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Protected areas planning: case studies on preparation and implementation of management plans in a sample of protected areas, in Central and West Africa

This NAPA newsletter proposes a summary of the main results of a study that we conducted last year on the management plans of a sample of protected areas in West and Central Africa, in order to assess their strengths and weaknesses and compare their preparation process, in relationship with the guidelines elaborated by IUCN and WCPA (World Commission on Protected Areas). The whole study (95 pages), conducted by J.P. Dhuart and including the detailed case studies, will be posted on www.papaco.org in February

Introduction

In order to protect wildlife, and as an answer to the often uncontrolled uses of nature and the many-sided threats on natural resources, African States have developed a network of protected areas that is expected to conserve the biological diversity. From one country to another, national marine and terrestrial protected areas networks have been extended at different speeds and following very different objectives and shapes. In Central and West Africa, protected areas have very often become the last places for conservation of wildlife.

Very early, IUCN, for its part, has tried to support the development of national networks of protected areas and their management planning by developing a consensus among its members on the adoption of common objectives, and drafting technical frameworks. These have contributed to provide common references to harmoniously extend and manage protected areas networks. Today, this coherent approach facilitates a straight comparison of situations between countries as well as the coordinated implementation of international agreements such as the CBD (convention on biodiversity), the World Heritage Convention or the Ramsar Convention.

In a more technical context, IUCN, further to an analysis of the lessons learned from protected areas management at the international level, has made methodological recommendations to managers through a series ("BPG" or *Best Practice Guidelines*) of technical documents. The topics addressed in this series include a very wide range of management aspects such as marine protected areas, financing, transboundary collaboration, tourism development, local and indigenous communities, sacred sites, trainings and capacity building, etc.

In this « BPG » series, IUCN has published two particularly important documents, one on management planning (Thomas & Middleton 2011), and another one on management effectiveness evaluation (Hockings *and al.* 2008). Both can be downloaded in French and English at www.papaco.org and on the website of the WCPA. These quite theoretical reference frameworks

underline how managers should be rigorous in managing the numerous facets of management planning and how to assess protected areas management.

These references were meant to be pragmatic and successful on the ground; it was therefore interesting to consider the reality in the field in Central and West Africa and to analyse, in respect of IUCN guidelines, how some protected areas' management plans have been developed and implemented. For this purpose, a sample of eight protected areas has been selected in six countries of the region. The study outlines how these sites management plans have been developed and implemented, and discusses the differences between theoretical approaches and the reality in the field. It highlights the major specificities and constraints experienced when drafting and implementing the management plans.

The sites selected for the study are:

BAR: Banc d'Arguin National Park and Cap Blanc Reserve (Mauritania)

GAR: Garamba National Park Complex and 3 contiguous hunting domains (D.R. of Congo)

KZB: Kahuzi Biega National Park (R.D. of Congo)

MAN: Manda National Park (Chad)

PEN: Pendjari Biosphere Reserve, including Pendjari National Park, two Hunting Areas and a Transition Area (Benin)

TAI: Tai National Park and N'zo wildlife reserve (Côte d'Ivoire)

URO: Urok Islands Community-based Marine Protected Area (Guinea Bissau)

VIR: Virunga National Park and Rutshuru Hunting Domain (D. R. of Congo)

Hereafter is a short summary of their main characteristics:

	BAR	GAR	KZB	MAN	PEN	TAI	URO	VIR
Establishment	1976	1938	1970	1965	1961	1972	2005	1925
IUCN PA categories	II.	II/VI	II	II	II/VI	II	II/VI	II
Surface area (km ²)	12.000	12.427	6.000	1.140	5.000	5.340	545	7.844
Biological fields	Mar/Ter	Ter	Ter	Ter	Ter	Ter	Mar/Ter	Ter
Numbers	83	240	150	60	38	96	-	392
WH site (endangered)	x	xP	xP			x		xP
Biosphere Reserve					x	x	x	
Ramsar site	x				x			x
Resident population (Legal/Illegal)	L. 1.200	L. 170.000	I. 20.000	I. ±100	L. 30.000	0	L. 25.000	I. 93.700
Sightseeing tourism	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Hunting		(x)			x			
Fishing	x				x	x	x	x
Managed by the State	x		x	x	x	x		
Delegated management		x						x
Community-based management							x	
Starting of the MP	2009	2010	2009	2011	2004	2006	2004	2011
Duration of the MP (years)	5	5	10	10	10	10	5	5
Duration of the Action Plan	1	5	5	3	1	10	-	5

