

Newsletter from African protected areas

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Editorial

Geoffroy Mauvais,
Papaco Coordinator

CHANGE WHAT CAN BE CHANGED

Every day, we hear that “*the world will never be like it was before*”, that the global crisis sparked by COVID-19 will lead us an epiphany and that we are set to embark on a new, better path. Scientific papers, media articles, op-eds abound, each shedding their light on what this new world could or should be. On the ground, there seem to be very few changes, for now at least.

Let's recall the words of Antonio Gramsci, in 1929, writing from jail after being locked up by the fascist Italian regime: “*I am pessimistic out of reason, and optimistic by will*”.

Let's accept, then, that from the worst can stem the best, especially if we really have the will to look for the best. Following this mindset and supported by its friends across social media and in the MOOC community, the Papaco team started to think about a few ideas to help African protected areas – aiming to feed into broader debates and to contribute (a little) to a much larger and collective effort. This NAPA covers some of these ideas, those which we consider “practical” enough to be implemented. Anyone may judge them according to their own criteria – we present them here in good faith and although we do not claim that these ideas could solve all our issues, they can contribute (in their small way) to turn tomorrow's world into a slightly less dark place than the world of today, for nature at least.

In short, we talked about:

- The urgent necessity to bring back ethics at the core of our behavior as naturalists. To compromise is not to submit, to defend simple principles is not out of fashion: we need to stop listening to insidious lobbies and leaning into toxic partnerships that blur the identity of conservation in the

name of “realpolitik”. All sectors, all actors of conservation are affected, including the large organizations claiming to promote conservation.

- The necessity to improve, once and for all, the governance framework of protected areas so that the rights of all may at last be respected, and so that we may move from a seemingly “participatory” but often conflictual form of management towards a truly constructive form of collaboration. Having the right to say your say in management decisions means a lot, even if you don't use it.
- The need to move from a project-based approach to a results-based approach, to put an end to forever broken promises, and to promote actors who produce tangible and measurable impact on the ground, beyond the usual reports produced.
- Capacity-building for all actors in and around protected areas, so that the overall level of this “ecosystem” may progress enough to reach a stage where reasonable decisions are indeed taken together, and no longer by a handful of individuals who may be more competent than their peers, but not always more creative or more honest.
- Last but not least, the development of new ways of sharing and circulating information, since, as we still see too often, in Africa those who need information do not always access it in a way that satisfies their needs. Current progresses in technology and media open many possibilities to reach this goal.

These are just a few common-sense thoughts, but whose operationalization could help resolve the challenges that we meet to support our protected areas, challenges that often go beyond the mere technical. At least, at our level as Papaco, we will do our best to promote them. •

Our courses

MOOCS

- Registrations closed -

Registrations closed on 1st July, but if you are enrolled, you have until 19 July to finish the MOOCs. Make sure you study enough before you take the exams.

The next session will be from 14 September to 13 December.

If you're done with a MOOC and wish to receive your certificate of completion, please send a request at moocs@papaco.org.

Current session: 17 February to 19 July 2020.

MORE DETAILS: mooc-conservation.org



ONLINE CERTIFICATION

- Successful first exam -

On 18 June, we held the first exam sitting for the online Certificate on Protected area conservation. The Certificate is granted by Senghor University.

26 students had the opportunity to test drive the system, and a good number of them succeeded.

What is it about? Students who completed all PAPACO MOOCs and one IFDD's three MOOCs (Sustainable development, Environmental law or Economy and environmental management) may sit a single exam, gathering all topics. If they succeed, they receive a Certificate on Protected area conservation from Senghor University. Because the IFDD's MOOCs are only available in French, for the time being, the exam is strictly available for French-speaking students.

The next exam will take place during the MOOC session, we will communicate when students can apply.

UNIVERSITY DIPLOMA

- Graduation ceremony -

Remember our University Diploma students who had to be repatriated because of Covid-19 and borders gradually closing down? Remember we adapted and took the course online with a combination of live classes and MOOCs? Well, all those students succeeded, and a virtual graduation ceremony took place on 18 June to put an end to this very special class of 2020. Congratulations to all for your work!

