect and three years after the first evaluation of the performance of the FMAs.

The goals of the FMA Compliance Scorecard rollout are two-fold: (1) it seeks to determine and assess the status of compliance of each FMA as regards the provisions of FAO 263 and other relevant laws using the FMA Scorecard; and (2) based on the assessment, the gathered data is used to identify gaps and provide recommendations to ensure that the FMA Management Boards are guided and fully functional and effective.

Methodology

As previously mentioned, this study uses the FMA Scorecard³ as an assessment and monitoring tool designed to help and recommend measures for effective and sustainable management of the 12 Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs) in the Philippines. It is the outcome of an extensive, participatory, consultative, and collaborative process among the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and People's Organizations (POs) working closely with FMAs throughout the Philippines. Input from several work streams helped to shape relevant sections of the Scorecard.

The FMA Scorecard adopts key indicators culled from the provisions of Republic Act 8550 or the Fisheries Code as amended by Republic Act 10654, FAO 263, and good governance principles of transparency, accountability, public participation, and predictability under the Rule of Law.

³ https://ph.oceana.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/FINAL_FMA-Scorecard_FINAL.pdf. Accessed December 20, 2023.

The scorecard is categorized into three phases – Initiation Phase, Implementation Phase, and Monitoring and Review Phase.

- (i) The Initiation Phase, which has 19 indicators, pertains to the establishment of core groups (FMA Management Body and Scientific Advisory Group) and the creation of indispensable plans and adoption of conservation measures, policies, and regulations.
- (ii) The Implementation Phase, which is composed of 15 indicators, measures compliance with established plans, harvest control measures, and policies, and checks if enforcement systems are enforced, and stakeholders are consulted.
- (iii) Lastly, the Monitoring and Review Phase, which is composed of 6 indicators, checks if there is a functional monitoring mechanism within the FMA and if reports, plans, feedback, and consultations with stakeholders are done.

The Scorecard uses the scoring guide below to define the performance status of each FMA based on the total score accumulated:

Green (EXCELLENT)	Yellow (GOOD)	Red (FAIL/NEEDS IMPROVEMENT)
The Total Points is a minimum of 33 and a maximum of 40 points.	The Total Points is a minimum of 17 and a maximum of 32 points.	The Total Points are 16 points and below.

This third rollout, which was done from November 15, 2023, until January 25, 2024, assessed the performance level of the FMAs for 2022-2023. Developments beyond the cut-off date are no longer included in this report.

This assessment was participated by the 11 Fisheries Management Areas, except Fisheries Management Area 4, namely:

Fisheries Management Area 1 (FMA 1)	Batanes, Cagayan, Isabela, Aurora, Quezon, Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Sorsogon, Northern Samar
Fisheries Management Area 2 (FMA 2)	Eastern Samar, Northern Samar, Davao de Oro, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental, Davao Oriental, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur
Fisheries Management Area 3 (FMA 3)	Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Sur, Sarangani, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi
Fisheries Management Area 5 (FMA 5)	Palawan, Occidental Mindoro, Aklan, Antique, Tawi-Tawi
Fisheries Management Area 6 (FMA 6)	Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Pangasinan, Bataan, Bulacan, Pampanga, Zambales, Batangas, Cavite, Metro Manila
Fisheries Management Area 7 (FMA 7)	Albay, Camarines Sur, Masbate, Sorsogon, Quezon, Biliran, Leyte, Northern Samar, Western Samar
Fisheries Management Area 8 (FMA 8)	Eastern Samar, Leyte, Samar (Western Samar), Southern Leyte, Dinagat Islands, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur
Fisheries Management Area 9 (FMA 9)	Agusan del Norte, Bohol, Camiguin, Lanao del Norte, Misamis Occidental, Misamis Oriental, Siquijor, Southern Leyte,

	Surigao del Norte, Zamboanga del Norte, and Zamboanga del Sur
Fisheries Management Area 10 (FMA 10)	Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental, Siquijor, Cebu City, Biliran, Leyte, Southern Leyte
Fisheries Management Area 11 (FMA 11)	Masbate, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Bacolod City, Iloilo City, Cebu, Negros Oriental
Fisheries Management Area 12 (FMA 12)	Batangas, Quezon, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Romblon, Masbate, Aklan, Antique, Capiz

Results

The findings of the study (Figure 3) reveal that four out of twelve FMAs received an **Excellent** standing (33%), seven FMAs garnered a **Good** standing (59%), with one FMA opting not to participate in the rollout (8%).

