

MFF Communications 2008 Evaluation – Summary for RSC-4

The “MFF brand” has been well-established during 2008. It has been an action-packed year for MFF with many MFF organised events, and national, regional and international events that MFF has participated in (see annex I). In addition to planned events there were a range of unforeseen activities and events were there were opportunities to promote and further the profile of MFF.

Monitoring and Evaluation of MFF Communications

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for MFF communications aims to assess whether the communications objectives have been met, and to measure the effectiveness of the communications system. Verifiable indicators and specific evaluation methods for MFF communications activities have been developed. These are specified in the communications strategy and the results are evaluated and presented at each subsequent RSC meeting.

There are five communications objectives in direct support of MFF programme objectives which have both verifiable indicators and means of verification. Below is a summary of the monitoring and evaluation of these under each objective.

Objective 1: Communicate MFF activities to both internal stakeholders and external audiences in a timely, accurate and professional manner;

Monitoring

Verifiable Indicators	Means of verification
E-newsletter subscription increase	Bi-monthly Report
Number of website updates	Bi-monthly Report
Website usage statistics	Bi-monthly statistics
Uptake of news items by press	Monitor press articles

This objective was monitored by using e-newsletter subscription increase as an indicator and the number of website updates, as well as website statistics. The website statistics include:

- Number of visitors
- Number of files up loaded
- Number of hits
- Entry pages
- Number of referrers
- Search items

E-newsletter subscription

The first bi-monthly MFF e-newsletter was 4 pages and was sent out in January 2008 to ca 60 people based on the RSC meetings lists of participants and IUCN and UNDP colleagues. There were a total of six issues in 2008. The last issue was 8 pages and was sent out in December 2008 to 919 subscribers (see figure 1). The piechart below (figure 2) shows the different categories of subscribers. This is a clear indication that MFF events are useful for increasing awareness and interest in the

initiative. MFF held three events at the recent IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC) which resulted in 184 e-newsletter subscribers alone.

