



Building Institutional Capacity in Government Conservation and Protected Area Organisations

A workshop to explore options and identify directions

8 – 11 January 2017

Workshop Report



Event

The workshop was hosted and supported by the International Academy for Nature Conservation, Isle of Vilm (INA) of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) in collaboration with the IUCN/WCPA Capacity Development Thematic Group. It brought together conservation professionals, capacity building experts, organisational development specialists and protected area practitioners to consider options, develop recommendations and identify realistic and practical ways for supporting and enabling organisational capacity development within conservation and protected area agencies.

A summarised agenda and list of participants can be found at the end of this document.

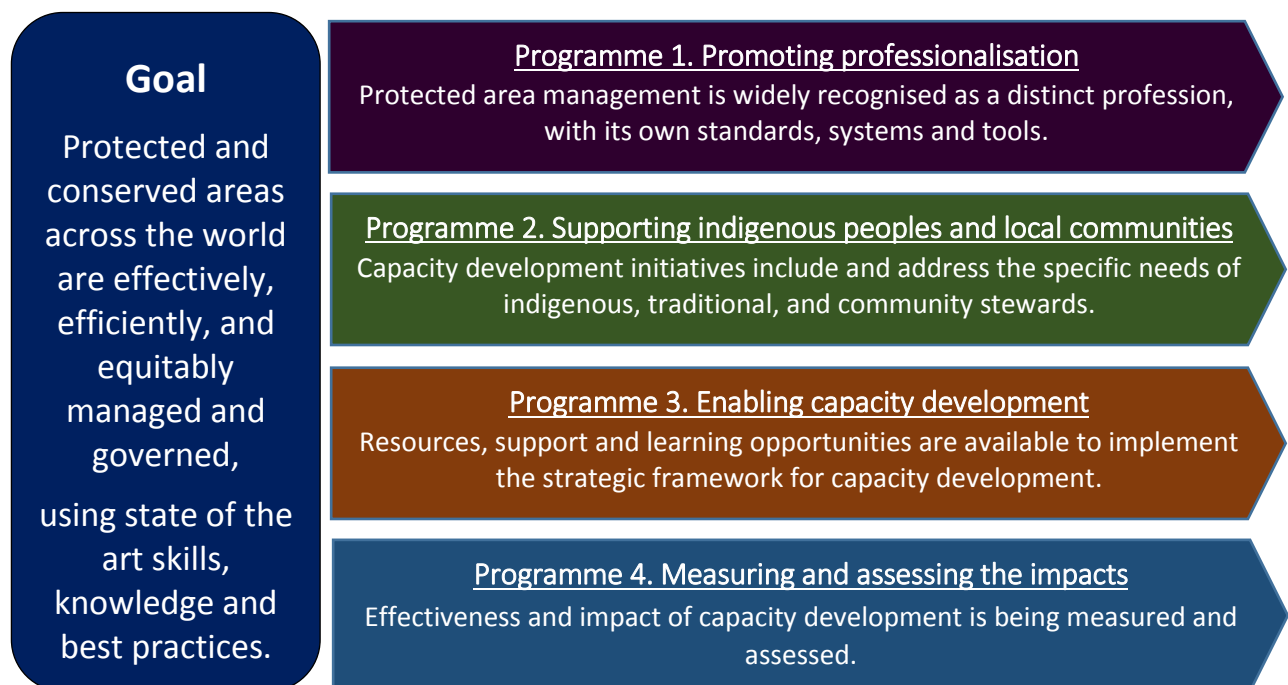
The WCPA Thematic Group on Capacity Development and the professionalisation programme

The IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas Thematic Group on Capacity Development works to support and promote improved capacity and ultimately performance of protected area organisations and practitioners. The work of the group is guided by the WCPA Strategic Framework for Capacity Development in Protected and Other Conserved Areas (SFCD), developed during and after the 2014 IUCN World Parks Congress. (See http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/sfcd_final_july_2015.pdf)

The SFCD defines an overall vision for capacity development in protected areas as follows.

Protected and conserved areas across the world are effectively, efficiently, and equitably managed and governed using state of the art skills, knowledge, and best practices stemming from a diversity of traditions and cultures.

The goal and the four main programmes of the framework are shown below.



Programme 1 includes four main objectives for professionalisation:

1. A set of global tools, guidance, and support materials is made available through IUCN WCPA to support development of competence based approaches.
2. Protected area occupations and associated standards are officially registered in at least ten countries.

