



Policy brief

## *A Template for Resilience:* Standardizing ICRMPs with Ecosystem-based Adaptation

### The need for a standardized ICRMP template

This brief proposes a standardized template for Integrated Coastal Resource Management Plans (ICRMPs) that integrates Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA). Ecosystem-based adaptation leverages the conservation and management of natural ecosystems and their services to protect and sustain communities, strengthening their resilience against climate change. The template aims to streamline coastal resource management by providing a clear and consistent framework and to increase the adoption of effective EbA measures, ultimately enhancing climate adaptation in coastal municipalities across the Philippines.

The eight local government units belonging to the Pacific Alliance of LGUs for Marine Resource Development (PALMDev<sup>1</sup>) shall pilot this template.

### KEY POINTS

- A standardized EbA-enhanced ICRMP template is currently absent in most member-municipalities of PALMDev.
- This absence of a standardized template increases the chance of incomplete and/or delayed ICRMPs, impeding prompt and effective action against urgent environmental threats.
- PALMDev is ideally positioned to champion and lead the collaborative adoption of a standardized EbA-integrated ICRMP template across its member-municipalities.
- The standardized EbA-integrated ICRMP template will enable more robust, efficient, and cost-effective ICRMP development for all PALMDev LGUs by providing clear guidance, streamlining the planning process and fostering knowledge sharing and collaboration.

<sup>1</sup>PALMDev is based in Southern Leyte, Philippines. Founded in 2010, it comprises the municipalities of Silago, Hinunangan, Hinundayan, Anahawan, San Juan, Saint Bernard, Liloan, and San Ricardo.



As an alliance of municipalities bordering the Silago-Cabalian Bay, PALMDev is well-positioned to champion the adoption of the standardized EbA-based template. It can leverage the experience of Saint Bernard, which, in collaboration with Environmental Defense Fund, has already developed an EbA-enhanced ICRMP (2024-2030). While still in its early stages of implementation, Saint Bernard's ICRMP could offer insights to refine the template, potentially benefiting other PALMDev and coastal municipalities.



## Barriers to ICRMP development

As mandated by Executive Order 533 of 2006, municipal governments are responsible for developing and implementing their ICRMPs. This plan, which must be developed and updated every five to six years, is essential for protecting municipal coastal zones and ensuring the sustainable use of resources.

Without the ICRMP, coastal development and conservation initiatives risk fragmentation, delays, and ineffectiveness, leading to further environmental degradation, social conflict, and lost opportunities.

Despite the recognized importance of ICRMPs, many coastal municipalities grapple with developing as well as implementing them. Of the eight PALMDev LGUs, only two (Saint Bernard and Hinundayan) have current ICRMPs. This challenge stems from several factors, such as:

**Lack of standardized prioritization framework and consistent planning approach.** Despite the existence of a recommended ICRMP outline, the absence of a standardized prioritization framework hinders municipal LGUs from effectively identifying and pursuing the best course of action for sustainable development and climate resilience. Also, the lack of a consistent planning approach can exacerbate poor communication, conflicting goals, and wasted resources.

**LGU capacity deficiencies.** Many LGUs lack the personnel and technical expertise to create effective ICRMPs, particularly in areas such as coastal resource assessment, data analysis, and plan development.

**Limited access to best practices.** Best practices are not emphasized in ICRMP development, leaving municipal LGUs without adequate guidance and support.

**Logistical and financial constraints.** Securing adequate funding to support the development of an ICRMP remains a challenge. This often limits LGUs' ability to manage essential activities, such as travel, site visits, stakeholder consultations, workshops, and meetings.

## Advantages of a standardized ICRMP template

To address the current challenges in ICRMP development, a standardized template is essential. This can be achieved by:

**Establishing a common framework.** The template provides a shared language and reference point for LGUs, facilitating plan development, communication, resource pooling, and collaborative goal setting.