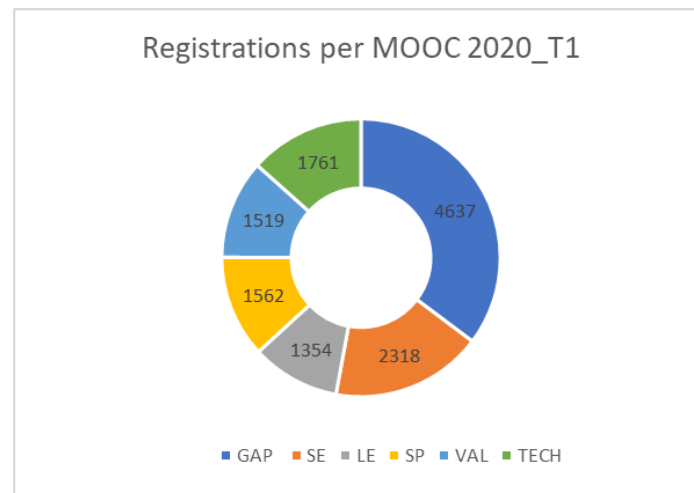
MOOC
conservation

FIRST MOOC SESSION OF 2020: A SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION SO FAR

The eleventh session of PAPACO MOOCs started 17 February, and ends 19 July 2020. In total, over 13 000 participated this session. This is a record number as, since 2018, the average participation per session is around 6 000 registrations.



With over 4 600 registrations, the MOOC Protected area management is once again the most popular course we offer. It is followed by the MOOC on Ecological monitoring (2 300 registrations), and the MOOC on New technologies (1 800 registrations). The MOOCs on Species conservation, Law enforcement and Valorisation of PA resources all count between 1 400 and 1 600 registrations.



The completion rates aren't complete yet, as students usually ask for their certificates of completion once the session is closed. But at the end of June, around 1 000 attestations were delivered by the Papaco team. This information will be more precise once the session closes, 19 July 2020.

MORE INFORMATION: mooc-conservation.org

The future of protected areas

INTRODUCTION

In the following pages, IUCN-PAPACO introduces a couple of ideas that could improve the future of African protected areas. We do not intend to cover all topics, but rather to contribute to a discussion that has been running over the course of Covid-19 crisis, and to briefly introduce a couple of possible and practical ideas that could ensure more efficient conservation of PAs in the future. We deliberately chose aspects that are usually little talked about, but that are essential.

1. ETHICS AND GOVERNANCE

Bringing back ethics at the centre of the conservation world

Ethics: by definition, ethics refer to the moral views of a system or group.

Governance: refers to the decision-making process within a structure. As opposed to ethics, which strictly focuses on moral views and foundations, governance concerns the implementation of these ethical principles by setting up an adapted decision-making system.

It is of vital importance that all actors involved in the nature – the ultimate global public good - conservation “world” have selfless intentions and that their goal is indeed the preservation of the environment. Unfortunately, the imbalance between them is striking: the voices of stakeholders with more significant budgets, of organised lobbies and of groups whose beliefs have been raised to the status of dogma, trample the less vocal but valid stances of stakeholders who may be smaller but are sometimes more sincere.

To ensure the main goal of all parties involved (States, donors, private sector, NGO, civil society...) remains the conservation of African protected areas, the benefits parties expect from their own intervention must be clearly identified, and these benefits cannot be a cover for other actions, which are sometimes opposed to conservation. You may do something other than conservation work, but it

is unacceptable to pretend the opposite and obtain undue benefits therefrom.

Meanwhile, smaller and less vocal conservation organisations, which often make up the traditional basis (sometimes historical) of conservation in many countries, should systematically be urged to speak louder (for example, through larger organisations such as IUCN). Thereby, different approaches can be considered, and ethical rules would apply to all, transparently. Many donors and technical support for local conservation stakeholders merely prescribe solutions instead of listening to and supporting these actors in their work.

In line with this, why not draw up an ethics charter which would include principles of transparency, integrity and commitment? Every signatory would commit to respecting the charter, including the monitoring and control measures

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PAs vary across the continent, and decisions must be made after annual assessments. But the local population must remain at the heart of every decision and policy.