3. Protected area employers and learning providers are enabled to adopt competence based approaches to building the capacity of protected area staff.
4. Protected area managing organisations are supported and enabled to improve and update working practices.

Professionalisation approaches foster the use of recognised standards of competence and performance, and the integration of these standards into professional development, career structures, and systems of performance recognition, as well as organisational culture and practices. The ultimate goal is to strengthen organisational effectiveness and thereby the effectiveness and impact of protected areas.

The need to professionalise protected area management is recognised in Recommendation 8 from the Capacity Development Stream at the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014: *‘To promote and support recognition of protected area managers, stewards and custodians from all types of protected areas as ‘professionals’ through systems and tools for professionalisation that strengthen performance in protected area management through competent individuals and effective organisations’.*

This drive for professionalisation is also reflected in Recommendation 103 from the 2016 World Conservation Congress ‘Establishment, Recognition and Regulation of the Career of Park Ranger’. (See https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/WCC_2016_REC_103_EN.pdf)

Workshop outcomes

Part I: What is organisational capacity and which are the specific organisational properties of government organisations?

In order to develop strategies to enhance the capacity of governmental conservation organisations, it is essential to understand and agree on what we are aiming for. Participants formulated the following vision for capable government conservation organisations:

Government Organisations are respected, effective, and responsive actors and partners in achieving biodiversity conservation goals.

Key attributes related to organisational capacity that enable organisations to fulfil their tasks effectively were identified during discussions:

Mandate and power:

- appropriately positioned and empowered

Financial resources:

- adequately and sustainably funded and ability to secure sustainability of funding

Human resources and staff capacity:

- adequately staffed with competent staff
- a system that awards good performance
- good working conditions and a positive culture and attitude
- application of transparent and scientifically sound standards and norms

Leadership:

- potential to envision
- ability to react flexible to challenges and changing conditions while pursuing its goals
- relevant and coherent in its approaches and actions

Governance:

- transparent decision-making structures
- collaborative, both within the organisation and with outside partners.

Participants highlighted some properties that make state/government (GO) institutions different from non-governmental organisations:

- They are potentially powerful due to a recognised mandate and a supporting legal framework support, their job is to serve the public, they are often permanent institutions, their mandate is driven by law and their decisions can lead to action.

However:

- They are often centralised, with central control of resources, and may use a top down approach and strict hierarchy
- Bureaucracy can often make them slow to respond
- Their communication, both internal and external is often not very effective
- GOs may not be able to achieve what they want due to lack of funds and people. Hands are sometimes tied.
- It takes time to change state organisations, even when there is will to do so
- GOs sometimes undergo major changes and staff fluctuations (especially during changes in political power). Continuity and growth in individual and organisations is hampered.
- Agendas of different ministries and agencies are often not aligned or integrated.
- The environment is not usually high on government agendas, they may find it difficult to cooperate or negotiate with other sector agencies.
- There may be a lack of intrinsic motivation for conservation or 'political will'. Decisions may be politically driven.

To sum up:

- They have potentially more power and influence than NGOs, but they are often less effective than they can be because of other government priorities.
- They are often less flexible in overcoming staff and funding constraints, and more hesitant to change.
- They are often not very skilled in communicating, engaging and collaborating with other stakeholders.

Part II: Examples and case studies of organisational capacity development initiatives

Some case studies were presented that addressed different challenges state institutions face in nature conservation. All presentations can be found in the attachment.

Capacity Development for Romanian protected areas (Alina Ionita)

The protected area network in Romania is a relatively young institutional system which was established very quickly in the context of EU accession. Many specialized professionals were needed, but few opportunities and resources for capacity development existed. ProPark's approach is to address the need for capacity building on the individual, organisational, and on the societal level. Main strategies are to provide learning opportunities and resources to individuals in a competence-based approach, to professionalise the PA manager occupation and to create a national PA agency. When developing capacity, key lessons learnt are: gain detailed knowledge of the institutional system, develop a strong and clear regulatory framework, and find internal support and leadership by identifying, supporting, and empowering "champions".