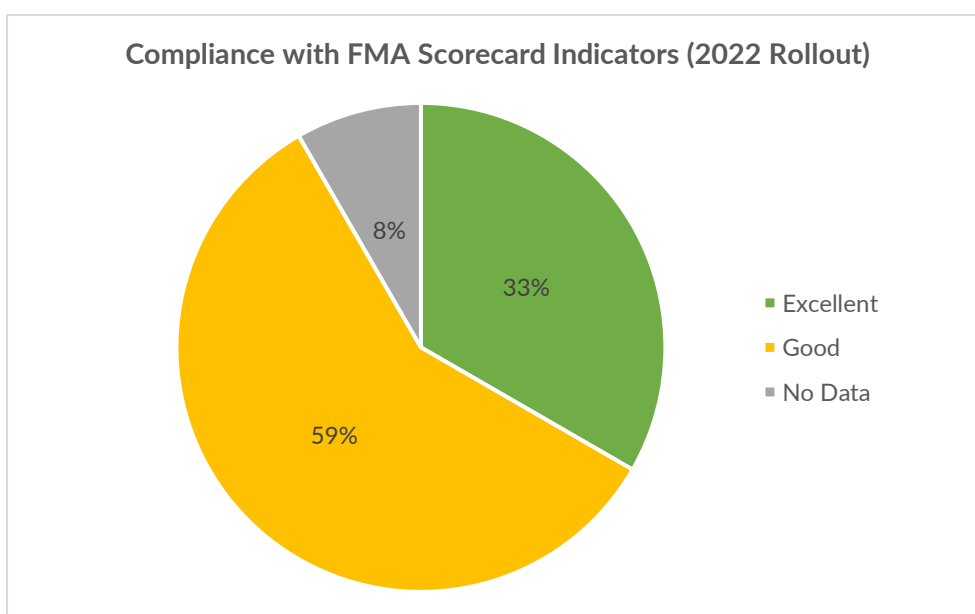


Figure 3. Overall status of compliance among the 12 Fisheries Management Areas during the 3rd FMA Scorecard rollout.

The FMAs in **Excellent** standing garnered an average score of 34.5 points or 86.25% compliance rate while those in **Good** standing had an average of 26.86 points or 67.14% compliance rate. This was a considerable improvement from the previous scorecard rollout where most of the FMAs received a good rating with some FMAs garnering a ‘needs improvement’ or failed rating.

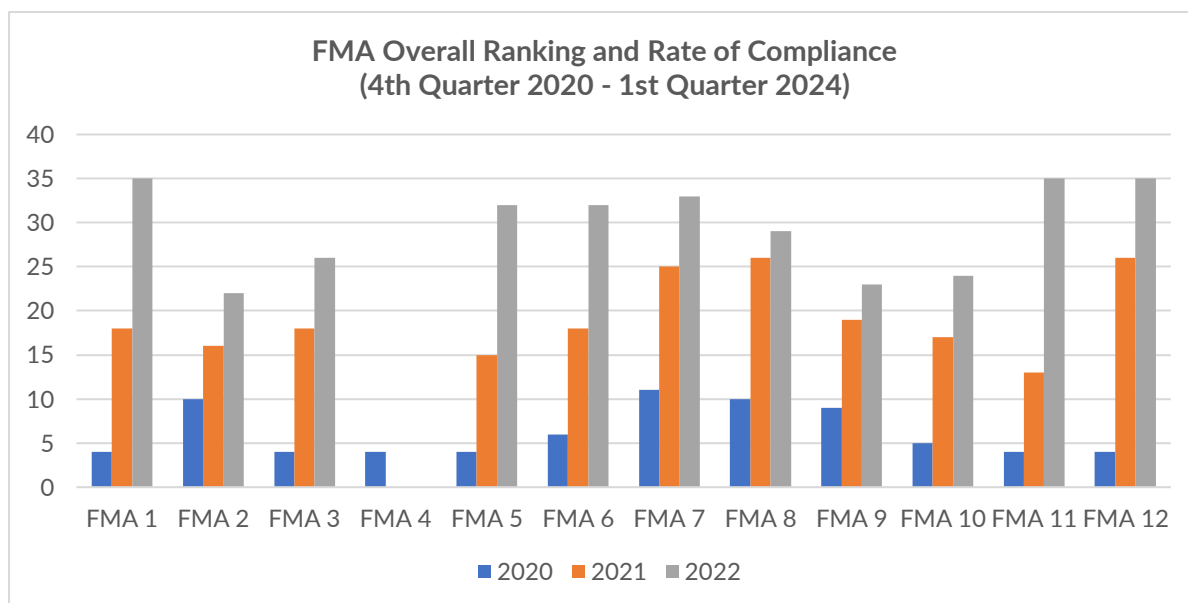


Figure 4. Summary of the Fisheries Management Areas Scorecard Rollout from 2020 to 2022.

Fisheries Management Areas 1, 11, and 12 had the highest scores in 2022 with 35 out of 40 points. FMA 7 with 33 points is also among those in the excellent rating. FMA 11 had the most improved score with 19 points in 2021 as compared to 35 points in 2022. FMA 4 did not participate in the 2021 and 2022 FMA scorecard rollout (Figure 4).

Initiation Phase

The average score for the Initiation Phase in 2022 was about 15.83 or 83.33% of the compliance rating (Figure 5). This was relatively higher than the previous rollout with only 58% of the rating for the initiation phase.

Results show that 50% of the FMAs have management plans that have been approved by their respective Management Bodies. This would also include clearly defined fishery goals and objectives and measurable key performance indicators.

Fisheries Management Areas 1, 7, 11, and 12 have completed the initiation phase according to the most recent FMA scorecard rollout. FMA 12 improved the most from a 58% compliance rating in 2021 to a 100% compliance rating in 2022.