1. IUCN management planning process (reminder of the methodology): 13 steps

Planning protected area management is a *continuous cyclic process* (and never a unique event) that starts with the *preparation* of a management plan, continues with its *implementation* and the *monitoring* of its impacts before proceeding to the plan *revision* to fit it to the current situation. IUCN brings out a logical suite of 13 successive steps in management planning:

1. Pre-planning: make the decision to prepare a management plan, design a planning team, determine the extent of the task and the process to be used;
2. Data collection: identify problems, define the type of data and information to look for, extend the consultations;
3. Evaluate data and information on the resources, identify key features (or outstanding values), make a clear statement on the importance of the protected area;

4. Identify and analyse constraints, opportunities and threats, prioritize the issues to be addressed;
5. Develop a long-term vision for the site and formulate objectives for its management, eventually formulate limits of acceptable changes;
6. Develop, evaluate and make management choices that will allow achieving the objectives, including the protected area zoning issue;
7. Integrate planning elements in a draft management plan; comply with the structure, format and style agreed for the management plan;
8. Widely present the draft management plan and ensure a large public consultation process;
9. Analyze comments, report-out the results of the consultation process, revise the draft plan and produce a final management plan;
10. Approve and officially validate the management plan;
11. Implement the management plan through an annual operational plans;
12. Monitor and assess progresses;
13. Review and update the plan, determine the frequency of reviews, and get feedback on the monitoring cycle.

In addition to the recommendation to observe these logical steps, IUCN prompts protected areas' managers to cautiously consider, beforehand, other aspects that clearly influence the success of a management plan drafting. Among those ones will be particularly cited the category of the protected area that makes it easier to structure management objectives, the budget available for drafting the plan, and for deciding on the scope of the planning operation, the time required for planning, rarely less than one year, that will influence the other potential activities during drafting, the link between the management plan and other existing plans or new plans to be developed (operational plan, business plan, zoning plan, development plan, etc.), legislative, statutory requirements and others, notably those related to the State adhesion to trans-boundary, regional and/or international agreements.

2. Reference framework of Central and West Africa protected areas management plans

The eight PAs selected for this study are different in many points (see the detailed presentation of each of them in the report). Their age, their surface area, the importance of their human and financial means, their management objectives, etc. probably explain why the situations described in those case studies are so diverse. However, even if these management plans have been developed following different methods, the comparison of their contents is possible and shows that they are, in fact, very similar structurally.



2.1 Main common points between the MPs of the 8 protected areas studied

Descriptive elements: the descriptive information included in MPs such as the physical, biological and ecological features of the site, the legal and regulatory context, the socioeconomic context, etc. are generally very complete (and sometimes extremely detailed). This tends to demonstrate that the exploratory and documentation phase has been

well done, with a rather systematic recognition of poorly known fields. Contrarily to the « old school » MPs, most drafting teams have succeeded in reducing this descriptive part to less than 30-40% of the content.

Strategic content: although the 8 MPs have been drafted following different frameworks, the really important items are fortunately found in most of them. Indeed, almost all the MPs provide for scheduling and prioritizing the most relevant actions, gathering the management team around justified objectives, assigning responsibilities to all stakeholders and developing a reference framework that is really suitable for budgeting, monitoring activities and evaluating impact after implementation.

Involving the management team in the drafting process: in all the sites studied, front-line stakeholders have been actively involved in almost the entire MP drafting process. This is quite natural as this team is collectively responsible for the implementation of the programmes developed for this MP. In all cases, the management team was supported by an external expert. It is however encouraging to notice that none of these plans, contrarily to some previous MPs few years ago, has been exclusively produced by an external consultant.

Participatory approach and appropriation: in all the reviewed cases, the MP has been drafted in a much participatory manner, including the PA executives, their local partners, national and/or international NGOs in charge of support projects, donors and more rarely, a representation of the national institution in charge of PAs. All the reviewed MPs have been finalized further to a consultation with the representatives of the bordering communities and local authorities.