Changing Organisations from the Middle: The Kenya Wildlife Service (Glenn Ricci)

The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) is organised in a very hierarchical, top-down structure. It has developed a very ambitious strategic plan, but the structures do not offer enough resources and incentives for individuals to develop. KWS used the WIO-COMPAS (Western Indian Ocean Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals) Programme to link staff development to organisational goals. The approach is to develop a bottom-up certification system based on staff input, build a core of certified staff in each organisation and change policies to formalise the profession.

German Development Cooperation in the Forestry Sector – Experiences from Tajikistan (Kathrin Uhlemann)

The state-owned forest management sector in Tajikistan employs around 3,000-10,000 (seasonally) employees, is chronically underfinanced and lacks equipment and necessary working conditions. Employees are among the lowest wage group in the country, mostly non specialists and on average quite old (85% staff are between 45 and 63 years old). The approach is to change the already established topping-up salary system from a water-can to a performance-based topping-up approach, establish clear task assignments, provide external coaching and mentoring and necessary equipment and install an independent observer during staff assessments.

The Capacity for Conservation online platform (Marianne Carter)

The online platform Capacity for Conservation (www.capacityforconservation.org) has been developed by Fauna & Flora International, BirdLife International, the Tropical Biology Association and the Department of Geography, Cambridge University, supported by the Cambridge Conservation Initiative. It aims at supporting the continuous self-led development of conservation organisations, focusing on NGOs so far. The website guides users through assessment of organisational development needs, development planning, progress monitoring indicators, and finding and sharing relevant resources such as templates or case studies. The platform has achieved a global outreach and is a success among NGOs. In order to be used by governmental organisations more widely, adaptation of the platform to suit their needs better is planned and first needs assessments have been carried out. Particular capacity issues for GOs have been found to be related to human resources, internal communications and knowledge management.

Capacity Building Plans for Efficient Protected Area Management in Eastern Europe (2012-2015) (Mike Appleton/Alina Ionita)

This project was supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Bundesamt für Naturschutz - BfN) and implemented by the ProPark Foundation for Protected Areas (Romania). It was designed to provide a foundation for professionalisation of protected area management across 23 countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. The project included a general competence based capacity needs assessment in 23 countries, a more detailed self-assessment completed by more than 1400 individuals from 208 protected areas in 9 of those countries, and development of internal capacity development plans by national protected area authorities in Romania, Moldova, Croatia and Georgia. Several countries in the region have now started on the path of professionalisation. The needs analysis results are available at

<http://propark.ro/images/uploads/file/alina%20CB/TNA%20General%20Report%20-%20Final%20Draft%2018%20February%202014.pdf>

A summary report on the entire project is in preparation.

Organisational Change in Saint Lucia (Mike Appleton)

This project supported a process of organisational change within the Saint Lucia Forests and Lands Department, which is responsible for biodiversity and for the largest protected area in the Caribbean island State of Saint Lucia. Through participatory development of a new organisational strategy, it was possible to change the direction, structure and culture of the Department and also to improve the morale and engagement of its staff. The new mission and vision capture this new approach, focusing on ecosystem services rather than forest productivity.

Vision: 'A healthy natural environment for a healthy and productive nation'

Mission: 'Collaboration and partnership for the preservation and sustainable use of forests, nature and the benefits they provide'

The strategy document can be downloaded from

<http://malff.com/images/stories/forestry/resources/Forests%20and%20Lands%20Resources%20Department%20Strategy%202015-2025%20ver%205.pdf>

A paper for 'Parks' on this work is in preparation.

Standards and benchmarking

Examples of organisational standards and benchmarking were presented to generate a discussion on the role and value of these for organisational development within the environment sector. While each protected area organisation needs to operate within its own context the concept of international standards proposes that there are some recognised quality management processes that apply to each organisation. Would PA organisations perform better if they evaluated themselves to international standards? The group identified existing standards and then discussed what value they provide. The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) for environmental management (ISO 14001) is the most well-known and applied standard internationally. Some national parks in North America and Europe as well as forestry and maritime activities internationally have adopted the standard to demonstrate their meeting of environmental benchmarks. A new programme targeting PAs is the new IUCN Green List for recognising and promoting PAs that are achieving conservation goals. The focus of the Green List standard is on conservation outcomes, though there are several standards that address effective management and organisational governance. What the Green List does not do is going a layer deeper in establishing standards for how organisations can meet the higher level outcome standards.

From an individual professional perspective there are a couple of standards and certification programmes to recognise high performing individuals within conservation. These include the Western Indian Ocean Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals (WIO-COMPAS) and the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). From a private perspective there are also standards programmes for forestry management.

