Gender and MPAs

B3

In the WIO, the role of women in coastal management tends to be overlooked, although women may play key roles as stakeholders, resource users and in management. This sheet outlines how women and men can play different but equally important roles, and provides guidance on how to stimulate participation from both.

The term 'gender' refers to the socially-determined roles, rights and responsibilities of men and women and the relationship between them. These are very variable across countries, religion and cultures and may change with time. In most countries, women are little involved or even overlooked in the planning, development or management of marine and coastal resources. This is despite the fact that such activities could easily involve women, and indeed would clearly benefit from their contributions. Fortunately, many WIO countries recognise gender and the participation of women in development processes as central for sustainable development, and are signatory to international agreements on gender equality.

Due to their different roles, MPAs affect women and men differently whether or not they are consulted or involved, and both men and women inevitably have an impact on MPA implementation and management. Recognition of gender differences and their integration into MPA planning increases the chance of both women and men participating in and benefiting from an MPA, which in turn contributes to its success.

Gender affects MPA establishment and management in terms of (a) ensuring women's participation at the stakeholder level, and (b) the management personnel who may or may not include women.

WOMEN AS MPA STAKEHOLDERS

Fishing is heavily dependent on tides, weather, seasonal variations in fish stocks and other variables. Given that in most societies women have primary responsibility for child-rearing and running the household, they generally do not play a major role in direct fishing activities. Processing, trade, mariculture and gathering marine products on foot can more easily be combined with women's roles in the household, and so these are preferred activities for women, as summarised below:

- Fishing – although women rarely go out in boats in the WIO region, they often gather invertebrates and small fish in intertidal areas, on foot, using a variety of gears and methods.
- Shell collection and preparation of ornamental shells for sale.
- Processing of fish products, and associated work such as collecting freshwater and fuel wood, is largely carried out by women. Even in industrial fisheries, women carry out much of the freezing, canning and processing work.
- Trade – women are extensively involved in the buying and selling of fish products, through local markets, restaurants or other outlets.
- Mariculture – although large-scale, intensive aquaculture (e.g. shrimp farming) tends to be dominated by men, women are often involved in the more extensive, less technological forms of mariculture in Eastern Africa, most notably seaweed farming.

Women are also involved in other activities that may be affected by MPA management activities, such as gathering of mangrove products and making handicrafts. They may also play a crucial role in aspects of community involvement in MPA management and are often very effective in planning and consultation. At Mafia Island Marine Park, in Tanzania, women have been included in the Park's planning since its establishment, for example as leaders of planning committees.

MPA STAFF

Protected area staff are often male, and this bias may be particularly strong in MPAs, since in many cultures women are not encouraged to learn to swim and do not have experience of boats. However, women are increasingly playing key roles; for example in Kenya, there is a female Marine Park Warden and several female rangers. It is generally recognised that women can bring particular skills to a management team, for example in helping to involve communities, children and youth and in relating to women's perspectives and knowledge. Gender sensitive male staff can help by fostering more equitable involvement of women. Recruitment criteria for long term staff, researchers and consultants should include gender sensitivity.

S. Wells

In Kisite Marine National Park, the warden has a good relationship with the women in the local communities that use the Park's resources.

KEY POINTS FOR THE MPA

- ❑ **Plan and budget for gender sensitivity training for staff. Develop a gender policy and agree simple strategies, e.g. where culturally acceptable, address men and women in the same way and accept that men can serve tea, be receptionists and file letters, while women can be Wardens and boat drivers!**
- ❑ **Learn about the gender structure of local communities and find out why women often cannot participate as much as men; address this by asking both women and men for solutions; proceed gradually and gain the support of men as well.**
- ❑ **Use the knowledge of women about biodiversity, as they interact differently with the marine environment than men (e.g. their role in post-harvest activities such as gutting fish, may give them greater knowledge about fish reproductive seasons).**
- ❑ **Ensure equitable participation in all activities, including training, of both stakeholders and staff (recognising that participation should never be mandatory). This may mean budgeting for childcare and scheduling meetings to suit women (e.g. not at traditional male meeting places); using particular methods, such as single sex focus groups and separate meetings with men and women (see sheet B1); and engaging gender-sensitive facilitators.**
- ❑ **Monitor how women and men participate in and benefit from MPA management. Keep gender disaggregated data on all employment, training, enterprise group loans, and meetings, in order to determine trends in proportions of budgets spent on and participation of both sexes.**
- ❑ **Create 'role-models' and encourage leadership and responsibility in promoting gender equity.**
- ❑ **Recognise that for some activities (e.g. school visits involving snorkelling and swimming) males and females may need to be in separate groups.**

Sources of further information

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Women, Gender and ICDPs in Africa: Lessons Learnt and Experiences Shared **http://www.ucc.ie/famine/GCD/AfricaFINALIIED2-F.pdf**

Women, Gender and ICDPs Overview **http://www.ucc.ie/famine/GCD/OverviewFINAL_IIED3-F.pdf**

CASE STUDY

Quirimbas National Park: a gender sensitive approach to MPA establishment

Aida Safire is a co-founder of ASSOCIAÇÃO KARIBO, an association of friends and residents of Ibo Island in northern Mozambique that promotes small projects on fishing, goat production, and other micro-enterprises. Its work with fishers made Aida and her colleagues appreciate that donor programs that provide fishing gear would not solve the problem of overfishing. The establishment of the Quirimbas National Park would be more effective, as legal protection would allow fish stocks to recover and would protect marine habitats.

The Association consulted with each of the 40 villages to be affected by the Park to determine the state of the resource base and what could be done to improve it. Aida often spoke to the women alone as, in the absence of the men, they tended to speak their minds more openly. All villages ultimately supported the park through signed agreements, and the results of the community consultations were used in the management plan. In particular it was agreed that there should be no-take areas so that fish stocks could recover. The zoning plan, the community agreements, and the proposed management plan were submitted to the Council of Ministers, and the National Park was declared in June 2002. Aida is now working to help implement the marine sanctuaries, four of which have been organized since the Park's inception. Two of these were not included in the original management plan but are the result of requests from local communities. She also works with groups of volunteer rangers who police these areas. In 2003, Aida Safire was a co-winner of the National Geographic Society/Howard Buffett Award for leadership in the creation of the Quirimbas National Park.