

**There are many ‘types’ of MPAs (e.g. community, multiple use, World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves), managed for different purposes and in diverse ways. This sheet provides a basic understanding of these and describes the IUCN system of categorising protected areas according to their objectives.**

Terminology does not directly affect the day-to-day management of an MPA but it is important to note that countries and organisations use terms in different ways. IUCN and other international organisations have developed internationally recognised definitions and classification systems to help in communicating and sharing information.

## MPA DEFINITIONS

IUCN defines a protected area as an: *Area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means.*

This definition is the basis of the UN List of Protected Areas, numbering over 100,000 protected areas. This is a subset of the larger World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), managed by UNEP-WCMC.

An MPA is defined more specifically by IUCN as: *Any area of intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by law or other effective means to protect part or all of the enclosed environment.*

MPA is thus a generic term for any marine area that is protected for the primary objective of biodiversity conservation, and includes protected areas differing in purpose, design, management approach, and name (e.g. marine reserve, sanctuary, marine park). The phrase ‘reserved by law or other effective means’ means that areas set up under traditional law or through voluntary agreements can be termed MPAs provided the mechanism is effective. Other definitions can be found in the literature, but the IUCN one tends to be the most widely accepted.

Note that MPAs in one country may have different objectives and be managed differently from those with the same name in another. Thus in Kenya, National Marine Parks prohibit extraction, and National Marine Reserves allow it; whereas in Tanzania, Marine Parks allow fishing and Marine Reserves are no-take areas (see sheet 11). Sometimes sites that are not perceived as meeting IUCN’s

definition of an MPA are considered by the stakeholders themselves as MPAs. These include some no-take fisheries management areas (e.g. in Tanga Region, Tanzania) where regulation of exploitation, rather than conservation is the primary objective, and some areas under integrated coastal management programmes which may be very similar to multiple-use MPAs. This does not affect the management of an area, but MPA practitioners should be aware of it.

## IUCN PROTECTED AREA CATEGORIES

In 1994 IUCN published a system to categorise protected areas based specifically on management objectives with the aim of providing:

- a tool for promoting the development of a representative system of protected areas;
- a framework for collecting data;
- international standards for comparison across countries; and
- a means of promoting international understanding (a ‘common language’).

The IUCN system comprises six categories, all of which have equal importance (see table below). Categories Ia-III cover the stricter forms of protected area. Categories IV and V are for protected areas where cultural values and sustainable resource use are important additional management objectives. Category VI allows for many uses, although two thirds of the area should remain in its natural state. Countries are responsible for assigning categories for their protected areas, using the IUCN guidelines.

MPAs can be difficult to categorise. They may be administered by a different agency from terrestrial protected areas, which may not be familiar with IUCN procedures (for example if it is a Fisheries Department). Furthermore, MPAs do not always appear to fit comfortably into the existing categories system, particularly multiple-use MPAs and no-take areas. In some cases (e.g. Australian marine reserves) different categories are applied to different zones. There are plans to revise the IUCN 1994 guidelines with greater attention being paid to MPAs (see further information at [www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/sacl](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/sacl)).

### IUCN categories (I-VI) with WIO examples (where they exist).

- Ia.** Area managed mainly for science, or as a Strict Nature Reserve (Cousin I. Special Reserve, Seychelles).
- Ib.** Area managed mainly for wilderness protection.
- II.** Area managed mainly for ecosystem protection/recreation (all Marine National Parks in Kenya).
- III.** Area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features; often called a National Monument.
- IV.** Area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention e.g. habitat management areas (Mauritius Fishing Reserves).
- V.** Area managed mainly for land/seascape conservation and recreation.
- VI.** Area managed mainly for sustainable use of natural ecosystems e.g. multiple-use protected area (Mafia Island Marine Park, Tanzania).

## TRANSBOUNDARY MPAS

These are MPAs that adjoin each other across an international boundary, although the part on each side of the boundary is generally set up and managed nationally. A formal agreement is usually drawn up between the countries involved, and a coordinating mechanism established (e.g. a unit or commission). Mechanisms for joint enforcement activities, research and monitoring, and other management issues will then be established. At present, there are no transboundary MPAs in the WIO, although there are plans for the border between Tanzania and Mozambique.

## INTERNATIONAL DESIGNATIONS

Some MPAs have, in addition to their national designation, international status as a protected area. This is binding if the designation is made through an international agreement that the country has acceded to or ratified. This provides international recognition of the MPA, which may help when fund-raising and seeking other forms of assistance. In some cases, designation may open up opportunities for direct financial aid.

World Heritage (WH) Sites are established under the World Heritage Convention (<http://whc.unesco.org>), which was drawn up to conserve the world's cultural and natural heritage. Countries must be a party to the Convention if they wish to nominate a site and the site must already have some form of legal protection. The nomination procedure involves preparation of a detailed document explaining how the site meets the criteria laid out in the Convention, and notably its 'Outstanding Universal Value'. Following nomination the protected area is subject to a rigorous review procedure. At present there are only two marine WH Sites in the WIO: Aldabra in Seychelles and St Lucia in South Africa, but several MPAs potentially meet the criteria for nomination, for example in Mozambique.

Biosphere Reserves are established under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme. They make up a network of protected areas with a key aim of reconciling conservation and sustainable use with socio-economic development and maintenance of cultural values. They usually have to have a national designation. Biosphere reserves in the WIO with marine components include Kiunga and Malindi-Watamu in Kenya and Mananara-Nord in Madagascar. Details at [www.unesco.org/mab](http://www.unesco.org/mab)

Ramsar Sites are established under the Ramsar Convention

on Wetlands ([www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)), which defines a wetland to include "areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed 6m". Ramsar Sites do not require formal legal protection as the focus is on 'wise use', and so they are often not part of a national protected area system. There are few coastal and marine Ramsar sites in the WIO, but several are being planned.

### KEY POINTS FOR THE MPA

- ❑ MPA managers and other relevant staff should develop a general understanding of the IUCN category system and how their MPA fits into this.
- ❑ If the MPA might be suitable for nomination for an international designation, communicate this to the relevant government agency.
- ❑ If the MPA has international status, use this to raise funds, improve capacity, and manage the site more effectively.

### Sources of further information

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