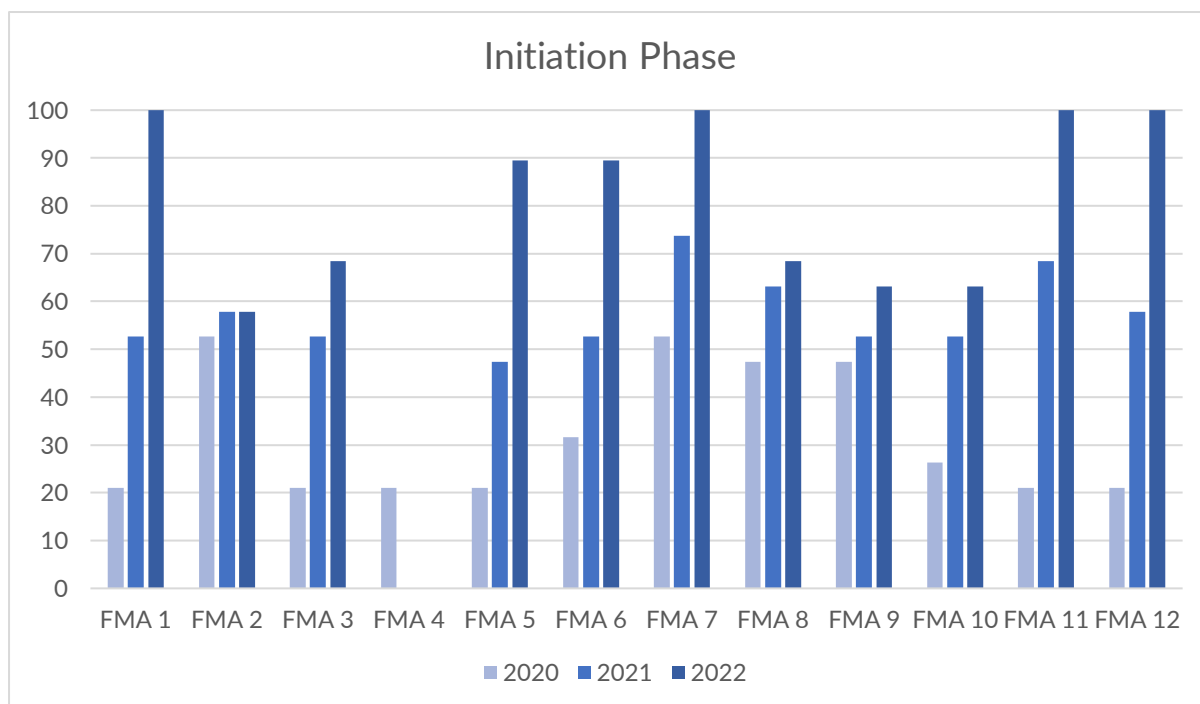


Figure 5. Status of compliance with the 19 indicators in the initiation phase of the 2022 FMA scorecard rollout.

Table 1 summarizes the key indicators in the Initiation Phase with extremely low compliance. Notably, indicator 6 and its sub-indicators pertaining to the approval of reference points and harvest control rules have not been complied with by several FMAs.

Table 1. Initiation Phase indicators with extremely low compliance turn-out.

Indicator	No. of compliant FMAs
6. Has the Management Body approved the following:	4
a. Reference Points (RPs) or critical range of values of performance indicators of fish set up?	(FMA 1, 7, 11, & 12)
6.b. Harvest Control Rules (HCRs) are formulated to guide Harvest Management Measures (HMM) and other conservation measures in the FMA?	4
	(FMA 1, 7, 11 & 12)

Implementation Phase

There is a considerable improvement in terms of compliance with the indicators for the Implementation Phase in 2022 with about a 72.77% compliance rate.

FMA 8 has the highest score of about 87% of the implementation indicators of the FMA rollout. FMA 9 had one of the lowest scores for the implementation phase indicators, not including the non-participation of FMA 4 (Figure 6).

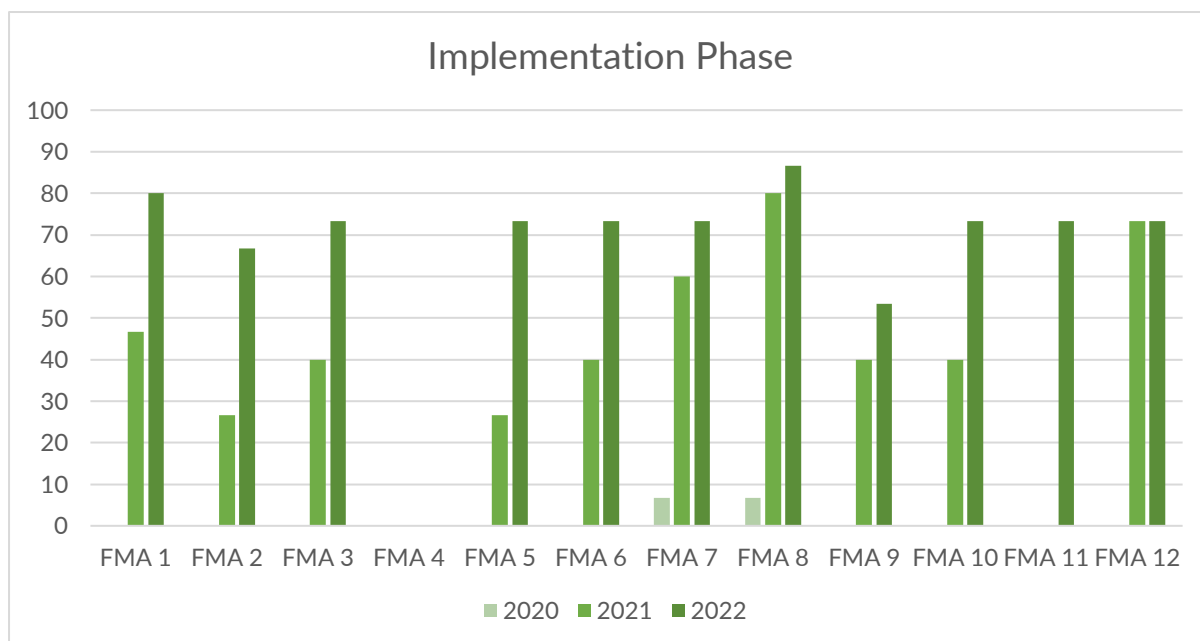


Figure 6. Status of compliance with the 15 indicators in the initiation phase of the 2022 FMA scorecard rollout.