- Cédric, Cameroon

to verify the authenticity of such commitment to conservation. This could help discern more easily actors that are indeed involved in conservation, and those who are only paying lip service. It would also ensure the means dedicated to conservation go to parties who really deserve the contribution.

Develop stronger and fairer governance

IUCN defines four types of governance for PAs. Three of them apply to systems where the decision-making power relies preferably on a single stakeholder: State, private or community. In some cases, governance can be shared, which is when stakeholders are combined. In this case, the decision-making power is distributed among parties.



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Several tools help understand and assess the effective implication of stakeholders in the decision-making process. Power play between stakeholders of a group or between different types of actors are specific to context, and require insights from independent studies. Therefore, the conservation world must open up to other disciplines from the field of anthropology, to support if needed, the transition towards fairer, more effective and durable governance.

2. FROM WORDS TO DEEDS

Prioritising results

There is room for discussion, but it must not immobilise action. Even when it results in decisions, these do not often turn into action. And even less so do they produce results or have impact. Compromise and diplomacy should not be confused with jeopardy and procrastination.

The benefit of shared governance relies in the fact that it curbs possible abuse from parties involved. For example, when external funds are committed (often high amounts) and a single entity - whichever it may be - has decision-making power over it, there is no assurance funds will be allocated following best practices. In that case, chances are the amounts spent will not produce the best impact, or that they are used at the expense of other actors. This could artificially inflate the place or role of the beneficiary, at the expense of others, and thereby compromise the durability of conservation.

Shared governance must be encouraged when it makes sense (where governance has good reason to rely on several partners), especially when protected areas receive external funding from private or public institutions. In other words, strictly financing territories that indeed combine relevant public stakeholders (centralised or not), private stakeholders (actors of the local or national economic framework) and civil society (local communities, neighbouring communities, local or national associations, research sectors etc.). This could prevent or limit abuse (embezzlement, corruption, misuse of funds, injustice, abuse of certain parties by others...). This could also reduce the need for outside control, as internal monitoring is improved. Finally, it implies that possible conflict between different stakeholders can be discussed in advance, thereby solving emerging crises.

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We must assess conservation efforts [...]. Every country should assess their PAs to identify problems and shortcomings. The results would be used to improve governance and PA management. Decisions and implementation of management actions should include local populations, women and the youth.

- Oumy, Senegal

Except for a couple of more advanced countries, external funding for African PAs usually relies on bi or multilateral donor (private or public, usually foreign) projects. Preparation of these projects require significant investment in time, human resources and funding - at the expense of more productive investment. *De facto*, this process excludes many capable actors, but who may be less skilled when it comes to drafting logical frameworks. It requires the use of increasingly sophisticated control procedures, which implementation exhausts the energy of teams running the project. Despite (or because) of all this, projects rarely meet their goals, and require repetitive phases that are just as complex to develop. These are seldomly launched in time, and generally lead to the same results, while the executant of the project is not sanctioned for his shortcomings, nor is he promoted for his success.

Alternatively, why not rather finance conservation actions based on their outcomes? This would require:

1. to analyse the situation of protected area conservation in each country according to a common grid of indicators that are easy to follow, and,
2. to agree on desired outcomes (which are fundable), as well as the terms of their assessment (which will focus on the indicators noted during the situation analysis), and leaving the executant the choice of practices to develop and methods to follow.

Funding would no longer be a risk for the donor, which also reduces the need for direction and monitoring. The risk would be borne by the executant, which in turn makes him more responsible and thereby more motivated. Mechanically, incompetent executants would disappear. There would no longer be funding gaps, as each result is directly rewarded, enabling the executant to develop and focus on the next step. A global “pre-financing” fund could be created (such as GEF) to enable structures in need of startup capital to be able to implement the project, but funding would be discontinued if there are no results. The funding mechanism could also include a type of “implementation insurance” to cover shortfalls due to a context that has become hostile, obviously independent from the executant’s intervention.

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PA managers aren’t equipped to manage ecotourism - the are usually amateurs. Conservation should be in the hands of the PA manager, and tourism in the hands of tourism professionals, as ecotourism management requires specific skills.

