

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SUSTAINABLE OCEANS

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SESSION SEVEN: GLOBAL & REGIONAL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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Western Indian Ocean Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals

Western Indian Ocean Region

1) What is the focus of this project?

The focus of the Western Indian Ocean Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals (WIO-COMPAS) program is building Marine Protected Area (MPA) professionals in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region using competence-based approaches. The project does this by developing tools and guidelines that are used to assess on-the-job competences and certify MPA staff who attain the required performance standards.

2) Which organizations and other partners are involved?

The WIO-COMPAS program is a joint initiative of two organizations, namely the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) and the Coastal Resources Center (CRC) at the University of Rhode Island (URI). WIOMSA and CRC are also the certifying bodies for the WIO-COMPAS project.

WIOMSA is a non-governmental organization that was formed in 1993 with the aim of promoting the educational, scientific and technological development of all aspects of marine sciences throughout the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region (consisting of 10 countries: Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius, Réunion (France)), with a view toward sustaining the use and conservation of its marine resources. WIOMSA has a particular interest in linking the knowledge that emerges from research to the management and governance issues that affect marine and coastal ecosystems in the region.

WIOMSA and CRC have involved a wide range of national, regional and international agencies, and many organizations and projects with an interest in improving MPA management are supporting WIO-COMPAS. As the program matures, many of these supporters will become recognized as formal partners.

3) What activities or tools have proven successful in building capacity?

In relation to building capacity for MPA management, WIO-COMPAS has been successful as a pioneer project for professionalizing MPA management. The core mechanism for developing capacity is by having candidates go through a rigorous assessment and learning experience which culminates in the certification of individuals as professionals. The WIO-COMPAS has identified key competencies (essential skills and knowledge) and standards as well as defining the performance levels that MPA staff must demonstrate in their specific MPA work segments to qualify as professionals. The WIO-COMPAS framework has successfully been used to assess

and award certification to 68 MPA personnel in eight countries and has now been integrated into the human resource management of two agencies – the Kenya Wildlife Service and Cape Nature in South Africa.

WIO-COMPAS has changed the way MPA training is approached in the WIO region with emphasis now placed on competence-based trainings. In addition to assessing and certifying MPA staff, the core competences and standards developed under the WIO-COMPAS project are now being applied by MPA organizations in the WIO to undertake other human resource services (e.g. self-assessment, career guidance and performance appraisal). For example, the Kenya Wildlife Service has used the WIO-COMPAS competence framework to develop the organization's staff self-assessment instruments. The WIO-COMPAS has also contributed immensely to regional capacity by creating forums where MPA professional can network and share learning.

4) What challenges have been experienced, specifically related to maintaining a focus on capacity building and/or replicating the project in other areas?

- a) WIO-COMPAS is still a voluntary program outside of formal government promotions. A few of the leading MPA organizations in the region have started to internalize the program's competences and assessment tools into their human resources policies, but it has been a slow process. Changing organizational practices takes time and the integration of WIO-COMPAS into diverse organizations in the region is a practical challenge.
- b) MPA staff who intend to undertake assessment and certification still rely upon their management organizations to determine and fund their capacity development opportunities. Limited resources in terms of funding has constrained many would-be candidates from undertaking assessment and gaining certification.
- c) The idea of professionalizing MPA management is very recent. Promoting WIO-COMPAS within the region and globally has required a lot of investment in awareness creation, which requires champions and resources.

5) What are the next steps for the project?

- Mainstreaming WIO-COMPAS into MPA agency human resource practices. WIOMSA and CRC are now working with MPA organizations in the WIO region to improve their capacity development practices by providing their MPA staff with competence based training and development plans.
- Assist other regions, e.g. the Caribbean, to develop their own regional certification programs.
- Offer WIO-COMPAS as a model for IUCN to develop their global Protected Areas professional certification programs.
- Develop an exchange program between MPAs in the WIO. Such a program will involve certified professionals visiting other MPAs to provide and support competence development.
- Supporting other regions of the world to adapt or develop complementary projects to the WIO-COMPAS.

<http://www.wiomsa.org/portfolio/wio-compas/>