

# Towards a New Commons

A recent ICSF workshop drew on country case studies to provide a small-scale fishing community perspective on marine protected areas

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**W**ith the conservation of marine resources increasingly a global priority, the concept of marine protected areas (MPAs) is being widely propagated. Most MPAs are located in inshore and coastal areas of high biodiversity, which has direct relevance and concern to the livelihoods, culture and survival of small-scale and traditional fishing communities. Numerous studies have examined the ecological and biological impacts of MPAs; however, few have focused on the social implications of MPAs on communi-

could engage as equal partners in the MPA process.

On 8 and 9 February 2008, ICSF organized a two-day workshop on “Social Dimensions of Marine Protected Areas”, with specific relation to fishing communities to discuss the findings from the six studies undertaken. The workshop was organized just prior to the Second meeting of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Protected Areas (WGPA2) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in Rome, from 11 to 15 February 2008.

The study from South Africa drew on five case studies of MPAs in South Africa, that is, Langebaan Lagoon, Maputaland, St. Lucia, Tsitsikamma, and Mkambati. The research was undertaken by Jackie Sunde of the Masifundise Development Trust, Cape Town, and Moeniba Isaac of the Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), University of Western Cape.

The study found that, in general, traditional, small-scale fishing communities living in, or adjacent to, MPAs bear the costs of marine conservation while enjoying few benefits. While South Africa has committed to fulfilling international and related national obligations to ensure that local communities and indigenous people participate in the management of protected areas (PAs), and share equitably in their benefits, MPAs lag behind their terrestrial counterparts in this regard.

## Fisheries legislation

The integration of MPA legislation with fisheries management legislation in South Africa constrains interpretation

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ties who depend on fisheries resources for a livelihood. It is to address this gap that the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) facilitated six studies (in Brazil, India, Mexico, South Africa, Tanzania and Thailand) to:

- provide an overview of the legal framework for, and design and implementation of, MPAs;
- document and analyze the experiences and views of local communities, particularly fishing communities, on various aspects of MPA design and implementation; and
- suggest ways in which livelihood concerns can be integrated into the MPA programme of work, identifying, in particular, how local communities, especially fishing communities,

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of the broader social justice imperatives inherent in the CBD Programme of Work, and a biological conservation-oriented fisheries science dominates the agendas of these MPAS. Far from adopting a responsible, 'enabling' approach to traditional, small-scale fisheries, current management of marine resources in MPAS contributes to the further exclusion of the sector and undermines traditional livelihoods.

The Brazil study, by Antonio Carlos Diegues of NUPAUB, the University of Sao Paulo, focused on three marine extractive reserves: Mandira, Sao Paulo; Corumbau, Bahia; and Arraias do Cabo, Rio de Janeiro. The National System of Protected Areas (SNUC) legislation that came into force in 2000 included new categories of PAS, such as marine extractive reserves (MERS) and reserves for sustainable development (RSDs), established only where they are demanded by fishing communities. These categories represent a significant departure from no-take national parks, which have caused many conflicts between artisanal fishers and those governing the parks. The study suggests that while MERS create new opportunities for equitable, community-led conservation, their effective implementation faces significant challenges, such as insufficient managerial capabilities within government environmental institutions; lack of strong, well-managed fishworker and community organizations; paucity of funds; and the integration of scientific knowledge with traditional knowledge and management practices.

For the India study, Ramya Rajagopalan, Consultant to ICSF, studied the Gulf of Mannar National Park (GOMNP) and Biosphere Reserve (GOMBR) in Tamil Nadu, and the Malvan Wildlife Sanctuary in Maharashtra. The study found that in both cases, fishing communities feel that consultation with them has been inadequate. Significant provisions in national legislation that support the rights and occupational interests of communities are yet to be implemented. Fishing communities demand better implementation of the provisions of the Marine Fishing Regulation Acts (MFRAS) of their respective States—to control trawling, in the case



A fishers' meeting to rate the benefits of Langebaan MPA, South Africa

of the GOM, and purse-seining, in the case of Malvan. They feel that control of such destructive fishing practices will, in itself, benefit conservation. In general, the study indicates that while legislation, policy and practice now focus more on community participation and co-management of natural resources, much remains to be done, especially to secure full and effective participation of fishing communities, and to improve governance, participation, equity and

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benefit sharing.