- Kouadio, Côte d’Ivoire

3. EMPOWERING STAKEHOLDERS

Massively training stakeholders involved in PA management

Lack of skills is often pointed out as a cause of conservation failure in Africa. Many courses have been developed and these have allowed to train up an elite, who does indeed have a certain *savoir-faire* in PA management (private and public). This group has become central in the decision-making process, and is now the link between the PA world and their partners (public, users, funders, other conservationists...). Meanwhile, a significant part of PA staff still lacks key knowledge that would allow them to be included in decisions, which are currently made without them.

All PA management actors must receive basic training, so that there can be a shared basis of skills. This would enable general understanding of decisions made, and thereby ensure better participation to all actions, to their assessment and possibly to their reassessment. In turn, this would improve their credibility and sustainability. The goal is therefore not simply to reinforce the skills of some, but to increase the level of all, so that the entire PA system can work better. Currently, distance-learning courses seem to be the answer to create this shared basis of skills.

In addition to developing skills, it is also important to recognise this training: both for learners who wish to defend their certification, as well as for employers who need to understand the value of their recruits. Training must thereby include (at least) an attestation, or a diploma, it must also clarify and officialise the value and equivalence of these diplomas in countries they are used.

Finally, most courses focus on hard skills, which usually refer to knowledge, tools or professional techniques that are relatively easy to observe, quantify and assess. However, to work effectively, an employee must also have a set of soft skills. These refer to social behaviour, communication and self-management. These skills must also be taught, so that PA actors not only acquire essential specialised skills, but so that they improve their teamwork, leadership, ability to delegate etc.

4. SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Effective protected area management is based on reliable data and information. There are currently several databases, study reports, publications, guidelines etc. on African protected areas to help managers. However, it is not always easy to access these documents, to be aware of their existence and to understand them.

To respond to all these problems, a user-friendly database could be set up to help find essential information, easily. Leading up to the database, information must be sorted and prioritised; content must also deliberately remain limited to ensure readability. And of course, it must always be up to date. Doing so, information will become more accessible to all, including to external influencers (consultants, donors, NGOs etc.) who could thereby also improve the quality of their decisions.

Meanwhile, new formats must be developed for more important resources in the form of interactive summaries, multimedia products etc. These could be accessible and spread to a wider audience through different channels thanks to modern technology. As many documents remain