Together these organisational and individual standards programmes promote key standards and minimum benchmarks for those wishing to meet international good practices. These programmes also serve the role of pulling lagging organisations forward through peer influence and international agreements.

Part III: Changing Government Organisations

Readiness to change

The group discussed the enormous importance of the concept of 'change readiness' in order for capacity building interventions to work in the long term. A few key points emerged in the discussion:

- It is important to have a clear purpose, vision and objectives of the change you want to make. If people participate in defining these, they are more likely to support the actions.
- There need to be sufficient resources for the change process. It is possible to prioritise actions, based on looking at the potential impact of the intervention against the cost and complexity of undertaking it. It can be useful to do simple easy wins first so staff can see progress, and work up to the more costly and complex ones which may have high impact later.
- External and internal conditions need to be right to enable positive change, including ensuring there is a good attitude to the change and that people are well motivated.
- In order to manage the change process it can be helpful to set up a process to monitor it.
- Recruiting co-ordinated change champions (at different organisational levels) can be an effective way of supporting a change throughout an organisation. These are individuals who enthusiastically support others to take on new systems, change behaviours and model the change for others.

Barriers to positive organisational change

The barriers to Government Organisations in achieving positive organisational change were listed and were then mapped by how much potential there is for organisational staff and partners to control or influence each factor. The group discussed what actions can be undertaken to help facilitate better conditions for change where there is potential for influence and also the areas where individuals, departments and their partners have less influence (mainly because decisions are taken at a much higher level, or where change would require major changes in policy, laws and regulations).

Good potential for control or significant influence

BARRIER	REMEDIAL ACTIONS
Poor information and knowledge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communicate best practices and lessons learnt -Establish clear roles (job descriptions) -Keep a record of training staff have received -Good communication with colleagues -Establish, use and promote clear information flows -Improve quality of information and knowledge collection, storage and accessibility -Develop appropriate knowledge products -Give feedback to the primary data collector about the use of their data -Establish clear procedures (e.g. staff do not get travel reimbursement until data entered into database)
Weak language skills, particularly English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Bring a volunteer to teach English in small groups in the workplace -Speak English on a Friday afternoon -Small incentives -Use technology (online courses, apps) -Assist at foreign language activities taking place
Uninformed decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strategic planning -Improved internal communication
Isolation of regional field staff	-Exchange visits/experiences within the organisation
Staff evaluation/performance weak or missing	-Regular staff evaluation
Lack of vision from short term to long term planning	-Strategic planning
Weak internal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training in internal communications -Create enabling environments to improve internal communication (e.g. coffee corners) -Create leadership examples for internal communication to share -Develop a communications strategy to reach all parts of the organisation
Limited understanding of capacity development	-Needs assessments
Lack of innovation	-Encourage and support experimentation, and use failures as learning
Limited strategic thinking	-Strategic plan
Weak organisational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Team building exercises -Leadership setting examples -Small group as champions of change -Internal rotation of staff -Demonstration/pilot projects

	-Standardise procedures and outcomes
Minimal training opportunities	- Set up a strategic professional development programme
Lack of HR development	-Training for HR professionals -Emphasise the value of change – what is in it for people, work related outcomes
Lack of clear job descriptions	-Use IUCN WCPA competency guidelines to help build job descriptions
Lack of learning environment/knowledge transfer	-Support learning by doing -Strengthen the HR team and set up professional development programme -Share successes and failures as learning tools
Weak supervisors skills to develop their staff's skills	-Mentoring/coaching -Training

Limited influence

BARRIER	REMEDIAL ACTIONS
High staff turnover	-Establish/build capacity of human resources department -Provide competitive salary and/or other benefits
Low pay	-Topping up (performance based)
Personal overload	-Training in prioritisation, delegation etc.
No reward initiatives for good performance	-Introduce performance assessment as a basis for promotion and payment
Not enough money (directly from government or other sources)	-Support from projects for salaries and projects (e.g. EU) -Engage in partnerships (private organisations/NGOs for innovative financing mechanisms)
Corruption	-Lead by example. Do not tolerate corruption among peers and subordinates
Politically appointed leaders and staff	-Introduce occupational standards and formal education and qualification requirements.
Rigid bureaucracy and vertical structures	-Cultivate informal channels
Low political priority, lack of political will	-Show relevance of conservation to other priorities/align with other sectors -Use international commitments as a pressure point. -Enable different thinking individuals to rise through the system

