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Enhancing management effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas in Algeria, Croatia, and Turkey

AT A GLANCE

The Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (MedPartnership) is a collective effort of leading environmental institutions and organizations together with countries sharing the Mediterranean Sea to address environmental challenges that Mediterranean marine and coastal ecosystems face. The project's 78 demonstration and the promotion and replication of good practices will maximize impact and ensure the sustainability of the project beyond its lifespan.

Total budget: 48 millions USD.
 13 million USD: Global Environment Facility
 35 million USD: Participating countries, executing agencies, and donors.

ABSTRACT

Within the MedPartnership project, WWF's intervention responded to the need to protect marine and coastal biodiversity of the Mediterranean by enhancing the management effectiveness of existing MPAs in the project countries.

Through a combination of initiatives at regional and national level, WWF addressed several shortfalls that could have prevented project MPAs from becoming operational. Specifically, WWF guided 7 MPAs in Algeria, Turkey and Croatia through the first phases of MPA implementation and ensured their development from a dormant state into an operational state. The project assisted in training and equipping staff, standardizing management plans, providing scientifically sound monitoring, and approved zoning plans.

The real strength of WWF's approach was the adoption of a participatory approach, where stakeholder engagement in MPA 'business' was key to developing ownership and securing buy-in from local communities and stakeholders (including fishermen), as well as endorsement from national and local governments.



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Between 2009 and 2015, WWF Mediterranean Programme Office accompanied the managers and lead staff of 7 MPAs in Croatia, Turkey and Algeria through the first phases of MPA implementation by providing them direct technical support, enhancing their capacities and skills, enabling cooperation and facilitating knowledge transfer with other MPA practitioners and experts in the Mediterranean, and by ensuring international visibility to their sites.

THE EXPERIENCE

In 2008, many MPAs across the Mediterranean were insufficiently managed and could be referred to as “paper parks”. In addition, many MPAs in the southern and northeastern Mediterranean did not have any staff and were insufficiently equipped, indicating low capacity and potential for management (Ameer et al, 2008).

Methodology

MPAs cannot succeed without proper legislation, a functioning institutional framework, adequate financial resources, and active engagement and support of the stakeholders. Creating an MPA is a long and complex journey that requires a holistic approach, integrating ecological, biological, social, and economic considerations. This journey can be divided into three distinct phases: Preliminary phase, Pioneer phase and Self-sufficient phase (figure 1). Within the MedPartnership Project, WWF's support specifically targeted 7 MPAs in Croatia, Turkey and Algeria to ensure that they could complete the Preliminary phase and move towards the Pioneer phase.

Three main sets of activities were implemented at each site i) to ensure good governance and stakeholder engagement, ii) to assess MPA conditions (evaluating institutional and legislative frameworks, understanding the ecological values of the area, and evaluating the financial sustainability), and iii) to develop concerted management plans (figure 2). Local teams, including MPA managers and lead staff (when available), representatives of public administrations having authority on the project MPAs and/or staff of local NGOs, were responsible for the implementation of the demonstration projects. WWF built the capacity and skills of local teams and provided the technical support needed to effectively run the project activities, facilitate the participatory consultation processes, assess and raise awareness on the ecological values of the sites and develop meaningful MPA management plans.