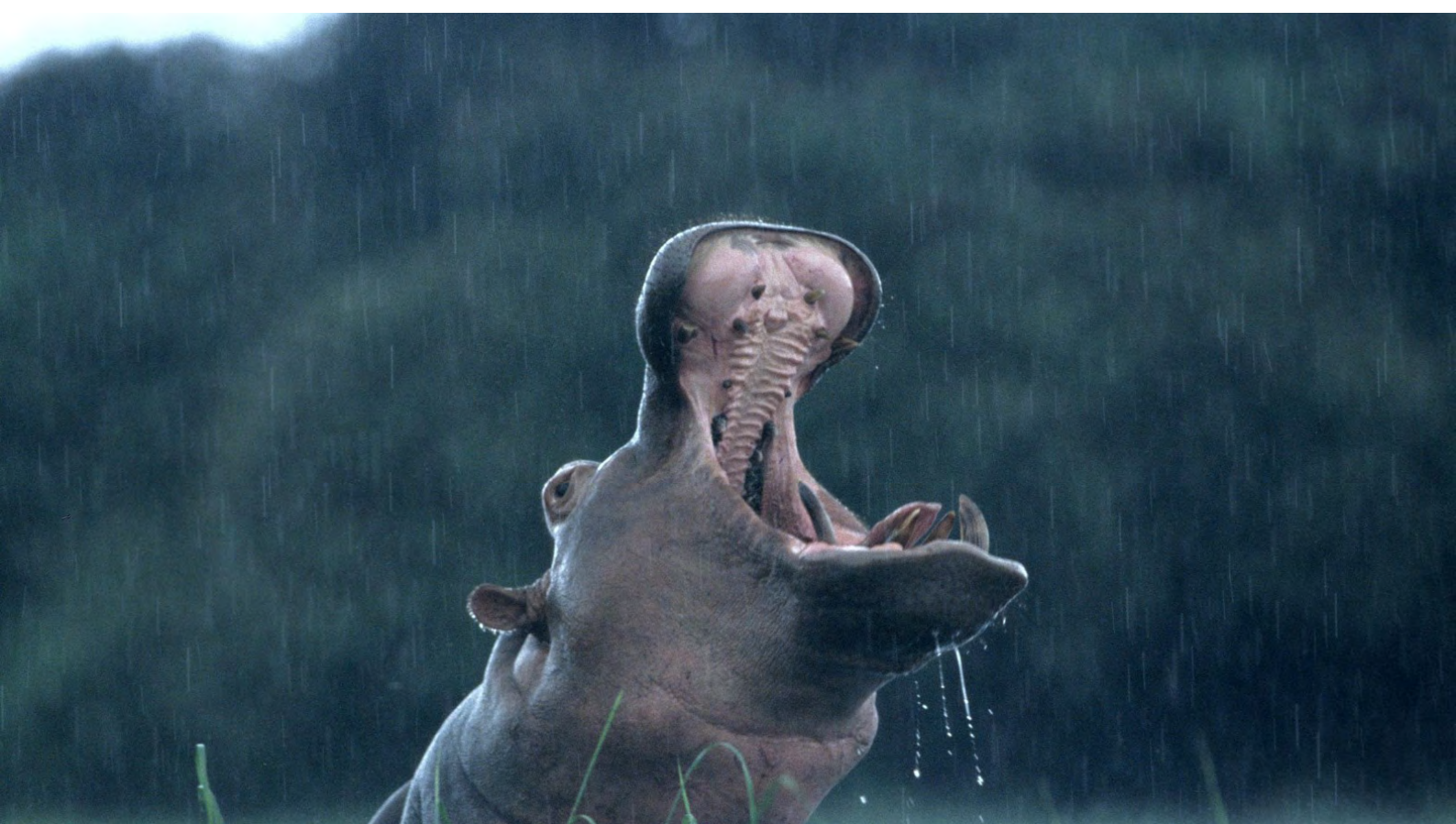
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First, the type of management must be reviewed, as each PA category requires a certain type of management, but this is not respected in many African countries. To improve governance within African PAs, managers must be competent and well-trained.

- Adama, Mauritanie

unread, this process of translating them in the form of videos could put them in the spotlight, feed the discussion, and raise awareness through social media.

Knowledge sharing also involves bringing actors together. Many students (onsite or online) and researchers do not visit protected areas frequently enough (or at all) during their studies. Yet, protected areas must become a workshop for socio-ecological development where practical solutions are invented to combine conservation with social progress. We must therefore make sure they open up widely enough to other sectors (research, education, agriculture, breeding, tourism...) to enable interactions and a mutual development of knowledge. This could also be a condition to receiving funding. • [Have a read at all our students' opinions on this Facebook post.](#)



Protected Areas and COVID-19

CONSERVING NATURE IN A TIME OF CRISIS, A REPORT FROM THE WCPA

Many of the threats facing biodiversity and protected areas will be exacerbated during, and following, the Covid-19 outbreak. The health of humans, animals and ecosystems are interconnected. An expanding agricultural frontier and human incursions into natural areas for logging, mining and other purposes has led to habitat loss and fragmentation, increased contact between human and wildlife and greater exploitation and trade of wild animal products. This enables the spread of diseases from animal populations to humans who have little or no resistance to them; Covid-19 is just the latest and most widespread of these zoonotic pandemics, following SARS, MERS and Ebola.

Protected and conserved areas are key to maintaining healthy ecosystems, protecting diverse natural habitats and wild species; terrestrial protected areas now cover more than 15% of the world's land surface. But PAs are not just about wildlife or biodiversity, important though these are. When governed and managed effectively, they also support human health and well-being, contributing to food and water security, disaster risk reduction, climate mitigation and adaptation, and local livelihoods. Globally there is increasing recognition of these wider benefits (IPBES 2019), but these contributions of well-managed protected areas are still often undervalued, or ignored, when it comes to practical policy or development decisions.