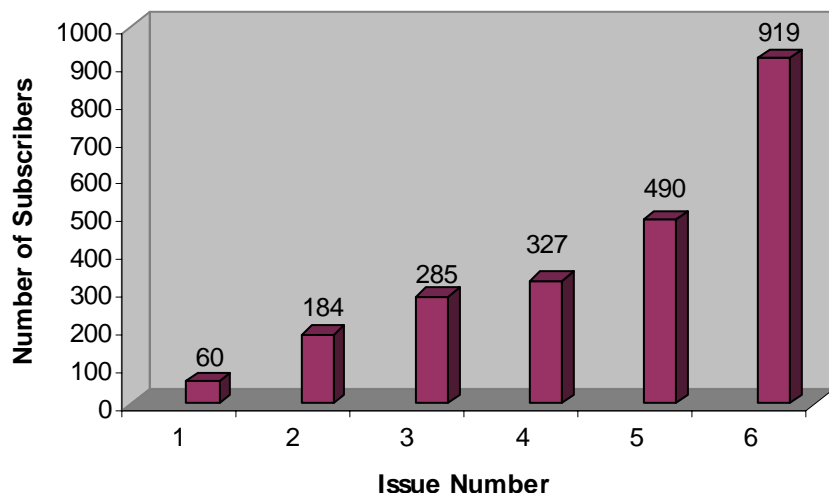


Figure 1 E-Newsletter subscriptions per issue

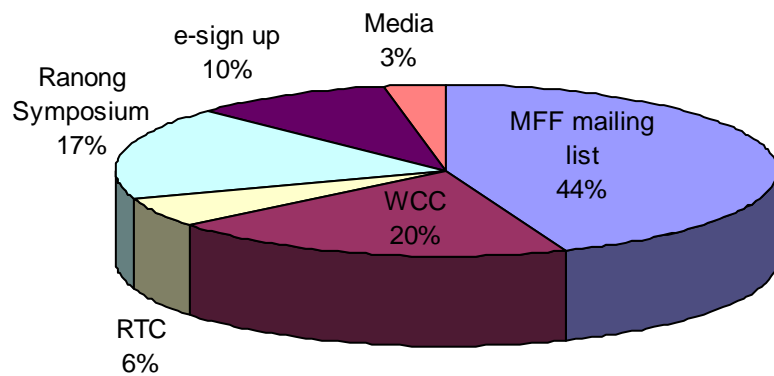


Figure 2 MFF e-Newsletter subscribers

Website Statistics

Website statistics are accurate and useful to monitor number of visitors (per day or month) and their interest. The visitor's interest can be monitored by the pages visited i.e events, media, resource documents etc. The web statistics will also show website referrers, ie. Wetlands International has a link to the MFF website, or if someone has added it on their facebook. The MFF website was launched 21 February, 2008. It had 63 visits that month compared to 1570 visit in December 2008 (see figure 3.). The daily average number of hits for 2008 was 100. The website statistics showed a positive correlation between hits and content development (up loading information and files).

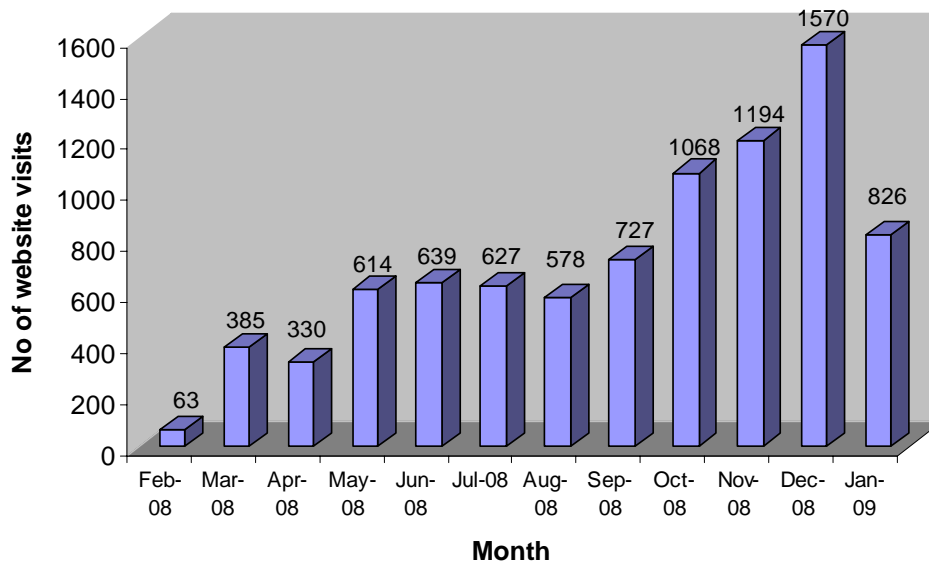


Figure 3 Website visitors February 2008 to January 2009

Summary by Month										
Month	Daily Avg					Monthly Totals				
	Hits	Files	Pages	Visits	Sites	KBytes	Visits	Pages	Files	Hits
Dec 2008	452	232	132	50	879	4130389	1570	4120	7214	14016
Feb 2008	122	76	34	12	28	20048	63	172	381	611

Website referrers

50 percent of the referrers are through direct requests. This is followed by Google, yahoo! search engines, and the IUCN website. There are also a number of other websites that have links to the MFF website.

What are the visitors interested in?

The website statistics showed the top entry pages. Top entries were:

1. Ranong Mangrove Symposium
2. MFF Regional Training Course (RTC)
3. The MFF shortfilm (coastal ecosystems)
4. News and Media
5. MFF Regional Review Forum
6. Resource documents
7. Events
8. How we work
9. Contacts
10. IUCN World Conservation Congress events
11. Exchange (password restricted section of the website)

The website statistics service allows you to see which documents were downloaded most frequently. According to this service, the training course materials were most frequently downloaded the Project Cycle Management and module presentations in particular.

