Way forward: Diversity and increase revenue from different sources

Diversifying sustainable and indirect revenue streams is vital for the long-term financial stability of the PAs and the wider region protected area estate and protection of key related ecosystem services. Importantly, raising revenue also facilitates the implementation of essential conservation and management activities that need both short-term and long-term funding. The approach to revenue raising can be adapted in various ways to suit the needs of the region, the protected area and other relevant stakeholders. All these aspects culminate in creating the platform needed to direct the protected area authorities to design effective strategies and action plans to reduce the funding gap.

1. Provide targeted training and capacity building: Adequate training and capacity building is needed to ensure public sector staff, including conservation officers, are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to design and implement strategies and action plans to reduce the funding gap. The training should include areas such as business development, improving revenue collections, and understanding the economic value of protected areas.

2. Understanding the gaps: In order to develop and implement effective strategies to address the protected area funding gap, it is essential to understand the key drivers of the gap. This includes identifying the causes of the gap, such as the lack of adequate finance, the need for better revenue collections, and the inability of protected area authorities to retain adequate revenue at protected area level. This understanding will help to identify the most suitable mechanisms to address the gap.

3. Develop and review accountable plans and strategies: To address the funding gap, protected area authorities need to develop and review accountable plans and strategies. These plans should include clear objectives and timelines, as well as specific actions and activities to achieve these objectives. They should also include financial projections and revenue collection strategies. These plans should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

4. Encourage the development of self-generated revenue: Encouraging protected area authorities to generate their own revenue is essential to addressing the funding gap. This can be achieved by providing incentives for protected area authorities to retain revenue at protected area level. This includes the development of innovative finance mechanisms, such as carbon credits and rights of sale; (iii) ensure public-private partnership legislation provides beneficial enabling conditions.

5. Decentralisation of decision-making: Decentralisation of decision-making and resource allocation to protected area managers is crucial to addressing the funding gap. This includes providing adequate financial resources, professional support, and technical support at protected area management levels.

6. Explore innovative finance options: Encourage innovative and sustainable solutions that can help to address the funding gap. This includes the development of innovative finance mechanisms, such as: (i) require industries with negative impacts to invest in nature-based solutions, including carbon credits and biodiversity offsets; (ii) clarify ownership around protected areas and the entire protected area system and incentivize conservation by communities at local level.

Build an enabling policy and legislative environment

An enabling policy and regulatory environment is a critical requirement and must be in place to support the implementation of effective strategies to address the protected area funding gap. This includes policies and regulations that enable the development and implementation of innovative finance mechanisms, as well as policies that incentivize conservation by communities at local level. It also includes policies that ensure protected areas are recognized as economically, ecologically and socially (and therefore as politically) relevant.