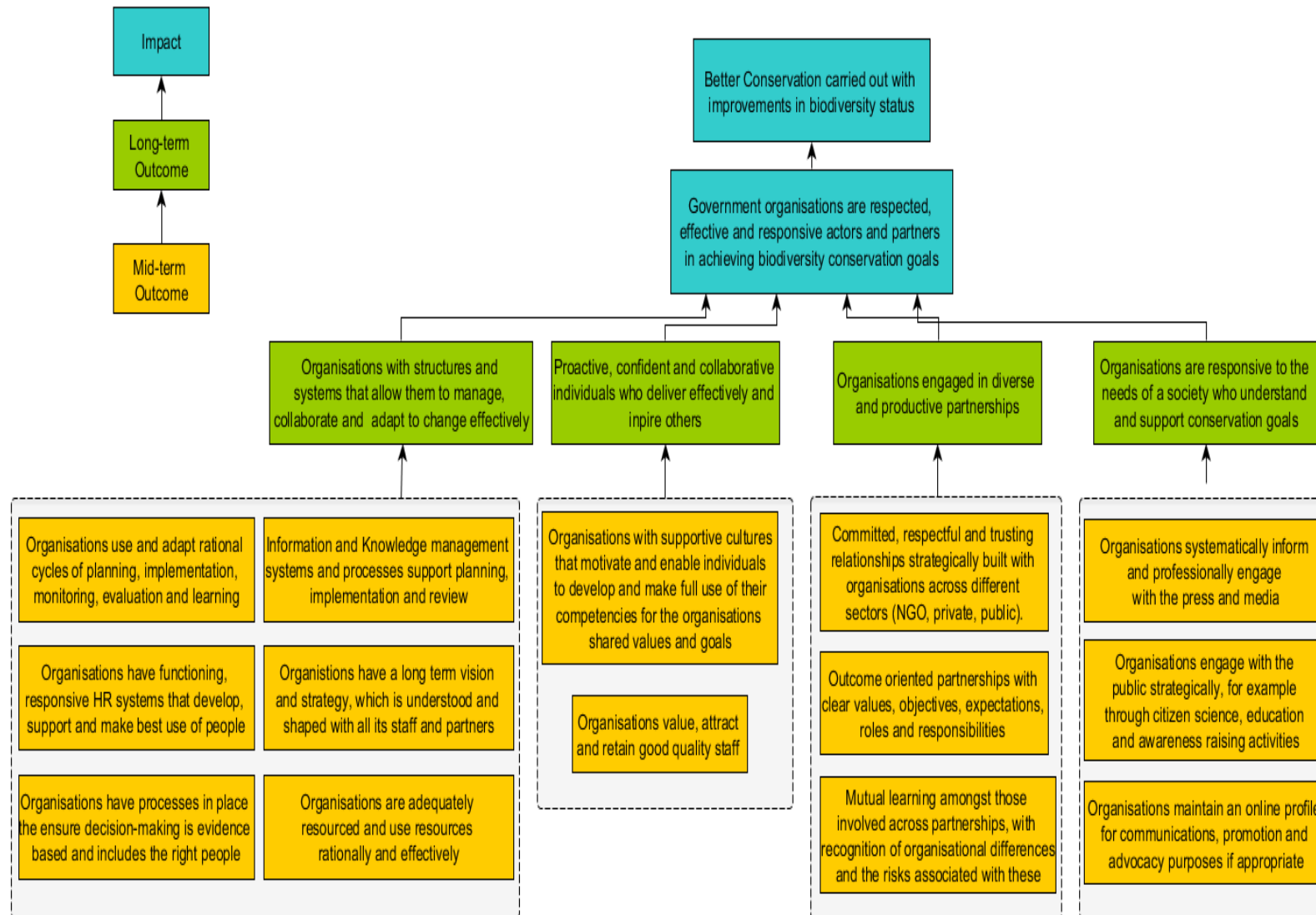
Outside the normal sphere of influence

BARRIER	REMEDIAL ACTIONS
Government inertia	
Adherence to rigid legislation	
Political influence	
Poor image of government work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Support transparency of decision making-Emphasis on PR work-Build partnerships
Uninformed decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Rules and standards for documenting decisions
Inflexible structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Cultivate informal channels
Hard to remove staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Decoupling from direct line management by government (e.g. through establishing an agency)-Find attractive alternatives for staff
Not enough staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Introduce volunteers, internships, studentships, contracts- Youth employment schemes-Partnerships with other organisations-Convince other organisations to second staff to the government organisation/agency-Delegate/lobby for other agency to cover work-Establishing or raising capacity of HR department

