

Preface

Marine protected areas (MPAs) have been established throughout the world for a variety of purposes such as conservation, tourism and education. At the time of producing this Toolkit there are more than 70 individual sites (nationally and internationally designated), in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), over which some form of management exists. Most of these sites are managed under formal government mandates while some correspond to traditional or localised arrangements, and span the spectrum from fully protected “no take” areas to multiple use areas. Every country in the region now has one or more MPAs and the number is on the increase.

The revitalization of the Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment in Eastern Africa (the Nairobi Convention, adopted in 1985) has contributed significantly to this increase and has also resulted in the establishment of the Group of Experts on Marine Protected Areas in Eastern Africa (GEMPA-EA), hosted jointly by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA).

A number of other regional initiatives have also contributed to the progress in MPA establishment and management, including:

- A Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD)-funded project - the WIO Marine Biodiversity Conservation Project, which has identified MPAs as a priority theme for attention.
- The Coastal Zone Management Centre (CZMC) of the Netherlands - supported project on Capacity building in MPA management in the Western Indian Ocean region. Implemented in collaboration with WIOMSA, the project aimed at providing training in skills, techniques and tools necessary for effective management of MPAs in the region.
- World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)'s Eastern African Marine Ecoregion (EAME) Programme, which covers the mainland coast from southern Somalia to the northern coast of South Africa, and promotes, amongst others, the establishment of a regional representative network of MPAs based on the ecosystem approach.

IUCN's Eastern Africa Regional Programme (EARP) initiated the WIO Marine Biodiversity Conservation Project in 2000 with a range of partners, to assist with implementation of the Jakarta Mandate within the Eastern African region. The project is led by a Task Force representing six of the Parties to the Nairobi Convention, as well as a number of regional organisations including WIOMSA, UNEP, WWF and IUCN-EARP. The project also provides a mechanism for assisting with implementation of the Nairobi Convention, since the Convention and the Jakarta Mandate share similar objectives.

The Nairobi Convention calls upon the Contracting Parties to ‘formulate and adopt guidelines, standards or criteria concerning the identification, selection, establishment and management of protected areas’. Furthermore, the Biennial (2000-2001) Work Programme of the Nairobi Convention proposed that existing MPA global guidelines should be ‘regionalised’ with the intention of improving their relevance to the situation in the WIO region. The Task Force of the WIO Marine Biodiversity Conservation Project therefore suggested that such guidelines could be prepared as one of the Project's activities.

A needs assessment was first undertaken to determine more precisely the requirements of MPAs in the region. The assessment, which was based on questionnaires, email correspondence and focused discussions, involved a range of practitioners and experts from within and outside the region, and benefited from contributions from members of the Task Force and GEMPA-EA. The assessment revealed that MPA managers and practitioners felt that many guidelines, training manuals and other relevant materials already exist and largely fulfill their intended purposes. However, the remote locations of many of the WIO MPAs, and their inadequate funding and communication facilities, mean that they have very limited access to simple and practical information. It was therefore recommended that a Toolkit be prepared to assist MPA managers and practitioners access existing information relating to all stages of MPA establishment and management, including site selection, planning, day-to-day management, sustainable financing, management effectiveness and monitoring and evaluation.

The Toolkit is designed to complement and build on the Regional Training Course in Marine Protected Areas Management in the Western Indian Ocean Region and a manual entitled *Training for the sustainable management of Marine Protected Areas: A training manual for MPA managers*. The Toolkit aims to act as a first point of call in the search for information on issues that MPA managers and practitioners face in day-to-day operations.

The Toolkit reflects work by many individuals and organizations that, over a period of three years, have collaborated together on conception of the idea, to the writing of theme sheets, to reviewing them. We hope this collaboration will continue since the production of this Toolkit is a small step forward in our long march to improve the management effectiveness of the MPAs in the WIO region.

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