

MPAs rarely have enough staff to carry out all the activities that are necessary for fully implementing the management plan. Capacity can be increased often at little cost by developing partnerships with local or national institutions with specialist skills or by using volunteers, research groups or student expeditions from overseas. This sheet outlines the advantages and disadvantages of these arrangements, the types of work that are most suitable, and gives information on how to find such assistance.

MPAs can increase their capacity by taking advantage of individuals and organisations that, for a variety of reasons, have an interest in working in such areas at their own cost. This is particularly useful where MPAs lack staff with specific skills, such as SCUBA diving, or knowledge of particular species that need to be surveyed or monitored. External personnel may also be useful for tasks that are labour intensive or take a long time. The types of activities that are suitable to be carried out by non-MPA staff include:

- Ecological and socio-economic survey and assessment work of all kinds (e.g. surveys of coral reefs, bird counts, collecting data on questionnaires). Often partner institutions and research expeditions bring in knowledge of methods that the MPA personnel may be unaware of.
- Research on specific topics. This can sometimes be carried out by students, research expeditions or visitors from other institutions.
- Certain types of monitoring. Monitoring should be carried out on a regular, long-term basis, and so short-term visitors are generally not the ideal people to assist with this. However, groups or individuals that return to the MPA regularly, or that are based locally can play important roles (see case study on Kiunga).
- Fundraising. Local residents and NGOs are often willing to help with this activity.
- Helping to organise special events and assisting with awareness-raising and educational activities.
- Beach clean-ups (see sheet K4) and other general maintenance work around the MPA requiring physical labour.

If non-professionals are involved, it is most important that the activities are tailored to their skills or that some form of training is given to ensure that the work done is of an adequate standard. If this involves data collection, it is important that the MPA manager fully understands the quality and reliability of this and to what extent it is comparable with other data collection activities.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH INSTITUTIONS

These might be local, national or overseas organisations that can provide specific assistance to an MPA, perhaps in terms of funding, technical expertise, or training activities. For example, the organisations Coral Reef Conservation Project (CRCP) and Coral Reef Degradation in the Indian Ocean (CORDIO) assist with monitoring activities in several MPAs in the region, which saves these sites money (see sheet G11).

VOLUNTEERS

Almost 40% of the population in the UK undertake volunteer work of some kind, and a similar situation occurs in many other western countries. 'Volunteering', or working for no money, is less common in many WIO countries, but nevertheless is growing, particularly among young people. There are several categories of individuals who may volunteer to work in an MPA, these include:

- Members of the local community, who may be benefiting from the MPA and are willing to put back something in return. These include fishers who assist with patrolling, village members who participate in management committees, local residents who help with monitoring, school children and teachers participating in beach clean-ups, and dive operators.
- National or overseas students and/or interns, who come primarily for work experience and on-the-job training, or where their research interests coincide with those of the MPA.
- Overseas volunteers, provided either through one of the bilateral-aid national volunteer programmes or through international programmes such as the UN.
- Overseas volunteers available through programmes run by NGOs or commercially-organised operations; these often work in certain locations over a period of time and provide volunteers in teams. Most of these are based in the UK and USA.
- Tourists or visitors to the country who want to do something useful during their holiday.



S. Wells

International and local community volunteers monitoring a turtle nest in Kiunga Marine National Reserve.

Individuals participating in one of the organised volunteer programmes will usually be paying a substantial sum of money to cover their travel and costs. Thus they are not only providing their time for free, but they are also paying for the experience. It is important that the MPA personnel they work with understand this – there is often an assumption that such volunteers are getting something for free. Furthermore the volunteers will be expecting some personal benefits, usually in the form of gaining experience or on-the-job training. Many volunteers of this type are highly motivated and can make a major contribution over a short period of time. On the other hand, they may require support which takes time (particularly if they are from overseas) and there can be problems if volunteers choose to ignore, or have not been fully briefed on, cultural issues and dress codes, and as a result behave inappropriately in local villages.

KEY POINTS FOR THE MPA

- ❑ When carrying out a capacity needs assessment, consider whether other organisations or volunteers could carry out any of the tasks.
- ❑ Discuss with the management agency the potential for taking on one or more volunteers and find out about insurance requirements and security risks (some MPAs may not be able to host overseas groups of volunteers on these grounds).
- ❑ Be aware that some volunteer programmes may have a profit motive as much as a genuine desire to assist the MPA and their interests may not be directly complementary MPA objectives.
- ❑ Make sure that MPA personnel are fully involved and take part in the activities carried out by partner organisations or volunteers, so that they learn from the experience.

Sources of further information

Bilateral aid funded volunteer programmes:

UK - Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO): www.vso.org.uk

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA):
www.jica.go.jp/english/

Germany – GTZ: www.gtz.de/home/english

US Peace Corps: www.peacecorps.gov

Australian Volunteers International: www.australianvolunteers.com

Overseas programmes that may be able to provide international volunteers or volunteer groups:

Greenforce: www.greenforce.org; info@greenforce.org

Frontier Conservation: www.frontierconservation.org;
info@frontierconservation.org

Coral Cay Conservation: www.coralcay.org; info@coralcay.org

Earthwatch: www.earthwatch.org - undertakes specific research projects with scientists and provides volunteers as a work force (has carried out a number of reef survey and assessment projects)

British Executive Service Overseas (BESO): www.beso.org

Raleigh International: www.raleighinternational.org;
staff@raleigh.org.uk

Global Vision International: www.gvi.co.uk; info@gvi.co.uk

Travellers Worldwide: www.travellersworldwide.com;
info@travellersworldwide.com

i-to-i: www.i-to-i.com; info@i-to-i.com

Wells, S.M. 1995. *Reef assessment and monitoring using volunteers and non-professionals*. Report for the International Year of the Reef. Tropical Marine Research Unit, University of York/Coral Cay Conservation, UK/ University of Miami, USA. 57pp.

CASE STUDY

Local volunteers in Kiunga Marine National Reserve (KMNR), Kenya

Since 1999, KMNR has involved local and foreign volunteers in its work programmes. Each volunteer has brought her/his skills to KMNR, and in turn has gone away with a better understanding of the challenges faced in managing an MPA. To broaden the involvement of the local youth members in the KMNR, a volunteer programme was initiated to assist with turtle monitoring activities, aimed at:

- Increasing awareness of youth through practical involvement with KMNR;
- Increasing participation of those who have limited job opportunities;
- Reducing the number of turtles killed in nets, by involving youth in conservation and thus discouraging them from poaching;
- Providing youth with some prestige and discouraging them from joining the beach seining and gill-net fishing fleets that cause so much damage.

Six local youths were recruited from the main fishing villages within KMNR, using the following criteria:

- Good knowledge of the KMNR area and basic understanding of marine turtles;
- Good communication and networking skills;
- Fourth form leaver with basic written skills.

Their main task is to assist with management and conservation measures at the Rubu Island outpost in collaboration with the KMNR Turtle team. Each volunteer is allocated specific tasks, and at the end is asked to complete a form to provide feedback on his accumulated experience, and recommendations for programme improvement. This initiative has so far only involved males, as culturally it would be unacceptable to have young girls working in the field in a mixed sex group, but there is potential to involve girls in activities that take place in the more immediate village environment.

Ten international volunteers have also played a crucial role in the development of the KMNR marine turtle initiative. They have brought skills and experience from similar programmes in Sri Lanka, Australia, the US and the Philippines, and have also assisted in the development of a marine turtle database, in training and in improving analytical and writing skills. National interns have also worked for KMNR and subsequently joined the WWF technical team that supports the Reserve.