Three indicators under the Implementation Phase remain unsatisfied by most of the FMAs. All FMAs have yet to adopt their FMA Management Plan through ordinances or resolutions in their respective jurisdictions. The adaptation of the FMA Management Plan into Implementation or Action Plans by sectors of the FMAs has only been implemented in FMA 6 while only 4 FMAs have set up enforcement systems to monitor compliance with the policies and regulations adopted by the FMA management body (Table 2).

Table 2. Implementation phase indicators with extremely low compliance turn-out.

Indicator	No. of compliant FMAs
7. Is the FMA Plan adopted through ordinances and resolutions, and translated into Action Plans by the LGUs within their respective jurisdiction?	0
8. Is the FMA Plan adopted and translated into Action Plans by Sectors in an FMA?	1 (FMA 6)
13. Are there enforcement systems set up to monitor compliance with these policies or regulations adopted by the FMA management body?	4 (FMA 1, 5, 8 & 10)

Monitoring and Review Phase

There are only 6 indicators for the Monitoring and Review Phase. The average score of the FMAs in this phase is 3.16 points or 52.77% compliance rate. FMAs 11 and 12 had the highest scores of about 83% in the monitoring and review indicators of the FMA scorecard indicators. FMA 11 was the most improved in terms of these indicators of the scorecard (Figure 7).

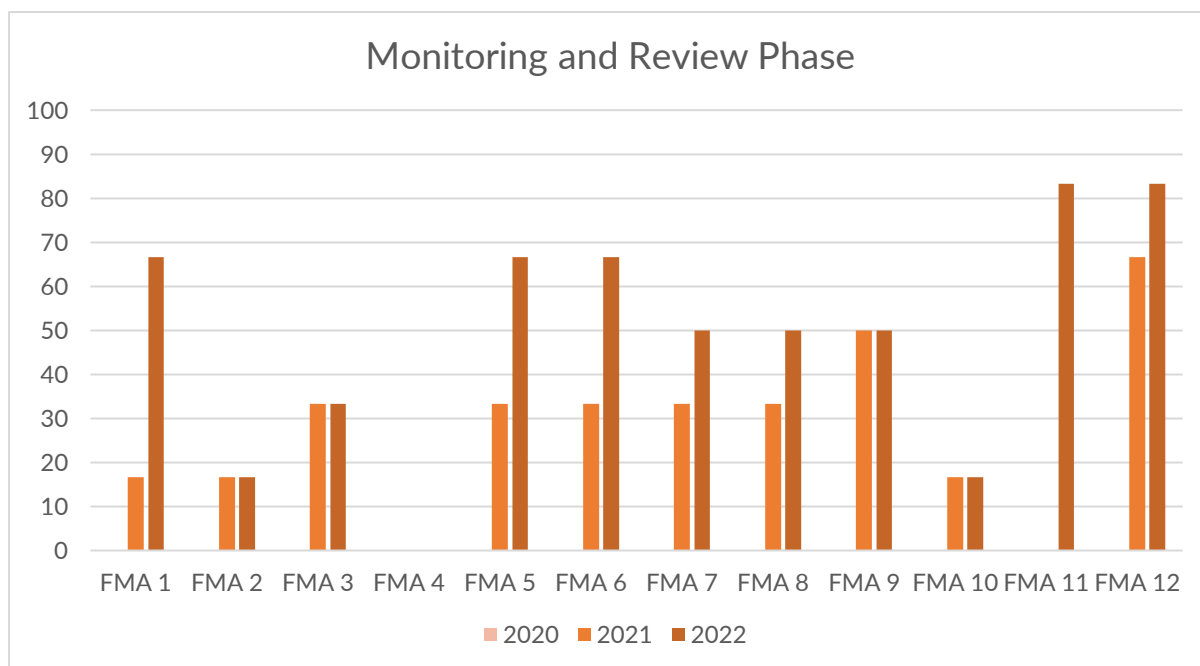


Figure 7. Status of compliance with the 6 indicators in the initiation phase of the 2022 FMA scorecard rollout.

The majority of the FMAs are still focused on completing the initiation and implementation phase of the scorecard. Some FMAs show good progress in the monitoring and review phase of their compliance with the FMA scorecard.

10 out of the 12 FMAs are regularly submitting their Annual Reports to their respective management bodies where they highlight the policies and measures as well as the accomplishments and the status of their fish stocks, among others.

Many FMAs have also established an online platform where they publish their annual reports. Note that FMAs 8 and 11 set up their own website and webpage, respectively, allowing the public to access relevant studies, policies adopted, and the status of the FMA.

More than half of the FMAs have yet to establish their monitoring and evaluation action plan. Only one FMA has complied with submitting the report of their stakeholders to the management body annually as regards their compliance with the FMA Management Plan, while only three FMA have conducted consultations and feedback by the FMA representatives to their constituents (Table 3).

Table 3. Monitoring and Review Phase indicators with extremely low compliance turn-out.

Indicator	No. of compliant FMAs
19.b. Is there a Monitoring and Evaluation Action Plan established by the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee?	5 (FMA 5, 6, 9, 11 & 12)
20. Do stakeholders (BFAR-RFOs, LGUs, industry, fisherfolk organization) submit their report to the Management Body annually as regards their compliance with the FMA Plan?	1 (FMA 1)
20.a. Were consultations and feedbacking conducted by representatives of the stakeholders to their constituencies?	3 (FMA 8, 11 & 12)

Discussion

The results of the 3rd rollout of the FMA Scorecard (2022) showed an overall improvement in the compliance of the indicators of the FMA Scorecard. The majority of the FMAs (73%) are in **Good** standing, which is a significant development in comparison to the results of the first rollout in 2020 where all the FMAs obtained a red card status (Figure 8).

