The View from Gran Paradiso

Conclusions and recommendations from an international workshop on Achieving Fairly and Effectively Managed Protected and Conserved Areas held from 24-28 June 2019 at the Gran Paradiso National Park, an IUCN Green Listed protected area[1].

More than 80 participants from 35 countries met in the Gran Paradiso National Park, in Cogne, Italy, from 24-28 June 2019, under the auspices of the BIOPAMA Programme, supported by the European Development Fund through the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. The European Commission's DG-DEVCO, IUCN, and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, convened the meeting as an opportunity to share and exchange lessons for the implementation of the BIOPAMA programme – a programme that aims to strengthen protected and conserved areas in 79 countries and ensure that they contribute towards sustainable development. The was graciously hosted by the Fondation Grand Paradis, and the Gran Paradiso National Park.

Participants were conscious that the world is at a crossroads as we approach 2020, the year we will renew the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. Nature has never been more threatened, while systems of effective protected and conserved areas provide hope and inspiration for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services and as a foundation for truly sustainable economies and livelihoods. A suite of keynote presentations started the process of deliberating progress, challenges, opportunities and direction across five streams of interest, with the ultimate aim of bringing these streams together in a clear way forward that will ensure that protected and conserved areas can play their full role. The Green-Listed Gran Paradiso National Park provided a suitable setting from which to view future needs and prospects, to engage the participants, and to commit to a programme of action.

Highlighted conclusions:

As the participants took stock of the insights and understanding achieved collectively in Gran Paradiso, they embraced and committed to:

- Building bridges between the different tools and methods for assessing and enhancing management effectiveness (PAME) and governance effectiveness assessment (PAGEA), and finding and exploiting synergies to achieve greater understanding and impact at scale.
- Taking advantage of BIOPAMA to emphasise the importance of data, analysis, decision-support and policy outreach, based on quantitative, comparable, scalable and repeatable approaches.

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[1] "The View from Gran Paradiso" and all the workshop resources are available at this link.

- Using PAME and PAGEA approaches, including IMET, with enhanced ecological monitoring as stepping-stones towards successful protected and conserved areas as exemplified by the IUCN Green List Standard.
- Expanding the deliberate use of monitoring biodiversity, cultural values, ecosystem services and other natural values as a fundamental component of the decision-making cycle.
- Systematically incorporating PA Governance and Equity assessment, including in national and regional contexts, into all protected and conserved area assessments, as a basis for evaluation of priorities and decisions.
- Emphasising the importance of the BIOPAMA Regional Observatories in the ACP regions for supporting prioritisation and decision-making for improved PA outcomes.
- Using the BIOPAMA Action Component to align with and support the broader application of PAME and PAGEA in the ACP regions
- Documenting lessons learned and communicating these, including through the PANORAMA.
- Expanding reference to the IUCN Green List Standard and commitments towards green listing.
- Working together across regions and partner institutions including within the BIOPAMA partnership to build on strengths and strive for sustainability into the future.
- Leveraging the work in BIOPAMA as one actor in a wider suite of programmes, including GEF, and to act as a multiplier for enhanced impact, including in decisions at CBD COP15.
- Using the powerful platforms in regional congresses, the IUCN World Conservation Congress and the CBD COP15 in Kunming, China, to put BIOPAMA "on the map" as a powerful integrator that supports successful conservation as a foundation for sustainable development.

    Progress on these high-level commitments will be followed-up and reported to the BIOPAMA Steering Committee at its annual meeting.

Key messages, and more detailed recommended actions from the five intersecting streams were:

1. **Protected Areas Management Effectiveness Assessment (PAME)**

The systematic assessment of protected and conserved areas is a powerful tool to enhance effectiveness, so that outcomes for biodiversity and society are achieved. There is a well-established linkage between management effectiveness and biodiversity outcomes, although achieving biodiversity outcomes is a function of several factors, including governance. It is therefore recommended that:

- Systematic application of management effectiveness assessments to cover all relevant components, including biodiversity outcomes, is required.
- In partnership with PA managers and agencies, PAME should be used to identify how management can be enhanced towards achieving outcomes; it should encourage managers and not be used to place them under scrutiny.
- That assessment e assessment should be embedded in the management institutions involved, as the process is as important as the findings.
- It should involve all relevant stakeholders, and data, knowledge and understanding, should be shared appropriately, while also being maintained in a global database.

- A comprehensive approach be taken, to ensure that management effectiveness is coupled with good governance and proper ecological design, as outlined in the IUCN's Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas.

