

Courses Provide Training for Managers in Caribbean, Western Indian Ocean

Spurred by concerns that many MPA managers are insufficiently trained to provide effective resource protection, two projects on opposite sides of the world have begun preparing practitioners to handle the challenges of planning and management. Organized in the Caribbean and the Western Indian Ocean, the capacity-building projects have combined classroom-style lecture courses with discussions, field trips, and networking opportunities. [For a description of project funders and organizers, see box at end of article.]

Training the trainers

The training course for the ongoing Caribbean project aims primarily to instruct managers who will in turn train local personnel in MPA management. This strategy, called Training of Trainers (ToT), is intended to multiply the course's impact.

"The program focuses on providing the managers not only with knowledge on all aspects of MPA management, but also with the skills to transmit the acquired knowledge to others," said course organizer Alessandra Vanzella-Khoury of the United Nations Environment Programme-Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP-CEP). One full module of the course is dedicated to teaching and communications skills, while each additional thematic module includes examples and suggestions for transmitting that module's concepts.

Vanzella-Khoury said that careful selection of participants is important for ensuring course effectiveness. "A major criterion [for participant selection] is the commitment by each participant to undertake tailored training activities at the local level, preferably with his or her MPA," she said.

The Caribbean project held a 14-day course in May 2000 for Spanish-speakers, attracting 15 managers from eight nations. A similar course for English-speaking managers occurred in November 1999. More courses are planned for 2001; beyond that, there may be similar courses offered for Caribbean terrestrial areas as well, said Vanzella-Khoury.

The idea for the course grew from a 1993 regional needs assessment that revealed that capacity-building and training efforts in the Caribbean were brief and non-systematic. UNEP-CEP conducted a second needs assessment in 1998 that confirmed the 1993 report, at which point the organization began developing the training course.

Training managers

Although similar to the Caribbean course in much of its content, the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) course focused on training managers rather than trainers. Julius Francis of the Institute of Marine Sciences at the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) said the WIO organizers' original intent had been more along the lines of the Caribbean course. However, when planning the WIO project, they realized that most of the region's managers had limited training in MPA management. "Most of the managers had been trained in wildlife management colleges and therefore had no background in marine issues," said Francis.

Offered in February 2000 in Malindi, Kenya, the WIO training course was the final activity of a one-year project to build managerial capacity in the region's MPAs. Trainees in the 13-day course included 17 managers and four others from an array of WIO nations, as well as instructors from both inside and outside of the region.

In the first week, the course focused on the marine environment, planning, and participatory processes, while the second week introduced more applied concepts, such as communication, administration, finances, and monitoring. Field trips to two MPAs featured discussions with park wardens and various stakeholder groups, including fishing organizations, scientists, and conservationists. The project's organizers are now finalizing a training manual for MPA managers based in part on lessons and feedback from the course.

In the interest of sharing information and facilitating cooperation in the future, the WIO organizers are considering developing a communications network for regional MPA managers. "For most of the participants, one of the big advantages of attending

the course was the possibility to share experiences between the different parks in the different countries of the region," said a report that evaluated the course. "It was considered very important that this informal network be maintained and that some mechanism for the dissemination of information be established."

Francis noted some of the challenges of networking in the region, however. Few of the parks have reliable telephones or electricity, and even fewer own a computer.

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Funders and Organizers

The Western Indian Ocean project was funded for one year by the World Bank, with additional financial support from Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS). The Coastal Zone Management Centre of the Netherlands, the Institute of Marine Sciences of the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), KWS, and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Sciences Association organized and delivered the training course.

The Caribbean project also received funding from the World Bank, as well as from the United Nations Foundation, the United Nations Environment Programme's Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP-CEP), and The Nature Conservancy (a US-based NGO). UNEP-CEP organized the course, and The Nature Conservancy coordinated and facilitated it.

The World Bank program that played a role in funding both projects is called "Capacity Building in Marine and Coastal Protected Area Management." The contact person for the program is Carien von Zwol, whose e-mail address is C.vonZwol@rikz.rws.minvenw.nl.

Tips on Developing a Regional Training Course

Practitioners interested in arranging a course to train regional managers might consider the following tips, collected by MPA News from the experience of the Caribbean and Western Indian Ocean projects:

Find funding: The costs of such a project, including an initial needs assessment and course logistics, add up quickly. Both training courses have required travel and lodging for several participants and instructors over a two-week span. Find a sympathetic institution -- perhaps one with a regional focus -- and attract its interest in funding the project.

Address the need: The first activity of the year-long WIO project was to hold a regional planning workshop (in June 1999) to identify ongoing MPA management activities and regional training needs. For the Caribbean project, UNEP-CEP conducted a needs analysis prior to developing the training course.

Develop a training manual: Both projects have featured training manuals with modules that can be expanded in longer training courses. Regional case studies provide the manuals with practical examples. Following the course, manuals can be distributed throughout the region. Creating the manual in a timely and professional manner can be a challenge, said UNEP-CEP's Vanzella-Khouri: it needs to be balanced and comprehensive, yet not overwhelming in its detail.

Provide field trips: Visits to MPAs offer an opportunity for participants to analyze the management challenges of each site, the potential causes of these challenges, and the effectiveness of existing management. Provide detailed background information on each site prior to visitation, and follow up each visit with discussions to review observations.

New Fund to Provide Small Grants to Caribbean MPAs

The United Nations Environment Programme's Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP-CEP) has established a fund to strengthen MPA management in the Caribbean. The CaMPAM (Wider Caribbean Marine Protected Area Managers) Small Grants Fund will provide grants of up to US \$8,000 in the form of technical or financial assistance. Projects will be supported in the categories of development of management/administrative systems; damage assessments and restoration; staff training; and purchase of selected equipment.

Instructions on applying are available in Word format on the UNEP-CEP website, at <http://www.cep.unep.org/programmes/spaw/MPA/mpa.htm>.