During the 2020 rollout, all the 12 FMAs have already delineated their respective fishery management areas, but only 6 of them formally established their respective Management Body, whereas only 2 FMAs were able to formally appoint the members of the Scientific Advisory Group. But with the recent findings, all 12 FMA Management Bodies have already been constituted and all 12 Scientific Advisory Groups have been formed. This is a noteworthy achievement five years after the establishment of the FMA system in the country.

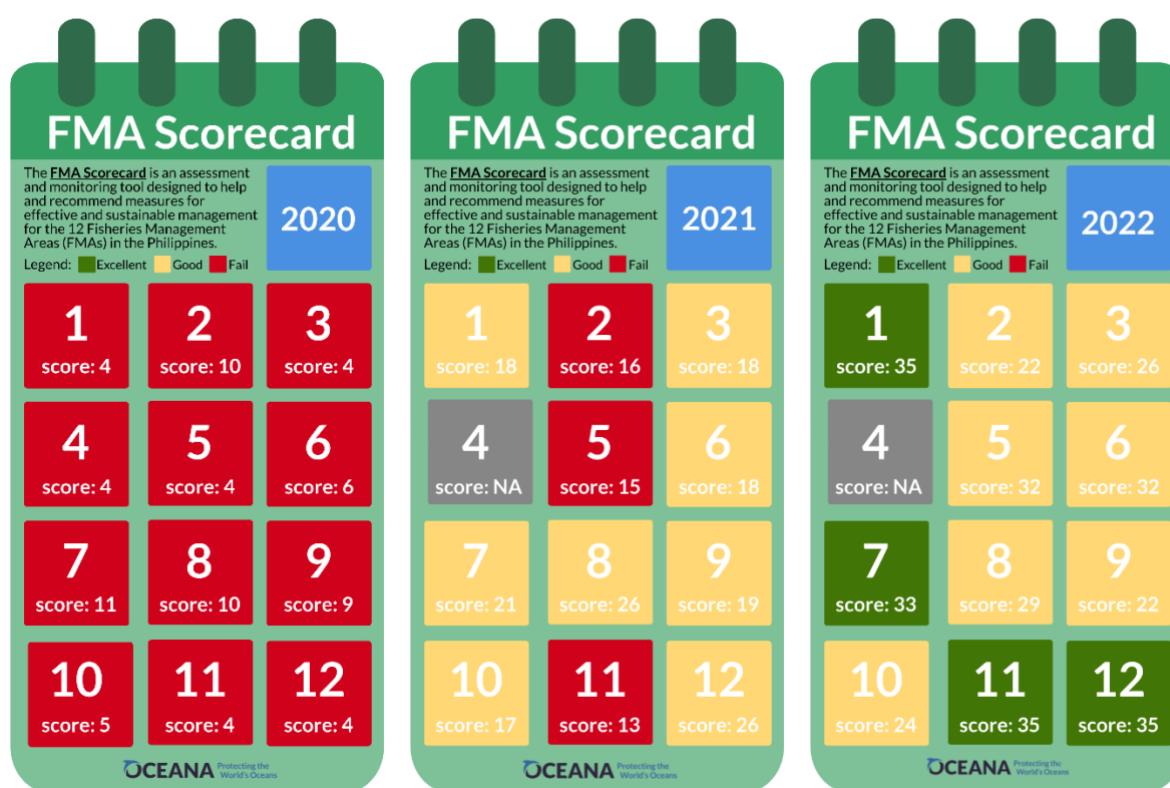


Figure 8. Summary of the Results / Status of FMA Implementation all over the 12 FMAs.

Status of Compliance

A pronounced trend running through the results of the rollout shows that indicators requiring thorough deliberation and discussion by a body or board remain unaccomplished by the majority, if not all, of the FMAs. Only half of the FMAs have established an FMA Management Plan; the majority (82%) of the FMA Scientific Advisory Groups have issued recommendations for the Reference Points and Harvest Control Rules to their Management Body, however, 90% of the Management Bodies have not adopted Reference Points, and 82% still have not established Harvest Control Rules that will guide Harvest Management Measures and other conservation measures in their FMA region.

An FMA Management Plan is important since it sets out policies and the framework to guide the actions of different key players like the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Local Government Units, and other stakeholders within the established FMA who are responsible for enforcing the plan. The FMA Management Plan, Reference Points, and Harvest Control Rules are indicators under the initiatory phase. Complying with these indicators, therefore, is crucial because these are foundational questions. In short, if these foundational indicators have not been complied with, inevitably, those succeeding indicators predicated on the presence of these foundational plans would not be fulfilled or performed. A key example of this is Indicator 4 which asks whether the FMA has its own FMA Management Plan. The 3 sub-indicators of Indicator 4 and the three other related indicators (Indicators 7, 8, & 20) can only comply if there is an existing FMA Management Plan in the first place.

Although the findings show that only half of the FMAs have produced their respective FMA Management Plans, reports show that they have already drafted them and are awaiting deliberation and approval of the Management Bodies. It was around the 3rd-4th Quarter of 2021 when most FMAs commenced preparatory planning, FMA framework planning workshops, initial stakeholder engagements, etc. Crafting a plan that will serve as the overarching framework for enforcement and decision-making in the whole FMA region is a lengthy process as it must undergo a thorough deliberation, coordination, and extensive consultation process.