2. Governance and Equity Assessment (PAGEA)

Good governance and achieving equity underpin effective management and are determinants of conservation success, whether at the national or regional system scale or site scale. Participatory, and transparent governance assessments can identify how the legitimate interests of rights-holders and stakeholders can be enhanced, and how poor governance can be addressed. This is key for securing well-being and healthy social-ecological systems fully respecting traditional and cultural expressions. It is therefore recommended that:

- Protected area Governance and Equity Assessments are applied systematically across protected and conserved area systems and sites, together with management effectiveness assessment.
- Specific efforts be made to develop capacity and competence through learning programmes, for undertaking and responding to governance and equity assessment.
- Beyond assessments, encourage engagement and recognition of diverse governance arrangements/mechanisms in protected and conserved areas, including OECMs.
- Global databases should include the findings of governance and equity assessments and the actions to enhance these.
- Case studies be collated for learning and understanding of the role and power of good governance, and develop "state of the art" assessment systems.

3. Monitoring and assessing biodiversity

Understanding whether biodiversity outcomes are being achieved is fundamental to effective governance and management programmes, yet is a challenge for many managers. There are blockages around many aspects of monitoring, from indicator selection to data collection, from data storage and analysis to data use in management decision-making. Monitoring and assessment of biodiversity (and other PA values) therefore needs to be properly resourced, standardised and consistently applied. It is recommended that:

- A monitoring system needs to be defined by PA managers, in partnership with communities and other stakeholders, which answers relevant questions related to the desired objectives and outcomes of the PA, and produces knowledge in an appropriate format and timely fashion to inform management decisions.
- The monitoring system should be integrated across scales of species, ecosystems and landscapes, and focus on specific outcomes including the achievement of ecological thresholds that provide a transparent report on the condition of biodiversity.
- The sustainability of PA monitoring could be enhanced, by capacity building, and the integration of short-term project-level initiatives into the ongoing roles of relevant authorities.

- A range of actors, including staff, citizens, indigenous peoples, communities and academics should be involved in monitoring, and results shared and communicated in formats (such as maps and dashboards) that facilitate easy interpretation and use in decision-making.
- Many PA managers would benefit from the production of standardized guidelines on biodiversity outcome monitoring, including templates and tools, ideas on how to enhance participatory monitoring, and examples of best practice.

4. The Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool (IMET)

IMET is a PAME tool developed in the BIOPAMA programme focused on an integrated "planning, monitoring, evaluation" approach. IMET allows for the integration of site level assessments with contextual information as a basis for decision-making both in systems and sites. It has great potential to be further developed - through new or enhanced modules covering law enforcement, planning and monitoring, governance of ecosystem services, all of which are focused on providing improved operational support to park managers at site level. IMET is a fully-fledged PAME tool, which can provide essential information for assessment against the IUCN Green List Standard and for Green Listing evaluations. It is therefore recommended that:

- IMET and the information contained in the BIOPAMA Regional Observatories should be integrated closely
- Access to IMET results is promoted as a benefit for the PAs and their management agencies, with clear data sharing arrangements put in place in agreement with the national authorities
- The application of IMET should be significantly expanded, across different kinds of PAs, and into new regions, and made more accessible through training and other capacity development. IMET has an established model of "coaches" and various training modules that can serve to expand knowledge of the tool, the process and analysis of results.
- IMET can be closely integrated as a tool for information gathering and analysis feeding into the Green Listing Process.
- Cross-walks between IMET and the Global Database on PAME (GD-PAME) should demonstrate that it is possible to generate a common reporting format, together with other PAME tools, linked directly to the corresponding PAs in the World Database of Protected Areas (WDPA).
- Efforts to communicate IMET are increased, including its potential for use in non-ACP countries

5. The IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas

The Green List is an evidence-based sustainability standard allowing for the strengthening and recognition of sites that achieve conservation of biodiversity and cultural values, as well as related ecosystem services, contributions to climate change adaptation and mitigation, and for social outcomes. The Green List can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses of protected and conserved areas that can be addressed through appropriate investments and actions. It is therefore recommended that:

- The Green List process is adapted to receive input from other diagnostic tools, such as PAME, PAGE and IMET, and does not replace these; it is possible to translate findings from these tools into the Green List process.
- The Green List Standard should be used an opportunity to assert the need for clear documentation of the evidence of a site's ability to meet all conditions for good governance, effective management and sound ecological design as foundations for biodiversity outcomes and contribution to the challenges of the climate crisis.
- The Green List can be embedded into the regional institutions and observatories across BIOPAMA, increasing efficiencies, as well as with other programmes such as World Heritage, Biosphere Reserves.
- A balance should be achieved between the costs of implementing processes, the credibility of the system, and the benefits of being engaged. The Green List business plan should support this as an objective.
- Green List resources, communications and processes should be accessible in more languages, and Green List mentors and IMET coaches could be trained in both systems.
- There is a need for more site-level training on how to implement the criteria of the Green List standard, and sharing of good practices (related to PAME and PA governance, as well as climate change in protected areas) amongst sites.