

Conflict is common in MPA situations where there are many interests. If not addressed adequately, conflict will undermine the management of the MPA. Managers are generally wise to face conflict with and among user groups and to work for a solution, for this can lead to resolutions that enhance management and please - or appease - varied stakeholders. This sheet outlines key principles and some of the techniques available.

A variety of conflicts may arise in relation to an MPA, most often connected to resource allocation and to the need to rationalise the MPA's biodiversity objectives with its sustainable livelihood objectives. The participatory approach (see sheet B1) which is frequently recommended now in the context of protected area management, is based on the idea of achieving consensus among parties with different interests and objectives. This often requires resolving conflicts. Examples of conflicts include:

- Economic (e.g. between hoteliers and the management authority over entrance fees, when the hoteliers feel that an increase in fees will reduce the number of tourists visiting an area);
- Spatial and/or temporal (e.g. between fishers and dive operators wishing to use the same area);
- Governance related (e.g. local and traditional customs versus 'new' MPA authorities);
- Political and/or legal (e.g. allowing entry to and use of an area by certain stakeholder groups but not others).

In a conflict situation, one or more stakeholders are generally perceived as gaining (in terms of power or resources) at the expense of the others. Often conflict arises because of perceptions of inequity rather than actual inequity. While conflicts may drive individuals and groups apart, conflict resolution presents an opportunity to create new, better, and more creative solutions for dealing with problems. It should however be remembered, that law enforcement is also an important role of an MPA, and that where MPA legislation is being disregarded, there may be a need for firm action. In some cases this can be the trigger for a conflict resolution process itself, as demonstrated in the case study from Madagascar.

There are various conflict resolution methods, of which the most common are:

- Negotiation;
- Mediation;
- Arbitration;
- Community conferencing.

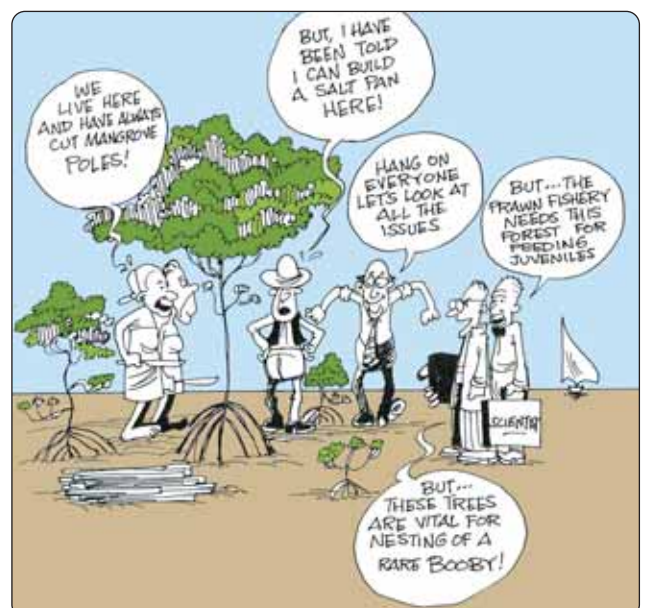
Details of these are given in the sources of further information provided overleaf. Managers may need to act as the facilitator or decision-maker, if the conflict relates to other stakeholders in the MPA. In some cases, the MPA itself may be part of the conflict, and the manager or other MPA personnel may have to negotiate with another party. To some extent, negotiation is like bargaining in a shop or market to reach an agreed price for a purchase. To be successful requires certain skills and practice, and a

manager should seek training in negotiating skills before embarking on conflict resolution.

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Some of the main steps involved in conflict resolution are as follows:

1. Check that all parties involved are ready to participate and willing to cooperate;
2. Ensure that the proposed meeting time and place is agreeable to all parties;
3. At the beginning of the meeting, ask each party to explain clearly what they want and why;
4. Identify areas of agreement;
5. Identify additional information required for all parties to understand the claims of others (if necessary, stop the process in order to obtain the information);
6. Identify the areas of disagreement;
7. Agree on a common overall goal for the negotiation – e.g. the MPA providing benefits for the stakeholders;
8. Help the parties compile a list of possible options to meet the goal;
9. List criteria against which each option should be measured – e.g. urgency, feasibility, economic returns;
10. Evaluate each option against these criteria;
11. Develop an agreement on one or more of the options that is satisfactory for all parties;
12. Decide on the processes, responsibilities and time-frames for implementation of the agreement;
13. Write up the decisions made and ask the parties to sign the agreement.



KEY POINTS FOR THE MPA

- ❑ Attempting to find something that can be agreed on, however small, can establish a tone of cooperation and problem-solving to tackle other issues.
- ❑ Admit mistakes, when appropriate, and be prepared to accept different opinions. A manager who admits a particular policy has not worked as intended can gain the support of the affected stakeholder groups and can help to gain trust and encourage positive future interaction.
- ❑ Avoid personal attacks and assigning blame. For example, a manager should not criticize the views of a fisher opposed to a new area closure, but should explain why the closure is needed, and ask the fisher to provide ideas on how to minimize negative impacts.
- ❑ Generating several potential answers to a problem helps to avoid or break deadlocks. If SCUBA diver impact in a sensitive coral area is causing conflict, rather than banning divers altogether, it may be possible to introduce several options such as having temporary closures, alternating days for different dive boats, and increasing diver education and monitoring of divers.
- ❑ Make sure there is an implementation plan once the conflict resolution process is complete.

Sources of further information

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CASE STUDY

Resolving a conflict with stakeholders in Masoala National Park

Masoala National Park was created in 1997 and includes three marine parks: Tampolo, Masoala-Ambodilaitry, and Tanjona. Until donor funding became available in September 2000, the marine parks existed only on paper: there were no regular patrols, the boundaries were unknown by the local population, and there was no agreement with local people over the fishing activities that were to be allowed. This situation led to a negative reaction, particularly from local fishers living around Tanjona marine park. This culminated in the establishment of a local fishers' association at Antsabobe aimed at countering marine park objectives and activities. The partnership between ANGAP (National Association for Protected Areas Management) and the Wildlife Conservation Society, with funding from WWF, permitted the implementation of the basic management systems. These included regular patrols, collaboration with local fishers' associations over access to marine resources, comprehensive regular monitoring, boundary marking, small scale development projects in the fishing communities, and education programs to explain the importance of marine ecosystems and the need for protection. However, the situation worsened and negotiation became impossible between the local fishers and marine park staff, until eventually two fishers were arrested for contravening marine park regulations.

This triggered a change in their approach and they decided to negotiate and ask for help. The marine park staff organized a small workshop to break down all misunderstandings between them and the local fishers about the management of the marine park. After the workshop, a field visit with snorkelling was organized with representatives of the fishers, focusing on the core (closed) area where improvements in the condition of the coral reef and biomass of the reef fish population could be seen. The workshop and field visit helped the fishers to understand the positive impact that the marine park could bring both to marine biodiversity and to their own livelihoods. The same approach was applied in the other two marine parks and also seems to have had a major impact on the behaviour of the local communities. However, although there has been a big reduction in destructive practices in all three marine parks, there is room for improvement in various aspects of management, particularly to ensure that there is more local participation.

This illustrates a number of aspects of conflict resolution and shows how activities such as field visits can bring people together. It also demonstrates that conflict resolution is a long-term process, in that although there has been improvement, the problems are not entirely over yet.