This global pandemic will have both immediate and longer-term effects on protected and conserved areas. The pandemic has already resulted in the closure of parks and protected areas in many countries, resulting in a cascade of impacts:

- Park staff being sent home to self-isolate or even being laid off. Many park agencies are already cutting staff duties. Because staffing levels are key to protected area effectiveness, this can have serious impacts on conservation of key habitats and species.
- Closure of protected areas to people for tourism and recreation. Many protected areas have been closed to visitors. For example, World Heritage sites have been completely closed to visitation in 72 percent of the 167 countries with listed sites, though anti-poaching patrols, monitoring and emergency interventions may continue.
- Concerns that charismatic threatened species may be susceptible to the virus has led to closures of areas supporting gorillas and other great ape populations.

- Suspension of protected area management and restoration programmes, including fire management, invasive alien species control, and species re-introductions. In Australia, efforts to restore park habitats damaged during the catastrophic wildfires are now on hold.
- Reduced revenue from tourism and cuts in park operational budgets. This can be especially challenging for private protected areas and community conservancies. For example, in the Mara Nabisco Conservancy in Kenya, tourism revenue that provided the salaries of 40 rangers has ceased entirely and the closure of local businesses linked to tourism has resulted in the loss of employment and livelihoods for over 600 Maasai families.
- Suspension of ranger patrols is widespread in some parts of the world, with the resulting possibility of environmentally-damaging activities, including agricultural encroachment, illegal logging and poaching. There are already emerging reports of increased poaching and illegal resource extraction in countries such as Cambodia, India, South Africa and Botswana linked to loss of rural livelihoods and reduced capacity to conduct patrols and fieldwork by enforcement staff.

As nations emerge from the lockdown phase there will be additional challenges for protected areas: a global economic depression, job losses, reallocation of government budgets to priorities such as health and social care needs, changing personal views on international travel, but hopefully, also, greater appreciation of nature and the importance of conservation and protected areas. There will be challenges associated with reopening parks and other natural spaces

though there is growing recognition of how important access to nature is to human physical and mental health. Longer term governments are likely to invest in massive stimulus packages to restart and revive economies, with the risk of reduced environmental regulation and fewer funds allocated for conservation. Unless carefully regulated these stimulus packages are likely to have major, if unintended, impacts on natural habitats and protected areas, with large-scale infrastructure, agriculture and resource exploitation leading to further habitat loss and fragmentation. There is already substantial concern over increased deforestation in Brazil where illegal logging and other criminal activities have led to an increase in forest loss of more than 60% in April compared to the same month last year, with more than 400 square kilometres of rainforest were destroyed, an area more than double the size of Washington, DC.

In the face of these challenges the Commission is supporting a range of activities related to the pandemic:

1. Understanding the scope of the problem. We need to understand the scope of the impacts on protected areas and the consequences of closures and reduced resources. The WCPA Vice Chair for Eastern and Southern Africa is running an online survey of African protected areas and the impacts from the pandemics. Other WCPA regions are considering doing the same.
2. Assessing the impact on protected area tourism. The WCPA Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group is contributing to a study for the European Union (EU) on COVID-19 and protected area tourism to evaluate the impact on protected areas, businesses and local communities.
3. A focus on urban settlements. World Urban Parks is hosting a COVID19 International Park Expert Roundtable with WCPA and other partners to discuss how to collaborate both during and after this global crisis on the importance of urban parks for people in our rapidly changing world. A series of webinars were hosted during Parks Week (April 23-30).
4. MPA News has been hosting an exchange about the impacts of covid-19 on MPAs, including challenges for management and enforcement, monitoring and impacts on marine protected areas which depend on tourism for financing – see MPA News.
5. Connecting people with nature. Given the confinement of many people to their homes, #NatureforAll, a joint initiative with the Commission on Education and Communication (CEC), and many other partners, is preparing a broad online repository of environmental education material and resources that will help people to connect with nature whatever the circumstances. This new online space is the #NatureForAll Discovery Zone.
6. Collating information through collaboration. WCPA has established a new Task Force on COVID-19 and Protected and Conserved Areas, and is working with other Commissions and the IUCN Secretariat to assess the impact of the pandemic on conservation and what IUCN can do to address the problem.
7. Working with others - Commission members are collaborating with the High Ambition Coalition to promote the need for more and better managed protected and conserved areas – see Webinar 1 and Webinar 2.