The Thailand study, by Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk and Duangkamol Sirisook Weston of the Sustainable Development Foundation, and Wichoksak Ronarongpairee of the Federation of Southern Fisherfolk, drew on case studies from the Had Chao Mai Marine National Park, Trang Province, Andaman coast, and the Ra Island—Prathong Island in the Prathong Sub-district, Kuraburi District, Phang Nga Province, also on the Andaman coast. The study suggests that while people's participation is a concept looked on very favo-

## MPAs: Small-scale fishing community perspectives

The workshop identified the following issues and related proposals:

**Prioritizing process:** Parties to the CBD have set themselves a target of bringing at least 10 per cent of the world's marine ecoregions under protection by 2012. While conservation initiatives certainly need an impetus, we need to be aware that in the quest for meeting quantitative targets, the nature and quality of community participation in governance is being compromised, curtailing the very effectiveness of this programme of work. In our experience, the process of ensuring effective and meaningful community participation in management and PA implementation is challenging, and needs, above all, time. However, it should be recognized that only genuine, participatory processes would ensure long-term and sustainable outcomes, balancing biodiversity conservation with environmental and social justice.

**Human rights:** Undemocratic and non-transparent processes in PA implementation, particularly top-down, target-oriented MPA implementation, supported by governments, financially powerful conservation NGOs and international financial institutions, are displacing and undermining livelihoods of fishing communities, compromising, in many instances, the human rights of these communities. This is especially the case where the focus is on no-take reserves rather than on conservation within a sustainable-use framework. If coastal and marine conservation initiatives are to be

effective from a biodiversity, livelihood and poverty alleviation perspective, the starting point must be fishing and other marine resource-dependent communities and their organizations themselves.

**Community conservation initiatives:**

In this context, we need to be aware that fishing communities across the world have been taking a variety of initiatives traditionally and, more recently, to protect and manage their resources, within a sustainable-use framework, including through establishing PAS. It is essential to adopt a dynamic and flexible approach to defining and recognizing PAS (in keeping with decision VII/24). Community initiatives need to be seen as conservation initiatives in their own right and accorded due legal recognition and support. Recently introduced MPAs have often been imposed on these systems, undermining them as well as the social institutions that sustain them. In contrast, in countries such as in Brazil, Spain and France, community-initiated and community-driven processes that have drawn on traditional knowledge of local fishing communities, have received support from government, and are proving effective.

The following are specific proposals for WGPAA2:

**Participation in PA-related processes:**

The direct participation of fishing community representatives in all CBD workshop and meetings related to PAS should be

rably by the government, in practice, genuine participatory approaches are still limited, and communities do not perceive benefits, particularly from the growth in tourism in PAS. There are also constraints imposed by the existing legal framework, inadequate institutional capacity, lack of co-ordination, and insufficient funding.

In Tanzania, Rosemarie Mwaipopo of the University of Dar es Salaam, and a member of the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA), looked at social issues in the Mafia

Island Marine Park (MIMP). Through an analysis of the socioeconomic and cultural contexts of the Mafia people, the study explains how people's rights regarding ownership, access and their capacity to engage in, and benefit from, the MPA become contested in circumstances where the pressure to conserve resources is also crucial. Management interventions, albeit meaningfully designed, fall short of taking on board the contexts within which people live their lives, their diverse and changing relationships with one another and with re-

facilitated. In order to make this participation meaningful and effective, preparatory processes prior to meetings need to be organized and supported, and translation of documents/interpretation ensured. A policy on effective participation of indigenous and local fishing communities in such meetings needs to be developed and implemented.

**Governance and capacity building:**

To increase awareness of the provisions of the PA programme of work and to ensure its implementation, particularly of Programme Element 2, there is need to organize specific capacity-building workshops on governance and social issues, with participation of indigenous and local fishing community representatives, governments, and natural and social scientists, at the national and regional level. Such processes should ensure that management plans developed for MPA implementation, which at present tend to be biological in focus, have a specific socio-economic focus.

**Reporting:** Reporting by governments on PA implementation should specifically include reporting progress achieved on implementing Programme Element 2 of the PA POW (in keeping with decision VIII/24, para 4) and on meeting MDG targets. The reporting format needs to be accordingly modified to enable qualitative and meaningful reporting on these goals.

National reports need to be prepared through a participatory process, where communities in PAs are part of the process of monitoring effectiveness of PA implementation. Civil society needs to be supported in conducting evaluation of PAs.

There is need for specific reporting on MPAS. This would also enable governments to review governance frameworks in use for management of MPAS, given that, in several countries, terrestrial frameworks and institutions are used for the management of MPAS, despite the unique nature of the coastal and marine ecosystems as well as the social institutions that relate to these resources.

**Socioeconomic data:** While the initiative to develop the World Database on Protected Areas is commendable, it is imperative that gender-segregated baseline socioeconomic data is part of the reporting framework that goes to develop this database.

**Toolkits:** There is need to develop specific toolkits for evaluation and implementation of MPAS, suited to the specific context of fishing communities and the marine environment, and with a focus on socioeconomic components.