Support from a dominant partner: in each reviewed case, the site for which the MP has been drafted has benefited from the financial and technical support of a main partner. In most cases, this support was in the form of an important field project, but in other cases, the (funding) partner would sign a contract to manage the site. In both cases, we can understand how decisive the partners' influence on the choice of the MP model was when the national institution did not impose a harmonized framework for all the country's PAs, as this is the case in DRC or in Côte d'Ivoire for example.

Technical dependence: in no case has the MP been drafted by a site management team only without support from external experts. It does not emerge from the MPs assessment whether the central administration has provided a crucial technical contribution for the MP drafting or not. This

can reflect both a successful decentralization and empowerment of the stakeholders in the field, or a lack of capacity at the central level. The need to involve - at least partly in the process - one or many external experts expresses either a requirement of the donor, or a lack of capacity at the local level.

Financial dependence: in all the reviewed cases, the MPs have been drafted thanks to the financial support of external donors. However, no financial support from the State was reported for the MP preparation. Almost everywhere, the implementation of the MP seems to be financially dependent on the funds allocated by the State, by donors and, in rare cases, by a specific trust fund. Only the parks that have the highest tourism potential (KZB, GAR, PEN, VIR) are trying to achieve a financial autonomy allowing them to partly meet their needs. None of the MPs yet includes a global evaluation - realistic or potential - of the PA economic and financial value that would allow showing its importance. However, at the request of UNESCO, some World Heritage sites have formulated the protected area "Outstanding Universal Value".

Implementation of the plan: as the reviewed MPs are relatively recent, there is very little information on the implementation status of the planned programmes and activities. In most managers' opinion, the achievement rate of the activities planned in the annual operational plans is satisfying, except in some cases (GAR, KZB, VIR) where serious episodes of insecurity have disturbed their implementation.

Local conditions that have an impact on implementation: according to managers, the main condition required to succeed or fail in the MP implementation is funds availability.

2.2 Main differences between the MPs of the 8 reviewed protected areas

The plan format : there are many differences in the reviewed MPs forms such as the document's name (management plan, planning and management document, general management plan...) and its annual action plan (action plan, work plan, operational plan), its length (from simple to triple), its structure, its duration, etc. These form elements make the comparison between MPs less meaningful and do not contribute in making MPs globally coherent, which would be eminently desirable.

The structure model: the MPs have been developed following various methodologies, under the influence of experts who facilitated the development process, or following the schedule imposed by the protected areas national institution.

Therefore, the MPs either have an atypical structure specific to the protected area (PEN, URO), or a structure specific to the national institution (DRC, Côte d'Ivoire), or a structure drawn from the methodology used by the drafting team (BAR, MAN). When not imposed by the central administration, the MP structure is the most tangible expression of the influence the experts and the external partners can have on the PA main strategic document.

The document style: according to the people in charge of drafting the document, the style and the language may seem to be very different from one MP to another. This aspect is not important, provided that the content of the document makes it really useful to take decisions and achieve outcomes. This style can however be an obstacle to pragmatism when the document has an extremely scientific purpose (ex: TAI) or when it provides for thousands of details that can hide the most important aspects of management ((ex: BAR).

The link with bordering areas development plans: in spite of the fact that all the MPs refer to regional or local management plans regarding the bordering area, very few include in their action/operational plan some tangible links between the protected area strategic priorities and those of these plans. Some MPs mention the idea of having joint operational committees to coordinate approaches, and others propose that the protected area supports the priority management or development projects of the bordering area.

Development process: while some sites do not provide any information on this process, others give details on the development process of their management plan.

Centralized management vs delegated management: we notice that there are big differences between the management structures and the scope of the objectives and the expected results formulated in some protected areas' MPs managed by the state at centralized level, compared to MPs (GAR, VIR) managed by private organizations. It seems that the management autonomy from which the latter benefits, compared to the central administration, fosters confidence regarding actions feasibility and stimulates initiative and donors' confidence. As some of them are operated within an extremely centralized system that is organized in a hierarchy (TAI), they first consider their protected area function as a contribution to the national network and reserve an important role of supervision and arbitrage to their central administration. Others however, particularly the PAs under delegated management, are more or less managed like

enterprises that have to achieve efficient outcomes, and meet empowerment and effectiveness criteria.

