Innovations in Capacity Building: Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals

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Abstract

With the growing recognition of the need to preserve and protect the world's marine resources have come accelerated calls at the international, regional, and national scales for increased numbers of marine protected areas (MPAs). In parallel, there are growing concerns and questions about the management effectiveness of existing MPAs. A first of its kind program in East Africa, the Western Indian Ocean Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals or the WIO-COMPAS Program, is taking a new approach to addressing this challenge. It ensures individuals responsible for designing, managing, and operating these areas have the right skills sets and competences to help achieve management effectiveness. It then publicly certifies these individuals as having those requisite skills; and creates professional networks through which these individuals moving forward can share experiences, promote the approaches that work, and avoid repeating proven mistakes. This article outlines the global movement to increase MPAs and their effectiveness; the general model for certification of professionals and the rationale for MPA-specific certification; the WIO-COMPAS Program overview from content to management framework; the process used by the creators of the WIO-COMPAS to develop and implement the program in the region; results to date; lessons learned; and recommendations for others interested in replicating the program in other regions of the world.

Keywords
Certification, Competence, Management, Marine protected areas, MPA, Networking, Training