Searches

Because the word mangroves appears in the initiatives name most key word searches included mangroves. Below are a few examples of searches:

1. Mangroves for the Future
2. Coastal Development
3. Mangrove ecosystems
4. Mangroves and climate change
5. IUCN and MFF
6. Ranong coastal research station
7. Ecosystem management approach to mangrove conservation
8. Individual names

Evaluation

During 2008, MFF has effectively communicated its activities to both internal and external audiences. There has been an exponential growth in the number of subscribers to the e-newsletter and website visitors. To maintain this growth it is important that new materials and content is being developed for the website for returning visitors. The number of visitors may stagnate or even decline if the website is being revisited and there have been no updates, the visitor will not return. It is therefore essential that the website continuously evolves and have updated information so that people will use it as a resource to find information. The website launched early last year had a simple design with the aim that it expand over time as more information/documents were up loaded and more features became available. It has now reached its capacity and it needs to be redesigned to accommodate information on projects and pages dedicated to each MFF focal country. A website for the Thailand NCB has already been established which contains information both in Thai and in English.

MFF has also communicated its activities through other means of sharing information in addition to the e-newsletter and website. Several article have been submitted to magazines other organisations publications, as well as presentations at meetings in and out side the region. In addition, there have also been several reports put out by the MFF Communications on events (RSC meetings, MFF Review Forum, RTC Ranong, and WCC). See Obj. 2 M & E for news items uptake by press.

Objective 2: Adopt a pro-active communication approach, communicating successes and lessons learned, and seeking new opportunities for information sharing and other forms of cooperation;

Verifiable Indicators	Means of verification
Media tracking Partnership formation Project proposal submissions	Monitor press and blogs New partnerships Increased project portfolio

Indicators for objective 2 were Media tracking, partnership development and project proposal submission. There has been uptake of news items by press during 2008. The majority of these were associated with the following events; MFF Review Form, RSC-3, IUCN WCC Press briefing in Bangkok, events at WCC (film launch, workshop and press conference), IUCN press release after Cyclone Nargis and other MFF Press releases.

A total of 7 press releases have been disseminated to media in 2008. However, no media tracking service was subscribed to during 2008. MFF communications had a trial with Meltwaters News service during the fall and was able to track media coverage during a short period of time as well as back track to events earlier in the year. MFF appeared both in International and local Radio; BBC World News and Ranong Radio (Thailand). A press trip was held in conjunction with the Ranong Mangrove Symposium mainly targeting national media which resulted in media uptake of articles in Thai newspapers.

New alliances have been formed and partner organisations have expressed great interest in MFF and our activities and ways to collaborate. SGF and large project guidelines are available on the MFF website and deadlines for submissions have been included in the e-newsletter. A total of four large project proposals were received and several SGFs.

Evaluation

MFF communications have adopted a pro-active approach in promoting MFF and its activities. More effort should be placed on media and frequency of press releases. Templates for media products such as press releases and advisories are available from the MFF Secretariat, but a media strategy needs to be developed for MFF. Further, MFF needs a media tracking software service to monitor uptake by press. This will also allow us to tailor information and press releases according to the media interests. As MFF projects develop there will be more stories and news to disseminate to media.

Objective 3: Build organizational communication capacity to effectively deliver the MFF objectives;

Verifiable Indicators	Means of verification
Number of project reports received	Secretariat records
Number of project reports used in promotional activities	Website and e-newsletter log
Contributions to e-newsletter	e-news review
Frequency of press release	Bi-monthly report

Some of the verifiable indicators for this objective were not applicable, such as the number of projects reports received and used in promotional activities given that project implementation had not begun in 2008. The aim was to establish a communication focal point from each institutional partner and their offices across the region to share and disseminate information and help promote MFF and capture activities and experiences. It is crucial that the communications network increases and strengthens as projects develop on the ground.