Performance of FMAs which institutionalized the FMA Scorecard

As opposed to the other FMAs with only loose collaborations, the results revealed the three FMAs (FMA 7, 8, and 12) which formally adopted and institutionalized the FMA Scorecard as a monitoring and evaluation instrument to assess their performance displayed good overall performance. The Scientific Advisory Group of FMA 7, for instance, has already identified RPs and HCRs, and its Management Body as well as approved the recommended RPs and HCRs. FMA 8's Scientific Advisory Group has also recommended HCRs to its Management Body.

In addition, the Management Body of FMA 8 and 12 are the only Management Bodies that adopted management measures, policies, and regulations in their respective areas. FMA 8 even has enforcement measures installed to monitor compliance with the policies or regulations adopted by the FMA Management Body. The results further reveal that the three FMAs not only have a clear adjudication process in place at the FMA level, but they also have capacitated their enforcement officials to ensure that the conservation measures, policies, and regulations set up by the Management Body are properly enforced. This is essential because there is ample evidence showing that conservation law enforcement is essential to curbing the growing threats of human-related activities on protected species and landscapes (Hilborn et al. 2006, Jachmann 2008, Rizzolo et al. 2017). The presence of enforcers, and a clear, fair, and transparent adjudication system are vital to ensure that immediate action is taken to address all forms of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing within the FMA. Enforcing conservation measures and ensuring that violators are punished are necessary components of sustainable fishery management and conservation.

Community-level consultations and information dissemination

The findings of the recent assessment also revealed that only half (50%) of the FMAs conduct regular consultations with stakeholders, and FMA 12 is the sole FMA where stakeholder representatives conduct feedback and consultations with his or her constituency. FAO 263 underscores the importance of stakeholder participation and transparency in achieving the goal of sustainably managing fisheries. Since key sectors are only represented by an individual member, ensuring that consultations and feedback sessions are done by said representative is vital so that accountability to the constituency is maintained. Community involvement is necessary because evidence-based conservation efforts suggest that law enforcement efforts, presumably initiated by governmental authorities and supported by community-level engagement, are more effective at preventing and combating illegal behaviors targeting protected species (Waylen et al. 2010, Brooks et al. 2012, Nilsson et al. 2016).

Moreover, stakeholders must be informed and consulted because conservation and management measures that will later be implemented in the FMA impose certain limitations on the use of marine resources and will surely impact the livelihood strategies of the stakeholders. This reinforces the study of Bennett (2011) where he found that conservation success is often predicated on local support for conservation which is strongly influenced by perceptions of the impacts that are experienced by local communities and opinions of management and governance.

Therefore, it is important that as early as possible, FMAs emphasize increasing the level of awareness among their respective stakeholder communities. The good thing as of now is that we can verify based on the reports shared that FMA 1, 7, and 12 at this stage underscore popularizing the FMA concept by disseminating information, education, and communication (IEC) campaign materials like handouts, pamphlets, and other collaterals to stakeholders. FMA 1 and 7 are also engaging with stakeholders through social and mainstream media platforms. FMA 2, on the other hand, has planned to utilize radio advertisements in its IEC strategies.

Gaps and Challenges

Delays in the implementation due to the pandemic and natural disasters.

When the Philippines announced its first case of SARS-CoV-2 (“COVID-19”) on 30 January 2020, government-imposed lockdowns and public health measures were implemented nationwide to curb the rising COVID-19 infections. From time to time, closures and suspensions of government and business operations were declared and these lasted for 2 years (Year 2020 and 2021). Limitations in the conduct of physical meetings and travel restrictions coupled with adjustments to be made with online work arrangements overall contributed to the delay in implementation of FAO 263 especially in crafting the initiatory plans like the FMA plan, RPs, and HCRs which would require constant coordination and frequent discussions among management body members and stakeholders.

Aside from COVID-19, typhoons and other natural disasters persist to be a challenge in the Philippines. On December 16, 2021, Super Typhoon Odette made landfall in the Philippines and severely hit Regions XIII (CARAGA), VI (Western Visayas), VII (Central Visayas), VIII (Eastern Visayas) and IV-B (MIMAROPA) (OCHA 2022). The massive damage created by the typhoon disrupted normal activities in every sector. Some provinces waited two months,

others even more, before things returned to normal - electricity, internet signal, work schedule, etc. This incident affected government operations including FMA activities in areas particularly hit by the typhoon causing further delays in the planning and some in the implementation of their scheduled activities.

It is encouraging to note, however, that the FMAs took these challenges into opportunities to use the available technology. Online and hybrid meetings are quite common and are done with ease and open opportunities for increased engagement and participation from different stakeholders and organizations since it is more accessible, time-saving, and cost-effective.

However, online meetings are less impactful than those conducted in person. As we try to shift back to the pre-COVID setup, the FMAs are also trying to work on gathering the stakeholders based in different areas, to attend the meetings in person and discuss policies exhaustively yet they must work on a limited budget.

Lack of or inadequate budget to implement the FMAs nationwide.

One of the main challenges in the FMA implementation is the lack of or inadequate budget. While it is a great milestone in ensuring better fisheries governance, a stable and sufficient budgetary allocation per FMA is needed. This will allow the operationalization and implementation of FMA Management Plans in all sectors and ensure that harvest control rules and management are implemented with target key indicators and the overall goal of restoring fisheries abundance.

Fisheries Management Areas 6 and 9, have recently been granted support through the Philippine Fisheries and Coastal Resiliency Project⁴ of the World Bank. The project comprises fisheries and coastal resilient resource planning and management, modern and resilient livelihood investments, and support for project implementation and management.

FMAs need institutionalized budgetary support to sustain and ensure that better fisheries reforms are implemented, and goals are achieved with good results.

Local Government Unit (LGU)'s active participation, support, and key role in the local implementation.