Figure 1

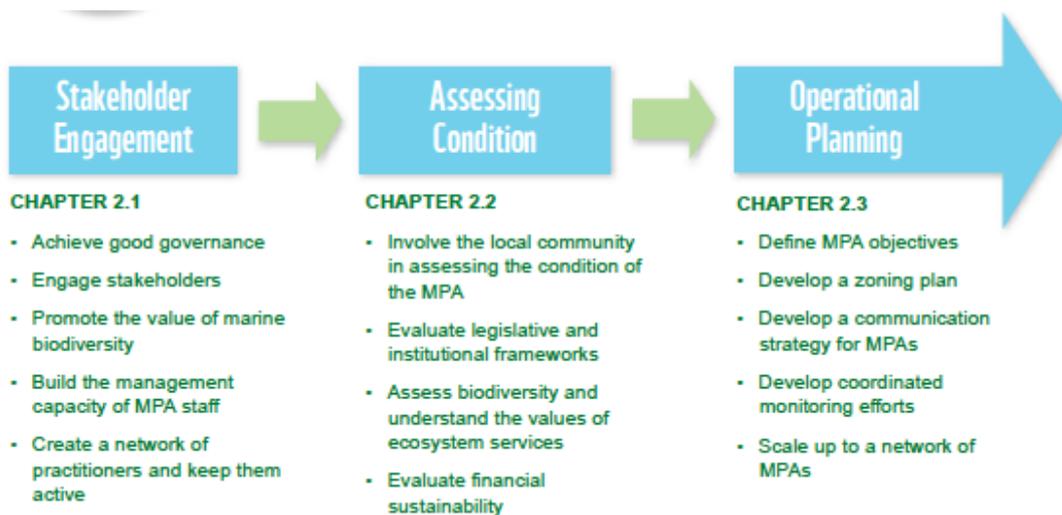


Figure 2

RESULTS

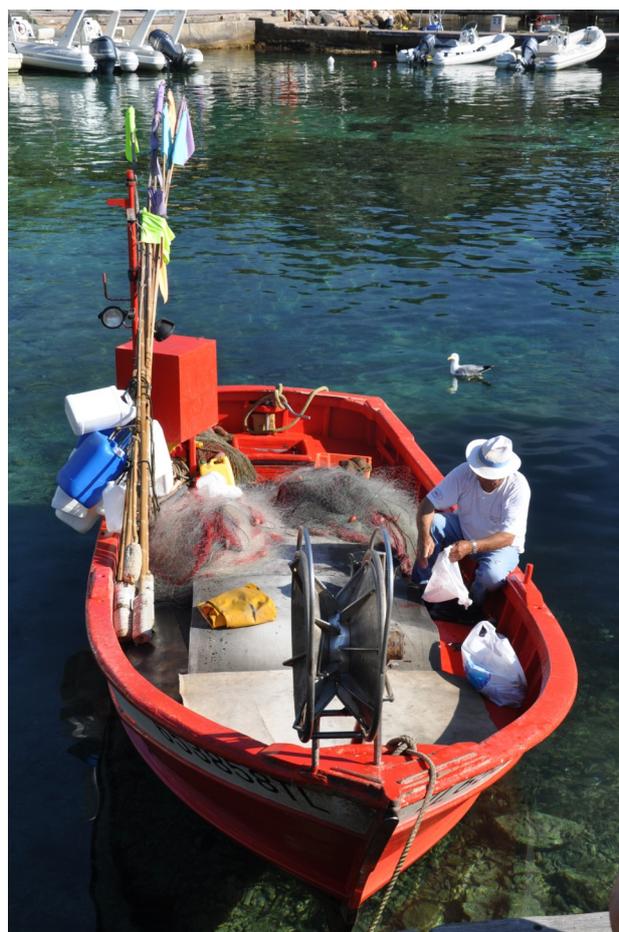
Good governance was achieved and management was strengthened - including the finalization of the management plan - in the following MPAs: Brijuni National Park, Kornati National Park, Lastovo Islands Nature Park, Telašćica Nature Park, Mljet National Park (Croatia); Taza National Park (Algeria); and Kaş-Kekova SPA (Turkey).

The project has greatly **increased the scientific knowledge of the 7 project sites**: overall, more than 30 biodiversity and socio-economic assessments were completed, including habitat maps and standardized monitoring plans.

Financial plans were produced for Kornati and Brijuni National Parks and Lastovo and Telašćica Nature Parks in Croatia allowing for more financial self-sufficiency.

Awareness was successfully raised on the importance and value of functioning MPAs among national and local governments.

Strong networking at national and regional level was achieved among MPAs.



LESSONS LEARNED

Accompanying an MPA from the infancy stage to self-sufficiency requires a good planning of each step towards maturity, tailored technical support, and ad hoc capacity and skill development activities.

WWF's approach proved extremely effective in helping the 7 project MPAs moving from a dormant state to an operational state and ensuring that the fundamental conditions for the long term sustainability of the MPAs were properly addressed. First and foremost, an important effort was deployed at the very outset of the project to bring all local teams to the same level of understanding and operativeness to effectively run the project activities and achieve the desired results.

Training combined with on-the-ground experience allowed all involved in the management and use of the park - project team, MPA staff and key stakeholders - to build their skills and learn from each other's abilities. Secondly, the establishment of an effective governance with well recognized authority (either through a steering committee or other advisory bodies) greatly contributed to the advancement of the MPA planning and management processes. Lastly, MPA management planning was recognised as a 'learning-by-doing' process supported by access to experts and capacity building opportunities and where stakeholders were brought into as early as possible and gradually (continuously) empowered to proactively contribute to these processes.

Other key lessons learned and experiences gained from the project have been made available to MPA practitioners world-wide in WWF's guidebook "Making Marine Protected Areas Work—Lessons Learned in the Mediterranean" (Gomei M. and Di Carlo G., 2012).

IMPACTS

Improved management within the Croatian MPA network

Croatia is one of the few countries in the Mediterranean where all existing MPAs are working together to improve the quality of their management in a coordinated fashion. Although, the current system is not yet an ecological network of MPAs, the active collaboration among managers created the opportunity to standardise approaches, share practices, and maintain a platform for dialogue that benefits all MPAs.

Within the MedPartnership Project, managers of five MPAs and representatives from national authorities developed their management plan through a harmonised approach and a standard template. The process entailed meetings and consultations to identify shortfalls in national legislation, clarify terminology, and prioritise the needs at both the MPA and national level. Final MPA management plans were designed in parallel with comparable marine zoning frameworks, monitoring protocols principles, evaluation and revision processes and financial plans. Approved guidelines were developed for future MPA management plan development.

“This is one of our best protected area management projects at the Ministry. Few projects feature such planned outputs, and such intensive and productive intersectoral cooperation.”

Loris Elez, Head of the Protected Areas Dept. Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection (Croatia)

REFERENCES

Abdulla A., Gomei M., Maison E., Piante C., 2008. Status of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Sea. IUCN, Malaga and WWF, France. 152 pp

Project Website: www.panda.org/msp

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KEYWORDS

Mediterranean, Marine Protected Area, MPA management plan

EXECUTING PARTNER

The mandate of WWF Mediterranean (also known as WWF MedPO) is to pursue WWF global priorities to conserve biodiversity and reduce the human footprint on nature. In the Mediterranean WWF works through field projects advocating improvements in regional and national policy processes affecting nature conservation and resource management. Complementing the work of the five WWF national organizations active in the region (France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Turkey), WWF Mediterranean operates in fourteen countries: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Syria and Tunisia.



Together for the Mediterranean Sea



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Participating countries: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Montenegro, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.