Communities' level of involvement in the drafting: according to the MPs, the development process reveals that local populations are involved at very diverse degrees. During this process, MPs refer to « information » (GAR), « cooperation » (MAN) or «consultation» (PEN) of bordering communities. In some cases, it is not always clear that communities' opinions have been taken into account in the MP formulation or if their involvement means that they have tacitly approved. Among the sites that provided the composition of their planning team, it is noticed that only KZB has included “a representative of traditional chiefs”. The URO case is very atypical compared to all the other protected areas. This community reserve's MP has been developed for many years by a national NGO, in permanent collaboration with the traditional social structures of the concerned communities.

How detailed is the zoning: while the areas that have a specific assignment are relatively well detailed in most MPs, some sites (BAR, KZB) have published their MP but postponed the drafting of the zoning plan after the collection of the still lacking elements. Surprisingly, these management plans have been validated by the supervising authority despite the absence of a zoning plan.

Formulating objectives, outcomes and indicators: it is noted big differences of accuracy among MPs in the way specific objectives, expected outcomes and indicators are formulated. This aspect is very important since they are key elements for the quality of the monitoring and the evaluations. While some PAs have opted for a very clear formulation with quantifiable elements that can thus be measured (BAR, VIR, GAR, KZB), others have a formulation with few quantifiable elements, or even vague.

Duration and review rate: while half of the MPs have a validity of 10 years, the other half has opted for a 5-year duration. The time coverage of the attached action/operation plan has more variations in terms of duration: 1, 3, 5 and 10 years of annual planning. The MP evaluation and review rate is systematically planned half-way and at the end of the period of validity.

Roles in the implementation: for the MPs equipped with action plans, the level of detail concerning the respective roles and responsibilities of the protected area staff, some groups coming from local communities, local partners, NGOs and other stakeholders is very different. When this information

is vague or absent, difficulties can be expected during evaluations.



2.3 Level of adequacy with IUCN guidelines

Referring to the guidelines for planning

Even though half of the MPs refer to IUCN guidelines, most of them do not use them as a guide. Among the 8 MPs reviewed, only MAN has clearly referred to the guidelines as a main reference for drafting the MP. In spite of that, the comparison of the content of the 8 reviewed MPs clearly shows that globally, the key elements of planning recommended by the IUCN guidelines have been taken into consideration.

Complying with the key steps of planning

Although the information provided in the MPs and by the sites' management do not allow to precisely assess the compliance or not with each of the recommended steps, it was possible during the study to make a global judgement (and not specific to each PA) on the achievement of each step (see report for details). Some interesting points can be underlined:

- Even if identification and threats analysis (steps 4) is generally well detailed in all MPs, this is rarely the case for operational constraints and the opportunities offered by the protected areas status;
- Some plans have been validated without making the necessary management choice regarding the PA zoning (step 6);
- The information available on the public presentation of the draft MP, the public consultation process and the MP review according to the comments (steps 8 and 9) is not always fully detailed in the MPs;

- Some plans have been submitted for approval but they are not yet validated (step 10). However, they are being implemented as such;
- Most MPs are recent (3 to 6 years on average) and information on the findings of monitoring and evaluations, review and update (steps 12 and 13) are not yet available.

3. Constraints related to MPs drafting in Central and West Africa

Linguistic aspects

The much limited availability of guide-documents in French for MPs drafting has long been a constraint. The existing guidelines have been little exploited by African French-speaking countries because there is not much French literary production on protected areas management issues compared to English literature. IUCN itself has issued very few French versions of its guidelines on PAs, according to funds availability...

English dominance in international forums, limited funding, etc. resulted in the production in only one language of key methodologies such as the *Enhancing our Heritage* evaluation. The first phase of this programme first focused on 3 PAs (Keoladeo, Sangay, Bwindi) from non-francophone countries before PAPACO secured funds to get documents translated and implement them in African French-speaking countries.

Now that an effort is made to have French version of the key documents, it is important for them to be widely disseminated and made available through IUCN networks and other channels.

