

Addressing Shifting Governance Contexts And Development Objectives In The Quirimbas National Park, Mozambique

Authors : Alima Taju¹, Vera Horigue², Joseph Maina³, Edna Munjovo⁴, Arthur Tuda⁵
¹WWF Mozambique,²Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia; Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA),³Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia,⁴Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique,⁵Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA)

E-mail Address: ataju@wwf.org.mz

ID: 12166

Submission: Background

Marine protected areas are among the most commonly applied spatial management tools for biodiversity conservation. Considering their history, MPA planning and management have evolved to address multiple objectives and evaluate different approaches to ensure their success and sustainability (Hough 1988; McCook et al. 2009; Pressey and Bottrill 2009). In terms of planning, MPA objectives have included ecological processes and various threats to ensure persistence of biodiversity, and different social, economic, and political considerations to reduce conflict between protected area management and stakeholders, and increase compliance (Ban and Klein 2009; Green et al. 2009; Pressey and Bottrill 2009). Management has also evolved to become more adaptive to increase MPA effectiveness (Hockings et al. 2000; Salafsky et al. 2001). Despite the considerable strides, MPA planning and management have yet to learn to be more dynamic to keep up with shifting governance contexts and development objectives to ensure their success and sustainability (Pressey et al. 2013).

Using the Quirimbas National Park (QNP) in Mozambique as a case study, we describe the lessons learned from the protected area review process. The lessons presented in this paper are envisioned to provide insights into how the development trajectories of Mozambique have influenced governance of the QNP, and consequently, the proposed downgrading of regulations and expansion of protected area boundaries.

Method

The QNP is located in Cabo Delgado province in Northern Mozambique. It has a total area of 9 130 km², including 7 945 km² of terrestrial and 1 185 km² of marine components (Figure 1A). It is also surrounded by a buffer area that has a total area of 5 730 km². The QNP was established in 2002 by the national government with support from the World Wide Fund for Nature and other stakeholders (Mozambique government - Ministry of Tourism 2004; Baghai et al. 2018). Unlike most of the protected areas in Africa, one of the main reasons for the QNP's establishment was to conserve biodiversity and support rural development for local communities in Cabo Delgado (Chevallier 2018; Mucova et al. 2018).

With the enactment of the Conservation Law in 2017 and its corresponding regulation in 2018, the government started reviewing conservation areas' status, objectives, and governance and their alignment with the new management categories defined by the law. The review of the QNP was undertaken between 2019

and 2020, and engaged various stakeholders from the QNP management, government officials and staff from Cabo Delgado, and representatives from other institutions that have been involved in planning and management of the park in multiple stakeholder workshops. Initially, the review's focus was to identify, under the new conservation law. This management category could allow better management of protected areas, and for the case of the QNP, with an increasing resident population highly dependent on natural resources for livelihood. The objectives of the review then shifted to re-thinking and redesigning the protected area management zones and restrictions.

The stakeholder engagement process adopted a top-down approach, where spatial design scenarios were prepared using biodiversity conservation and socioeconomic objectives. These design scenarios were then presented to stakeholders for review and discussion. During the participatory review process, stakeholders suggested expanding the QNP to extend regulatory and management frameworks for unmanaged areas of Cabo Delgado with high importance for conservation.

Results

The proposed expansion of the QNP was also a result of efforts by the Mozambican government to update the category of several conservation areas in the country to align the status of these areas to the terms of the new conservation law and improve management of these conservation areas. Shifting the most populated areas to sustainable use management will relax park regulations and allow the government to accommodate and engage local communities in various sustainable use and economic activities within EPA boundaries. This will also enable the creation of additional sources of income to the conservation area and contribute to its financial sustainability. Keeping the ecologically important areas under total protection management as a national park will help prevent future degradation of these areas. The shift from total protection to sustainable use management of the most populated areas of the QNP is a form of protected area downgrading, downsizing, and degazettement (PADDD). The potential increase of the total area conserved occurred in the backdrop of human encroachment settlements and other activities inside the strict protection zones of the QNP. Although the increase in the total area of protection may be seen as a win for biodiversity conservation, establishing and managing it might become more challenging. Protecting such a large area will require appropriately crafted policies to support park regulations, strict enforcement of management zones, and high governance capacity. Moreover, managing a much larger size would require more human and financial resources, which the government have already found challenging to provide.

Conclusion

Frequently, MPAs are considered permanent spatial closures. However, governments worldwide enact PADDD when human activities encroach protected area boundaries or when development is prioritised over conservation objectives. PADDD is not unique to Mozambique, and it has been recorded globally, including some of the WIO countries. Some of the terrestrial protected areas in Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania and South Africa were downgraded, downsized, or degazetted because of encroachment of pastoralist communities, land titling, logging concessions, timber licensing, and government corruption.

Lessons from these terrestrial parks point out the importance of increasing the

governance capacity of various government levels and stakeholders involved in protected area management. This also holds for MPAs and other spatial management tools that can be used to regulate coastal and marine areas in the WIO. Increasing the governance capacity of WIO nations is very important because it can ensure that MPA and other management zones and relevant laws and regulations are strictly enforced and that sufficient resources are allocated. Increasing the governance capacity of relevant stakeholders will require improving their awareness and education of the importance of maintaining ecosystem function to sustain the benefits provided by various coastal and marine ecosystems. Hopefully, this will help government and non-government stakeholders explicitly discuss trade-offs between conservation and development objectives to make informed and better decisions.