

**Each MPA should have a Management Plan that is designed to ensure that the objectives are effectively achieved. The way in which the Plan is prepared, its content, and its presentation all affect the extent to which it is useful, and this sheet provides general guidance on these key issues.**

The Management Plan is the main tool to guide the development and management of a protected area and all MPAs should have one. It helps to:

- Improve use of human and financial resources, by setting priorities;
- Provide continuity in case of staff changes;
- Increase accountability both at the level of the MPA itself and the management agency;
- Improve communication with stakeholders, the public, and potential donors;
- Ensure that management decisions are based on a clear understanding of the MPA's objectives.

Management Plans have tended to be 'issue-driven', or focused on issues that were important when they were prepared. A more useful approach is for a Plan to answer the question 'what is needed for the objectives of the MPA to be met?' Objective-oriented management is pro-active rather than reactive, emphasises outcomes, and makes progress easier to measure.

Most protected area agencies are required by law or policy directive to produce and implement Management Plans, and the format, content and process may be defined in the legislation. For example, in Tanzania, the Marine Parks and Reserves Act requires that a Management Plan be developed within six months of a Marine Park or Reserve being gazetted. Management agencies should aim to promote a common approach and format for the Plans for all MPAs under their mandate, in order to harmonise objectives, facilitate comparison between sites, and streamline planning and reviewing procedures. However, each MPA is unique and its Management Plan must be designed specifically to address its own needs. Where an MPA has an international or other specific designation (e.g. World Heritage Site), the Plan should address this and may require a certain format.



Management Plan for Moheli Marine Park in the Union des Comores.

Some Management Plans have the status of legal documents, in which case failure to manage an MPA in accordance with it may constitute an offence. Although this may seem stringent, legally binding Plans are advantageous as they have greater force and help to back up management decisions and actions.

Once the plan and any supporting documents are produced, they should be used to guide implementation of the MPA, and monitoring programmes should be designed to assess their effectiveness (see sheet G10). Plans are often not used or are difficult to implement, particularly if they were prepared without the participation of all those involved in implementation, and if they were poorly structured and written. Management Plans should be revised and adjusted at intervals to reflect new issues, lessons learnt, or changes in management objectives, adapting the contents according to new information gained from monitoring. The review process for this is usually laid out in the legislation or in the Plan itself.

## MANAGEMENT PLAN PREPARATION

The Plan can be prepared before or after the MPA is set up, and will usually take at least a year to ensure adequate consultation. MPA agencies often lack the financial resources for the work involved but donors may be willing to fund such activities. Management Plan preparation generally involves the following steps:

- Pre-planning: establish the planning team, define the process to be used, find funding, and train the planning team and key stakeholders if required.
- Review existing information (e.g. physical, biological, social, economic, policies, legislation) and describe the 'context' of the MPA.
- Identify stakeholders and establish a transparent consultation process, which may involve meetings or workshops, with individual interest groups and for all stakeholders together.
- Analyse constraints, opportunities, threats, issues, problems, and needs, and identify solutions.
- Formulate vision, objectives and, where appropriate, targets.
- Design management actions and interventions, including boundaries and zonation schemes and acceptable mechanisms for enforcement and compliance.
- Determine financing mechanisms, bearing in mind the need for benefit and revenue sharing with stakeholders.
- Establish monitoring and evaluation protocols, including a process for periodic review and revision.
- Prepare the draft Plan, and submit it for public consultation and review.

- Incorporate comments and publish final Plan (preferably both as a hard copy and electronically)
- Submit plan for approval (the mechanism for this varies between countries) and disseminate it.

Where an MPA does not have sufficient capacity or expertise to prepare a Plan, it may be useful to hire a consultant. Such a person must work closely with MPA personnel and stakeholders so that when he/she leaves all involved feel ownership of the Plan and are willing to implement it.

## CONTENT

The Plan may be a single document covering all aspects of management or a general 'umbrella' document. In the latter case, specific plans are developed separately, such as a day-to-day operational plan, annual work plans, detailed zoning plan, business and financial plan, and visitor plan. These may have different target audiences and may need to be prepared in different ways. The level of detail to be included in the plan will be decided by the site manager and the relevant management agency.

The Plan should present both the strategic and operational elements of the MPA and clearly link them, be flexible enough to cater for unforeseen events and interpret national policies in relation to the MPA, taking into account obligations under international conventions. It should identify the assumptions (e.g. adequate funding and political stability) that have to be made for successful implementation; these may be beyond the manager's control but may have consequences that require contingencies. Many Plans give too much description; detailed biological and socio-economic information can be placed in annexes or a separate volume. Good presentation, with maps and other visual aids, will help to ensure the Plan is used. The text should be clear, concise and accurate. It may be necessary to translate it, or key sections, into local languages, and prepare a summary for broader dissemination.

### KEY POINTS FOR THE MPA

- ❑ Ensure that all staff are familiar with and use the Management Plan, and understand its status (as a legal document or general guidance).
- ❑ Revise the Plan at the appropriate intervals, involving all stakeholders, and ensuring an objective-oriented approach.
- ❑ Ensure that the budget allows for preparing and/or revising the Management Plan, or that special funding is sought.
- ❑ Obtain copies of management plans for other MPAs, both within your country and from other countries for comparison.

### Sources of further information

Amend, S., et al. 2003. *Management Plans: concepts and proposals*. Parques Nacionales y Conservacion Ambiental No. 11. Panama. 114pp. Available from: IUCN Regional Office for MesoAmerica, Moravia, Apartado Postal 0146-2150, San José, Costa Rica; [www.iucn.org/places/orma](http://www.iucn.org/places/orma); [correo@orma.iucn.org](mailto:correo@orma.iucn.org)

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## CASE STUDY

### Management Plan for Moheli Marine Park, Union des Comores

The decree that established Moheli Marine Park requires that a management plan be prepared. This was done with support from a UNDP/GEF project and technical assistance from IUCN. The process took two years and involved all stakeholders, particularly the 10 villages involved in collaborative management of the Park. The process started with a training workshop organised by the park personnel and 'eco-gardes' (village-based rangers). The objectives were developed through consultations in the villages and working groups were set up to develop certain sections of the plan. All aspects of the plan were developed in consultation including gathering baseline information, defining the zoning plan, and developing the regulations and co-management agreements. The management plan is for five years and will be used to develop annual work plans and more detailed operational plans. It was approved by the Management Committee of the MPA. The contents are as follows:

- Ecological and socio-economic characteristics and values;
- Threats to the environment and its resources;
- Objectives and strategies to be adopted to ensure conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, and the sustainable development of revenue generating activities;
- Management inputs (management structure, budget and financial resources, equipment);
- Zonation scheme, regulations, rights of access to zones and co-management agreements;
- Five year action plan for each objective.