Evaluation

Little contributions to the e-newsletters have been received during 2008 from partners and focal countries. It is hoped that as projects develops information will also be shared through a communications focal point network, resulting in both an increase in topical project information contributions and the frequency of press releases.

Objective 4: Track and manage an MFF knowledge product portfolio across the initiative and its projects to support outcomes-based evaluation;

Verifiable Indicators	Means of verification
Number of training tools developed and disseminated	Report, Questionnaire
Number of coastal managers receiving information regularly	Quarterly Web-based Questionnaire
Number of coastal managers contributing information regularly	Quarterly Web-based Questionnaire

Monitoring

Training tools have been developed and disseminated. The training course materials were evaluated through a questionnaire, and results disseminated to participants (see RTC Summary evaluation report in RSC-4 folder under annexes). The other indicators were not applicable to the inception phase of MFF and can only be measured once project activities are underway.

Evaluation

Evaluation reports have revealed a strong request for more packaged information/materials to be used for capacity building purposes.

Objective 5: Facilitate the acquisition of funds and co-financing opportunities to advance sustainable coastal ecosystem management in the region.

Verifiable Indicators	Means of verification
Regular communication Timely reports	Level of engagement and interest in MFF activities Increased/continued support

Monitoring

MFF has produced and packaged a lot of products throughout the year. This can be verified the exponential increase in the number of files/reports uploaded to the website. The MFF brand has been heavily promoted in 2008 and is well established as a result. MFF has regularly communicated its activities, events and positive press media coverage to its donors. Annual reports and other reporting requirements have also been met.

Evaluation

MFF donors have shown increased level of engagement in MFF activities (organised events etc) our main donors have agreed to continued support for MFF. There has also been interest from potential new donors during the later half of 2008 to be targeted through the MFF fundraising strategy in 2009.

Activities/events	Audiences	Products and Tools	Expected outcomes	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
RSC Meeting & Reporting	RSC meeting participants, and other MFF stakeholders	Meeting report ✓	Update and endorsement of recommendations ✓							
MFF Review Forum Sri Lanka (not originally listed)	RSC members, partners, experts, consultants	Folders, Media advisory, reports, webstories ✓	Review activities, situation analysis, document and disseminate ✓							
Website updates	MFF Stakeholders and the general public	Web stories, Press release, MFF reports and documents ✓	Effective and timely dissemination of programme information ✓							
E-newsletter	The MFF Network (including partners and donors)	A 6p newsletter with stories from the region, and up date on events and other activities ✓	Raising awareness and keeping existing MFF stakeholders up dated ✓							
Regional Training course, Indonesia	Practitioners, associated partners and project staff, academia	Promotional materials, Training packages, press ✓	Capacity building (economic valuation of coastal ecosystems, and community participation resource management), Press articles ✓							
Information Bulletin	Coastal managers, policy-and decision-makers, MFF countries, partners, and other stakeholders	Production and dissemination of bulletin ✗	Disseminate information and raise awareness on coastal issues and emerging management trends							
Scientific symposium 22-25 November Ranong, Thailand	Experts, relevant Governments and agencies, and Media	Brochure Website ✓	Technical information shared ✓							
WCC Press event Sept, Bangkok	Press, general public, Regional policy-makers and government	Press Release, Media Advisory, briefs ✓	Increased awareness of MFF and the congress ✓							
WCC MFF Events (film, workshop, press conference)	MFF partners, IUCN members, NGO's, academia, governments, potential donors, and media	Workshop materials Media, posters, t-shirts, hats, revised brochure ✓	Identify opportunities for new partnerships, investments from new donors and media coverage ✓							

Additional Events

Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands – Hanoi, April 2008

CGI Exchange NYC – September 2008

Other meetings in BKK, i.e. AIDCO/ISDR, MFF NCB workshops and meetings

Photography mission- April, 2008;

Video (southern Thailand), Aug- 2008;

Media Training- September, 2008,

Press trip- Nov, 2008

Cyclone Nargis- UN Flash appeal meeting