**Social and cultural criteria:** There needs to be greater focus on social and cultural aspects of PA planning and implementation, balancing the current predominant focus on biological aspects. Local, traditional and indigenous knowledge should be included in all stages of the identification, planning and implementation of conservation and management initiatives, and in monitoring and evaluating effectiveness of these initiatives. In this context, it is unfortunate that the regional capacity-building workshops on Gap Analysis and Management Effectiveness did not make any attempt to integrate social and cultural aspects and knowledge systems.

sources, how they articulate such management interventions in relation to their rights, and their roles in resource management.

The study from Mexico, though primarily a secondary study, drew on two already-published detailed case studies, and summarized the findings from four other case studies, as well as the experiences of the authors themselves. It was undertaken by Julia Fraga of the Centre for Research and Advanced Studies of the National Polytechnic Institute (CINVESTAV-IPN), Mexico, and

Ana Jesus, a student who has just completed her Master's thesis on the community-based management of an MPA in a small Mexican fishing village. The study noted that despite government efforts, participatory processes are still considerably immature, and indigenous and local communities play limited roles in decisionmaking and/or policymaking. The study highlighted a case where a local group, initially motivated and willing to participate in PA management, ended up disillusioned with the shortcomings in the system.

The authors also drew on cases where local resource users expressed lack of confidence in the government's management of natural resource within

**Alain le Sann of Pêche et Développement, France, described how fishermen have become ardent supporters of the Iriose Marine Park, which covers 3,500 sq km off the western tip of Brittany.**

PAS; they viewed conservation and PAS as threats to their livelihoods, probably due to their lack of involvement in natural resource management, as well as the absence of alternative livelihood options.

The workshop also benefited greatly from the experiences of fishing communities in MPA areas in France, Indonesia and Spain, as well as the perspectives provided by the representative of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP). Alain le Sann of Pêche et Développement, France, described how fishermen have become ardent supporters of the Iriose Marine Park, which covers 3,500 sq km off the western tip of Brittany (see page 36). They see the park as a tool to protect the marine environment, including from land-based threats, and have sought and achieved proper representation in the manage-

ment process. Antonio Garcia Allut described a similar fishermen-led process in Spain's Galicia, a region where fisheries are of great importance.

Riza Damanik of WALHI, the Indonesian Forum for the Environment, presented a recent study on five MPA experiences in Sulawesi and Komodo-NTT, namely, Wakatobi Archipelago MNP, Togian Archipelago MNP, Bunaken MNP, Komodo MNP and Taka Bonerate MNP. The WALHI study found that conservation initiatives tended to be "coercive", with little opportunity for communities to express their consent or participation. Traditional, local knowledge has rarely been taken into account. In addition, the process of setting up marine national parks tends to be followed by industrial investment activities for fisheries and/or tourism, which provide few local benefits.

The workshop presentations revealed that the most positive examples of livelihood-sensitive conservation were community-driven initiatives, as in the cases presented from France (Iriose Marine Park), Spain (Galicia) and Brazil (MERS). In these cases communities are using PAS as a tool to protect their livelihoods, as, for example, against shrimp farms, tourism, sport fishing and oil pollution. It was noted that while community-led processes require time, as community institutions need to be developed and strengthened, they are more effective in the longer term. These initiatives are creating a "new commons" where coastal communities have the responsibility for management, even though they continue to face several challenges.

On the other hand, it was clear from the case studies from India, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa, Tanzania and Thailand, that communities do not consider themselves equal partners in the MPA process.

### Community participation

While in all cases there have been recent efforts to enhance community participation, in general, participation tends to be instrumental—where communities are expected to participate in implementation, and are not part of the process of designing and implementing management initiatives.

ALAIN LE SANN



A fisherman in the Iriose Marine Park, Brittany, France

The studies also document clear costs for communities—in terms of livelihood options lost, expulsion from traditional fishing grounds and living spaces, and violation of human/community rights, with few perceived real benefits. Alternative livelihood options that have been put in place are perceived to have provided limited support to affected communities, and in several cases, as in Tanzania, South Africa and Thailand, communities do not perceive benefits from tourism initiatives associated with the PAS. There tends to be a resistance to MPAS among local communities, a mistrust of government and NGOs that lead such processes, and violations of rules and regulations, undermining the effectiveness of the MPA itself.

The workshop arrived at a set of recommendations for WGPA2 (see box on page 22). The findings of the case studies were also presented at a side-event organized by ICSF during WGPA2. Summaries of the case studies are available on ICSF's website ([mpa.icsf.net](http://mpa.icsf.net)) and the studies are soon to be brought out as separate publications. ¶

**For more**

[mpa.icsf.net](http://mpa.icsf.net)  
**ICSF MPA website**

[www.cbd.int/](http://www.cbd.int/)  
**Website on the Convention on  
Biological Diversity**

[www.fao.org/fishery/mpas](http://www.fao.org/fishery/mpas)  
**Marine Protected Areas as a Tool for  
Fisheries Management (FAO site)**

<http://www.lmmanetwork.org/>  
**Locally-managed Marine Area  
Network (LMMA)**