Looking ahead

1. The IUCN WCPA Urban Conservation Strategies Specialist Group is preparing guidance for visitor management when parks and trails reopen. There is already some guidance available in the Best Practice Guidelines on Urban Protected Areas.
2. Contributing to the Global Biodiversity Framework. The year 2020 was to have been a “super-year” for nature, with new global biodiversity targets, including protected areas, to be agreed at COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). This process is now delayed because of the pandemic, but WCPA is still working actively in the process, through engagement of the Beyond the Aichi Targets Task Force and members of the WCPA Steering Committee.
3. The IUCN WCPA Health and Wellbeing Specialist Group has already been working with the health sector to better understand the contribution of nature and protected areas to human physical and mental health and the value of this contribution in economic terms.
4. PARKS Journal – The Commission’s scientific journal PARKS has developed an Editorial Essay and Call for Action with a range of conservation leaders on the impacts and opportunities arising from the global

pandemic.

5. Collating and disseminating information from national PA agencies for good news solutions designed to create new employment opportunities focussed on conservation and protected areas. The New Zealand government has released a budget designed to revitalise the economy. The Department of Conservation will receive NZ\$1.1 billion to invest in new jobs in environment and conservation over the next four years.
6. IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille (January 7 -15, 2021) – WCPA is involved in organising many events at the Forum and Protected Planet Pavilion. Internally we have initiated a discussion within the Commission on what the pandemic means for the programme in Marseille, including a greater emphasis in Forum and High-level events on the role of protected areas in supporting human health and well-being. The PANORAMA web platform features case studies that describe good practice in ensuring that PAs provide benefits for a broad set of human health and well-being issues; available [here](#).

7. The Covid-19 pandemic has diverted attention away from other global crises such as climate change and biodiversity loss but these challenges still need urgent attention. Going forward it will be even more important to ensure that governments understand, and invest in, the important role of well-managed and connected protected areas as natural solutions and ecosystem-based approaches to climate change, biodiversity conservation land degradation and human health. Several WCPA Specialist Groups are working on collating information and best practice on the relevance of PAs to environmental challenges and the Sustainable Development Goals.

References

- IPBES. (2019). Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Bonn, Germany. • [Read the article here](#).



Announcements

PANORAMA

SOLUTIONS FOR A HEALTHY PLANET

Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Change Finance Projects

The African Development Bank's Department of Gender, Women and Civil Society (AHGC) designed, in partnership with the Climate Change and Green Growth Department (PECG), the AfDB/CIF's Inclusive Climate Action Initiative. This initiative was implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 2019. The purpose of the Initiative was to support the concrete integration of gender into future Climate Invest Fund (CIF) initiatives implemented under the supervision and support of the Bank by conducting context-specific research, developing two case studies on good practices and producing a set of knowledge resources to support the work of the African Development Bank and its staff.

Full article: [here](#).

More info on Panorama: [here](#).



Climate change
© AfDB

Head Environmental and Heritage Management

Where? Cape Town, South Africa

Applications deadline: 31 July 2020

>> [Click here to access full job description](#) <<

Grants manager @ Conservation International

Where? Nairobi, Kenya

Applications deadline: 10 July 2020

>> [Click here to access full job description](#) <<

Senior Director @ Conservation International

Where? Botswana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar or South Africa

Applications deadline: 10 July 2020

>> [Click here to access full job description](#) <<

CONTACTS - PAPACO

geoffroy.mauvais@iucn.org	// Programme on African Protected Areas & Conservation - PAPACO
beatrice.chataigner@iucn.org	// PAPACO Programme officer - Green List
marion.langrand@papaco.org	// PAPACO Programme officer - MOOCs
youssouph.diedhiou@iucn.org	// PAPACO Programme officer - Green List and World Heritage
madeleine.coetzer@iucn.org	// PAPACO Programme officer - Communications