### *The case of Saint Bernard*

The LGU of Saint Bernard completed its ICRMP in the first quarter of 2025, but even with EDF's assistance, ICRMP development took ten months. A key takeaway from this initiative was the critical need for a streamlined process in developing the ICRMP. A readily available template, a clear prioritization framework, and a designated point person would likely contribute to a smoother and more efficient experience.

**Ensuring comparability.** Standardized ICRMPs enable LGUs to easily compare their plans, benchmark progress, and learn from each other's successes and challenges. This fosters a culture of continuous improvement and knowledge exchange.

**Promoting consistency.** Standardization ensures all LGUs adhere to essential principles and guidelines, regardless of their individual capacities. This eliminates inconsistencies, strengthens overall management effectiveness, and promotes equitable resource allocation.

### The benefits of integrating EbA in the standardized template

Integrating EbA streamlines ICRMP development for PALMDev municipalities by:

**Providing a prioritization framework.** EbA guides efficient identification and prioritization of key coastal ecosystems and their services, saving planning time and resources.

**Promoting multi-purpose planning.** The EbA-informed template promotes multi-objective management strategies (e.g., climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation, food security), eliminating separate planning processes.

**Promoting cost-effective solutions.** The template encourages nature-based solutions, often more cost-effective than engineered infrastructure.

**Aligning funding.** EbA integration aligns ICRMPs with national and international development goals, facilitating access to funding for climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation (e.g., Saint Bernard LGU's access to the People's Survival Fund).

**Enhancing economic justification.** The template helps quantify the economic value of ecosystem services, strengthening the case for natural resource management investments.

### Benefits of a timely ICRMP for key stakeholders

A timely and efficient Integrated Coastal Resource Management Plan (ICRMP) benefits several stakeholders:

**PALMDev-member LGUs.** The ICRMP improves coastal governance, leading to better management, fewer conflicts, and sustainable development. It increases climate resilience through prioritization of nature-based solutions, reducing disaster risks and protecting livelihoods. It also improves access to funding, making LGUs ready to propose projects and secure grants and investments from various funders.

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**Silago-Cabalian Bay coastal communities.** Timely implementation provides more opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and improved quality of life. Participatory planning empowers communities in decisions affecting their lives and environment.

**LGU partners (NGOs, tourism/aquaculture businesses, fisheries, and other industries).** The ICRMP creates a more predictable regulatory environment, fostering collaboration among stakeholders and increasing funding opportunities for projects benefiting the environment and local economy.





**Prioritize EbA in coastal resource management.** Ecosystems naturally cross political boundaries; thus, for coastal resource management to be truly effective, intergovernmental collaboration is a must. An ecosystem-based approach is essential for this reason. Specifically, an EbA-enhanced ICRMP under PALMDev leadership is critical, as the eight municipalities share the Silago-Cabalian Bay coastal ecosystem.

**Mandate standardized ICRMPs.** PALMDev should enforce a binding agreement (e.g., a PALMDev resolution) requiring all member LGUs to develop and adopt a standardized EbA-enhanced ICRMP template.

**Designate ICRMP focal persons.** To ensure effective ICRMP implementation, each municipality must designate an ICRMP focal person to oversee development, facilitate information sharing within the community and with relevant partners, and enhance local capacity.

**Facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration.** PALMDev, with development partners (NGOs, academia), should address municipal technical and capacity needs. This includes creating a knowledge hub to share best practices in EbA and facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing in coastal resource management.

## About the material

This policy brief draws on the experiences and recommendations derived from a project funded by the IUCN's Global EbA Fund and implemented by the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) in Saint Bernard, Southern Leyte, Philippines. The project supported a collaboration between the Saint Bernard Local Government Unit and EDF to develop the municipality's ICRMP. The policy triggers and recommendations presented here stem from the discussions and deliberations of the ICRMP's Technical Working Group regarding the need for a standardized EbA-based ICRMP template.

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For more details on the EbA-enhanced ICRMP template, visit <https://ssfhub.org/icrmpolicybrief> or scan the QR code.