The local government units have a key role in the FMA implementation. The local chief executives need to be properly informed and have a deeper understanding of this important position. FMAs with active local chief executives and regional representatives of the Department of the Interior and Local Government who personally and actively attend the meetings have found it easier to ensure that policies are implemented in the grassroots and communities. Several crucial issues could also be discussed including deep seabed mining, black sand mining, seabed quarrying, and law enforcement, among others.

There is a need to institutionalize the local chief executives' (Co-Chairpersons) role in the Management Body, which is impacted every three years following the local elections. The same holds true when there is a change in the officers representing the government agencies/sectors. A comprehensive Manual of Operations on the process can help the transition of the FMAs.

⁴ <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P174137>. Accessed December 20, 2023.

It must be noted that FAO 263 did not diminish the authority of LGUs within its municipal waters. The *bantay dagat* officers in each LGU within the FMA are strong potential partners in enforcing measures and policies adopted by the FMA.

Moreover, since LGUs are vested with legislative powers, they may even reinforce the plans, policies, and measures adopted at the FMA level by replicating the same in their jurisdictions through the enactment of ordinances with penalty provisions in case of breach.

Implementation of science-based, participatory, and transparent FMA with a sense of urgency.

There is a need for concrete actions to implement harvest control rules and measures. While data gathering and capacitation are crucial, they must be geared with a sense of urgency to implement policies with measurable indicators to achieve results. Existing plans including the National Sardines Management Plan, Tuna Management Plan, and Blue Swimming Crab Plan, among others, have existed for years and they need to be already implemented. Strengthened implementation and enforcement is crucial in every Plan.

Conclusion

In summary, the Fisheries Management Area Scorecard 3rd Rollout Report (Report) provides an update on the status of the FMA System in the Philippines taking off from the provisions of the Amended Fisheries Code of the Philippines and the Fisheries Administrative 263, series of 2019. It highlights both the achievements and the imperative for sustained efforts, collaborative engagement, and strategic reforms to ensure the sustainable management of fisheries in the Philippines.

The Report also underscores the pressing need for immediate action: urgent implementation of harvest control rules and measures, the institutionalization of FMA with a sufficient budget, the crucial role of the active involvement of the members of the Management Body, engagement with key stakeholders, and implementation of the Plans set in place.

A key recommendation is the inclusive involvement of all stakeholders in the implementation process, emphasizing the importance of science-based policies. Recognizing the escalating impacts of climate change on fisheries, the Report calls for proactive measures, urging fisheries managers to act promptly and prioritize the perspectives of marginalized stakeholders, particularly the poor and vulnerable fishers.

Furthermore, the Report underscores the critical role of transparency in policy implementation. It likewise emphasizes that effective outcomes are contingent on the stakeholders' clear understanding of the policy framework and the ability to implement and measure results.

Recommendations

Given the findings of this assessment, as well as the challenges identified, we propose the following recommendations:

First, an institutionalized sufficient budget for the 12 FMAs. A sufficient budget is key in effecting reforms. While Management Plans are helpful, implementation with results should be the soul of each policy. Legislators through the House of Representatives and the Senate will fully support a regular budgetary allocation. The Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028⁵ already includes fully operationalizing the fisheries management areas (FMA), especially the convening of FMA management bodies and developing and implementing the fisheries management plans as one of the priorities. Milestones have already been accomplished by the FMAs over the past four years – this translated into several capacities built over the years with various stakeholders in our fisheries sector – from national, regional, local, and grassroots levels. Sustaining these efforts is crucial to the realization of the goals of the FMAs.

Second, coming up with an approved FMA Plan, and Reference Points and Harvest Control Rules is most important so the FMAs can wrap up and move forward to the implementation phase. However, since FAO 263 does not provide for a definite period when to come up with the FMA Plan, Reference Points, and Harvest Control Rules, wide discretion is left to the FMAs. This uncertainty and unpredictability could be addressed if FMAs create a time-specific work plan to guide the implementation and monitor progress as well. This can also be further reinforced if BFAR will craft an issuance setting a definite period and imposing a mandatory deadline for the submission of an FMA Management Plan. A perusal of the annual reports shared shows that only FMA 2 has come up with an implementation plan for 2022 which indicates that they will be finalizing their FMA Management Plan.

Third, aside from the FMA Management Plan, the focus should also be given to crafting of FMA-wide Enforcement Plan, and the creation of a strong enforcement team. FMAs may also opt to strengthen the *bantay dagat* enforcement officers of covered LGUs. Support by way of the use of technology in detecting illegal fishing, procurement of patrol boats and other necessary equipment, the conduct of city building training, and paralegal training for enforcers is also necessary for a smooth implementation of the FMA plan and other policies. In this aspect, civil society organizations may help in awareness-raising and capacity-building training for local government units, enforcers, and fisherfolk stakeholders. Capacitating enforcers and getting the support of LGUs would contribute greatly to enforcement since these units are clearly more influential in mobilizing local people and experience tells us that LGUs are critical actors when we deal with implementation. Aside from this, capacity-building training sessions may also provide a good opportunity to share best practices that other FMAs can replicate or share other learning experiences. The preparation of template ordinances and resolutions that LGUs may adopt is also one aspect in which CSOs (civil society organizations) can assist them.

