

Scenario: “The 30x30 pressure”

Activity created by Dr. Jessica Blythe

The national government of a small coastal nation has just designated a new large-scale MPA covering 300,000 km² of ocean. The MPA will push the country past its 30×30 commitment and unlock a US\$40 million conservation finance package from an international blue economy fund.

The MPA was designated rapidly, over 14 months, to meet a Conference of the Parties (COP) deadline. It overlaps with the ancestral sea territory of Indigenous people, who have governed these waters under a customary tenure system for generations. Their traditional governance council was consulted twice. Once via a government-run meeting conducted in the national language (not the local language), and once through a written submission process requiring internet access that most community members do not have.

The MPA prohibits all commercial extraction in its core zone (60% of the area) and restricts small-scale fishing in the buffer zone to licensed permit holders only. The permit system has not yet been established, meaning that fishing has effectively ceased for the 2,400 people in the four villages who depend on it for food and income. Distant-water fishing fleets from two foreign nations, whose access agreements pre-date the MPA, have been granted transitional exemptions for three years.

The \$40 million finance package is managed by the international NGO that led the scientific case for the MPA. A community benefit fund of \$2 million has been promised, but the structure and distribution criteria are not yet defined. The MPA management authority, newly created, has no Indigenous representation on its board. The NGO's communications celebrate the designation as a landmark win for ocean conservation.

Room A. National Government - Ministry of Environment/Ocean Affairs

Activity created by Dr. Jessica Blythe

Your ministry championed this designation. You negotiated hard for the finance package and faced a non-negotiable Conference of the Parties (COP) deadline. You conducted formal consultations as required by domestic law and believe the permit system and benefit fund will deliver real community gains once they are operational. You see the MPA as a genuine conservation achievement that will also lift coastal livelihoods long-term. You are proud of what was accomplished under difficult political constraints.

Task: Score the ‘**human and Indigenous rights**’ & ‘**benefit sharing**’ criteria *from the National Government’s perspective*. Have someone in the room record the scores and a sentence about your reasoning.

	Very poor (0)	Poor (1)	Good (2)	Very good (3)
 Human and Indigenous rights	Human and Indigenous rights are violated by the ocean initiative.	No recognized need for policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights.	Recognized need for policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights.	Policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights are identified and/or implemented
 Benefit sharing	Benefits from the ocean initiative flow to powerful actors, and away from marginalized groups or communities.	No recognized need for benefit sharing mechanism(s).	Recognized need for benefit sharing mechanism(s).	Benefit sharing mechanism(s) are identified and/or implemented.

Discussion prompts for your room

- The consultations met domestic legal requirements. Does that mean the Human & Indigenous rights criterion is satisfied?
- The benefit fund is promised but not yet operational. Does a commitment count, or only implementation?
- How do you weigh the long-term benefit of conservation finance against short-term livelihood disruption?



Room B. Community Council

Your council has governed these waters for generations. Your customary tenure system is unwritten but well understood within the community. It includes seasonal closures, species-specific harvests, & sacred sites. You were invited to two government meetings but had no meaningful input into the MPA boundary or management rules. The designation happened. Your fishers cannot work. No one has consulted you on the benefit fund. You did not consent to this MPA, and you have said so publicly.

Task: Score the ‘**human and Indigenous rights**’ & ‘**benefit sharing**’ criteria *from the Community Council’s perspective*. Have someone in the room record the scores and a sentence about your reasoning.

	Very poor (0)	Poor (1)	Good (2)	Very good (3)
 Human and Indigenous rights	Human and Indigenous rights are violated by the ocean initiative.	No recognized need for policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights.	Recognized need for policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights.	Policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights are identified and/or implemented
 Benefit sharing	Benefits from the ocean initiative flow to powerful actors, and away from marginalized groups or communities.	No recognized need for benefit sharing mechanism(s).	Recognized need for benefit sharing mechanism(s).	Benefit sharing mechanism(s) are identified and/or implemented.

Discussion prompts for your room

- Consultations did happen. At what point does inadequate consultation become a rights violation vs. simply poor practice?
- The benefit fund promises \$2M for the community. Does a promised benefit change how you score benefit sharing today?
- Your customary system already protected this area. Does the MPA recognize or erase that governance?