Partnerships-related aspects

The presence of external partners in West and Central Africa protected areas allowed for the development of many support projects and the MP drafting. The study however revealed various aspects related to these partnerships:

- Various efforts are made by francophone NGOs to simplify the existing methodological documents and make them easier and more practical for use in protected areas. But there is a risk to create a certain confusion on the nature of the methodologies to be used if the common BPG framework is not referred to;

- It is to be noted the influence of international NGOs that often operate thanks to the funding of a wide range of national or multilateral agencies, and channel technical support from very diverse sources. This combination could be more beneficial if it was “channelled” by a unifying element, either a MP drafting framework imposed by the country or complying with a reference international methodology;
- According to the nature and affinities of the partner, the PA manager has access to different methodologies and references for drafting its MP;

Professional aspects

The study showed that all the reviewed MPs have been drafted thanks to the support of foreign experts. This is most probably due to the lack of technical capacities at the internal level. This is unquestionably a field that IUCN has identified as a high priority, which resulted in the setting up of diploma training courses (like the DU or the PA management master developed by PAPACO and the Senghor University). Many similar initiatives (some of which are currently being developed) should be created in Central and West Africa in order to enhance the existing training opportunities and quickly fill this professional gap.

Institutional aspects

Central administrations have different roles in MP drafting. A positive aspect is that in most countries, the obligation to produce a MP and make it validated is governed by the national policy and thus cannot be ignored. This relatively new development is the result of the combined influence of international conventions or agreements ratified by countries (CBD, Ramsar, World Heritage...) and of international partners' pressures...

This influence of central administrations may however be a constraint when the central administration is responsible for the PA coordination, supervision and evaluation without having the technical capacities for holding this position. Indeed, in some countries, it is not rare to note that, thanks to the successive technical support of projects in the field, the staff level of professional training is higher than at the central level. In this case, this may result in a situation of frustration, or even conflicts if the realities are not known by central staff, and the issues not understood.

4. Conclusions drawn from the study

The study has revealed that despite the diversity of the reviewed PAs, their MPs' content fortunately have big similarities. However, the comparison of these MPs with the practices recommended by IUCN in its MP drafting guidelines reveals more or less significant differences. Their analysis allows drawing conclusions on two fields applied to protected areas management: the issues related to MP drafting and those related to their implementation.

4.1 Issues related to management plans drafting

Pre-planning phase

As part of the preparation of a management plan, it is crucial to designate a planning team, to determine the extent of the activities and the process to implement. These teams do not often include representatives of the PA central administration, regional or local authorities and/or bordering communities. The presence of representatives of partner NGOs in the team, but not of other local external stakeholders, may result in the rejection of the MP as an exogenous document which appropriation remains low except by the writers themselves.

Considering the tasks to be achieved and the need to have a multidisciplinary team, it is not surprising that the field teams judge that there is a lack of required technical capacities and call for their partner NGOs or external experts. The “weight” of this external support could be restricted by paying more attention to the technical expertise and professional norms that the central administration can provide.

Developing a vision, formulating objectives and making management choices

Most of the key elements of a PA management have been included in the reviewed MPs, but a couple of them did not include some of these elements. Also, it turned out that some planning teams had opted not to propose management choices or include actions without being sure they can achieve them. For example, some MPs do not provide for an optimal organizational chart for the protected area or do not include action plans. On the contrary, the guidelines foster the design of a MP according to the situation desired for the protected area and not to the funding available or other constraints.

Besides, some MPs have not included major elements such as the PA zoning because it was necessary to conduct more studies or to postpone the resolution of a problem of illegal settlement in the PA. These motivations are understandable, but the supervising authorities have to be encouraged to officially validate a MP only when it includes the most important management choices.



Integrating planning elements in a draft management plan

IUCN recommends complying with the structure, the format and the style agreed for the management plan. The study showed that even at the national level, there is not always a reference framework. It is interesting for a PA to have a national framework because it is of great help for protected areas and ensures coherence between the MPs of different PAs. Its existence prevents external partners from promoting a different methodology. It emerges from the comparative analysis that a simple and concise style, with a precise and figured formulation provides a better reference document for managers and a tool that is more pragmatic for use and more pleasant to disseminate.

At the sub-regional level, the lack of harmonization of MPs' formats and structures makes them difficult to compare and is in favour of the development of a common format-framework, following the example of the plans and reports that the States committed to submit in line with their adhesion to international agreements. This format-framework can be developed thanks to IUCN support as part of sub-regional agreements such as the COMIFAC Convergence Plan.