Fourth, the key role of the Local Government Units and the supervision of the Department of the Interior and Local Government. Strong community-level adopted policies and enforcement are key factors for the successful implementation of fishery management and conservation measures. Hence coastal LGUs must be involved in every step of the process and play a more proactive role in the decision process. The purpose is to ensure that plans both at the FMA level and LGU level are updated and aligned but, more importantly, get their

⁵ [Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 - Philippine Development Plan \(neda.gov.ph\)](https://neda.gov.ph/philippine-development-plan-2023-2028). Accessed December 20, 2023.

commitment and support in the enforcement of policies, measures, and guidelines. The active participation and local implementation of the FMA plans among the component LGUs would help ensure positive impacts are felt among the communities. The Department of the Interior and Local Government can also help with their supervision functions and include this as one of the indicators in the Fisheries Compliance Audit (FISHCA) and in the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG).

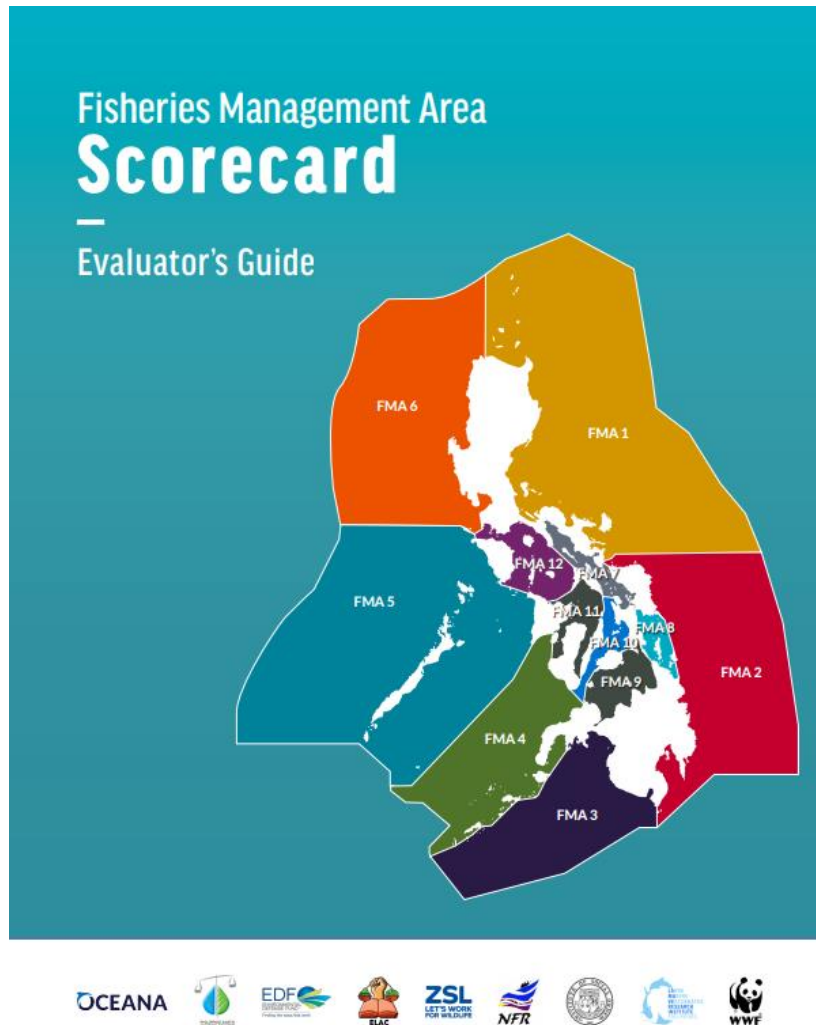
Fifth, as the concept of fisheries management areas is relatively new, it is important to intensify information dissemination to reach as many stakeholders as possible. Crafting information materials written in the local dialect, like what FMA 2 did, is replicable. Keeping stakeholders informed will give way for a more meaningful consultation process as it will allow them to participate actively in the discussions and empower them to express concerns. Utilizing mainstream media, social media, and other online platforms to expand the scale of information dissemination like what FMAs 1, 7, and 12 are doing is a notable approach worth exploring.

Sixth, FMAs should also strengthen existing participatory mechanisms designed to promote public participation. Public participation can improve environmental governance by reducing governance costs and improving policy flexibility, especially with long-term aspirations of sustainable fishery management in addition to creating a sense of ownership on the part of the constituent stakeholders in ensuring an effective FMA System.

Lastly, the importance of transparency tools is important in FMAs. Having a well-maintained website or social media helps in informing the stakeholders. Also, Scorecards like the FMA Compliance are highly encouraged for civil society organizations - ideally one from each FMA - to lead in undertaking the FMA Scorecard on an annual basis.

For the next Report, it would be ideal to have a one-on-one session with each FMA regional office lead who submitted their scorecard to verify and discuss the results and probe into some practical details or considerations in the process that are sometimes not captured by the scorecard.

Fisheries Management Area Scorecard Evaluator's Guide⁶



The Fisheries Management Area Scorecard Evaluator's Guide is a step-by-step guide for performing the FMA compliance assessment. It contains two sections: (1) General Principles on Fisheries Management Areas and (2) Technical Guidance on the conduct of the compliance assessment.

The FMA Scorecard is designed for use in all relevant government and non-government sectors, at the FMA level. It is designed with this flexibility in mind because FMA compliance assessment is useful at all levels. The Scorecard can be used by government officials as well as external evaluators from civil society organizations. It is available [online](#).

Fisheries Management Area Scorecard:
[FINAL FMA-Scorecard FINAL.pdf \(oceana.org\)](#)

⁶https://ph.oceana.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/FINAL_FMA-Scorecard_Evaluators-Guide_FINAL.pdf.
Accessed December 20, 2023.

Fisheries Management Area Scorecard Evaluator's Guide:
[FINAL FMA-Scorecard Evaluators-Guide FINAL.pdf \(oceana.org\)](#)

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