Room C. Fishing Cooperative

Activity created by Dr. Jessica Blythe

Your cooperative represents 340 fishing households across the four villages. Fishing is not a choice; it is how your members feed their families and earn income. Since the MPA came into force, your members have stopped fishing because the permit system doesn't exist yet and rangers have begun patrols. Meanwhile, you have watched foreign distant-water vessels continue operating under their transitional exemption. You feel the MPA was done to you, not with you, and that outsiders bear none of the cost.

Task: Score the **‘human and Indigenous rights’** & **‘benefit sharing’** criteria *from the Fishing Cooperative's perspective*. Have someone in your room record the scores and a sentence about your reasoning.

	Very poor (0)	Poor (1)	Good (2)	Very good (3)
 Human and Indigenous rights	Human and Indigenous rights are violated by the ocean initiative.	No recognized need for policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights.	Recognized need for policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights.	Policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights are identified and/or implemented
 Benefit sharing	Benefits from the ocean initiative flow to powerful actors, and away from marginalized groups or communities.	No recognized need for benefit sharing mechanism(s).	Recognized need for benefit sharing mechanism(s).	Benefit sharing mechanism(s) are identified and/or implemented.

Discussion prompts for your room

- Foreign fleets have a 3-year exemption; your members have stopped fishing now. How does that asymmetry affect your scores?
- The \$2M community fund is 5% of the total finance package. Is any benefit sharing score above 0 justified at this ratio?
- What would need to change for you to score benefit sharing a 2 or 3?



Room D. International Conservation NGO

Activity created by Dr. Jessica Blythe

Your organization led the scientific case for this MPA and manages the \$40M finance package. You ran the consultation process on behalf of the government and believe you followed best practice given the timeline. You have a fiduciary responsibility to funders who require demonstrable conservation outcomes. You are committed to the \$2M community fund and are now designing its structure. You see yourselves as a bridge between conservation ambition and community benefit. You acknowledge the process was imperfect.

Task: Score the **'human and Indigenous rights'** & **'benefit sharing'** criteria *from the International Conservation NGO's perspective*. Have someone in your room record the scores and a sentence about your reasoning.

	Very poor (0)	Poor (1)	Good (2)	Very good (3)
 Human and Indigenous rights	Human and Indigenous rights are violated by the ocean initiative.	No recognized need for policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights.	Recognized need for policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights.	Policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights are identified and/or implemented
 Benefit sharing	Benefits from the ocean initiative flow to powerful actors, and away from marginalized groups or communities.	No recognized need for benefit sharing mechanism(s).	Recognized need for benefit sharing mechanism(s).	Benefit sharing mechanism(s) are identified and/or implemented.

Discussion prompts for your room

- You followed "best practice given the timeline." Does the OEI allow for context-adjusted scoring, or are standards absolute?
- You manage the finance and are designing the community fund. Does that create a conflict of interest in how you score benefit sharing?



Room E. MPA Management Authority

Activity created by Dr. Jessica Blythe

Your authority was created six months ago to manage this MPA. You inherited the designation, yet you played no role in the consultation process. You are understaffed, your permit system is not yet built, and your board has no Indigenous representation despite your requests to government. You want to do this well but are caught between government reporting requirements, NGO funder timelines, and community frustration. You see the equity problems clearly and feel constrained in your ability to fix them.

Task: Score the **'human and Indigenous rights'** & **'benefit sharing'** criteria *from the MPA management authority's perspective*. Have someone in your room record the scores and a sentence about your reasoning.

	Very poor (0)	Poor (1)	Good (2)	Very good (3)
 Human and Indigenous rights	Human and Indigenous rights are violated by the ocean initiative.	No recognized need for policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights.	Recognized need for policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights.	Policies or processes to protect human and Indigenous rights are identified and/or implemented
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Discussion prompts for your room

- You can see the equity failures but didn't cause them. Does the OEI score the initiative or the institution doing the scoring?
- You've requested Indigenous representation and been refused. Does that effort change your score, or only outcomes do?
- How might you use an honest OEI assessment as a tool to push back on government and funders?