Protected areas categorization

With a few rare exceptions, there is no link between the reviewed MPs zoning and IUCN categories I to VI that should more easily structure the PA management objectives in its different areas. IUCN

fosters an easy exercise that can help managers decide on the optimal types of allocation and the management objectives for their PA zones. This important exercise may not have yet received a particular attention from national institutions and this may be linked to the very restricted number of "network plans" at the national level.

Cost and time required for planning

The budget available for the PA drafting has inevitably determined the planning scope. The drafting costs of the reviewed MPs turned out to be very different from one PA to another and very hard to compare. In some cases, the main funds have been used to finance visits in the field, meetings and workshops; in others, external experts' costs and the document publication, etc. In many cases, it was difficult to establish the exact cost because no specific budget was dedicated to the activity. Considering the size of the task and the real cost of the MP drafting, it is surprising that some managers have not opted to first draft a concise MP.

More than one year was often required to plan the studied MPs. In some cases where the planning team has not worked continuously and where local populations' involvement has become very significant, the process lasted over 3 years. None of these PAs deplored the duration of the process; they rather recognized that the much participatory aspect required adjusting the process and/or that the efforts for sensitization and information were very important. In those cases, the choice was to more integrate the MP drafting as a recurrent activity of the protected area and of the partners' normal working plan rather than a separate project.

4.2 Issues related to the implementation of the management plans

Monitoring the implementation

The planned actions and the expected results follow-up plans are rarely precise and rarely have realistic and/or measurable indicators and clear responsibilities. In these conditions and even when the MP includes an annual operational plan, it is hardly conceivable that the MP monitoring generates fairly good information, able to provide the manager with effective tools for decision-making. Contrarily to other countries (ex: Madagascar), ecological monitoring is rarely left - totally or partially - to a scientific centre or a university, which would however strengthen sustainability. The patrol-based monitoring ("law enforcement monitoring") is also based on various methodologies and there is no trend to harmonize.

Roles in the implementation

The stakeholders' roles and responsibilities are not generally well defined. When this is the case, only the PA staff's precise roles are given. Other stakeholders' roles are defined without making sure that they are able to fulfil them, and this is a risk that has to be taken into consideration. Even if it is recognized that it is vital to involve populations in the participatory drafting of MPs, their precise role in the implementation is rarely defined.



Evaluating the implementation:

The information available regarding the implementation of the reviewed MPs is still very disparate due to the recent production of the MPs and the scarcity of formal external evaluations. Most of the existing evaluations are internal. They are dealing with relatively short periods and have been done by the managers themselves (and sometimes by only one member of the management team) and tend to be self-satisfactory. From then on, it seems important that the METT or EoH evaluations be generalized and done systematically by groups of stakeholders (managers and partners) in order to have frequent and reliable results.

Where evaluations are available, this study also highlighted the fact that the lessons learned further to

a site evaluation are not known or shared enough. This is in favour of a concerted effort for sharing and mutual support regarding the results of the evaluations.

Measuring the MP impact:

When the PA is supported by a project, which is almost the case everywhere, it is often impossible to distinguish the MP implementation impacts from the project impact because the project is often the only real instrument of the plan implementation. Besides, this measurement requires an adapted monitoring methodology and technical capacity permanently, and these two elements are often lacking. Coping with this kind of weakness requires a huge effort to train the staff and enhance necessary nature-related jobs.

More information on www.papaco.org

Birdlife international is looking for a consultant

Consultancy: design of a livelihood component for communities around the Greater Gola Forest in Sierra Leone and Liberia
Overall objective of the consultancy is to design a livelihood framework (plan) that will enable the implementation of livelihood activities in collaboration and for the benefit of communities around the Greater Gola Forest in Sierra Leone and Liberia
Questions or expressions of interests, consisting of 1) a statement of interest, 2) a full CV, 3) the names and contact details of 2 referees and 4) a consultancy fee/salary indication, should be send to:

Albert Schenk, ARTP Project Manager, e-mail: albert.schenk@birdlife.org and in CC: Paulinus Ngeh, BirdLife International West Africa Coordinator, e-mail: paulinus.nych@birdlife.org

Reminder

The study: impacts of extractive industries on West African protected Areas is now available in English on www.papaco.org, page « publications »

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