Theory of Change

The group agreed to begin developing a high level theory of change for government organisational capacity building for biodiversity conservation. We came up with a preliminary theory of change, which currently lacks some detail. A sub group agreed to work further on this so it can be used as a guide for work going forward in this area. The provisional results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Draft theory of change for developing capacity of government conservation organisations



Part IV: Ideas for supporting government organisational capacity in conservation

It was acknowledged that bringing about organisational change is challenging and time consuming. Participants were asked to suggest activities that, from their experience, might succeed.

Changes that could be made from within with few resources

Improving the working environment to create a more pleasant atmosphere and demonstrate a supportive attitude to staff (e.g. redecorating the office, team pictures, a noticeboard with the results of work)

- Documenting and defining procedures in a more visual and accessible way.
- Communicating success internally. (e.g. talking about positive examples, the contributing roles of individuals and teams)
- Internal exchange of experience (e.g. lessons learnt, positive examples, solutions to challenges).
- 'Open Doors' day: Staff present their work to the public or celebrate their overall achievements (e.g. 'Day of the Parks').
- Find alternative routes. Build partnerships with NGOs and other sectors that are better able and positioned to make the change you seek.
- Seek outside support to improve professionalisation.
- Encourage staff to find a 'change/learning buddy' to share ideas and experiences and challenges.
- Lead by example. Demonstrate a more open and positive attitude at work and creative approach to solving problems to encourage others to do the same.

Specific activities and resources that could help promote positive change

- Improve individual capacity development as a means of encouraging organisational capacity development:
 - Identify capacity needs. Conduct internal needs analyses using the IUCN WCPA competence approach.
 - Establish a learning programme for mid/high level leaders and managers. This is best portrayed not as training but as experience sharing, seminars etc.
 - Provide clear, concise case studies of good practice that could be readily adopted.
 - Provide coaching/consultancy on organisational management and change.
 - Establish national/system level exchange visits and team building activities.
 - Package organisational capacity development activities (which may seem uninteresting) around 'hot topics' and attractive themes.
 - Provide advice and guidance on ensuring that training opportunities are made available to the most appropriate people.
- Provide strategic frameworks that encourage organisational capacity development:
 - Develop nationally owned plans for capacity development (incorporated into NBSAPS, wider protected area strategies etc.).
 - Develop organisational development/management plans for national PA agencies.
- Improve HR practices:
 - Support and involve HR Departments from the start in change processes.
 - Develop clear job descriptions and if possible occupational standards using competences from the WCPA competence register.

- Disseminate good practice:
 - Prepare a 'Best Practice Guidelines' book.
 - Provide short, accessible knowledge and dissemination products (not just large books).
 - Share knowledge about what capacity development practices best work.
 - Share ideas on small changes that can make a big difference.

Part V: Agreed follow up activities

Participants agreed the following activities to promote and extend work on organisational capacity development:

- Organisers will prepare and circulate a report from the workshop (Bettina Ohnesorge, Marianne Carter, Glenn Ricci, Mike Appleton, Kay Farmer).
- The organisational capacity working group of the IUCN WCPA Capacity Theme will prepare a feasible programme of activities and outputs for supporting organisational capacity. This will combine stand-alone activities (where possible) but also focus on building partnerships and synergies with existing programmes (Marianne Carter, Glenn Ricci).
- Fauna and Flora International and its partners will continue its work to develop the Capacity for Conservation website and tools, in particular adapting it to meet the needs of organisational capacity. The site could eventually act as an information hub on the topic (Marianne Carter).
- The IUCN Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) will develop a programme of organisational capacity development activities (Tomasz Pezold).
- IUCN ECARO would like to conduct a regional assessment of capacity in Central Asia (Tomasz Pezold).
- The Vilm Academy and the KTF programme will offer an increased focus on topics connected with organisational capacity development. The Academy will investigate the possibility of a future BfN project on the topic, possibly in collaboration with GIZ. It may be possible to support a publication on the topic (Bettina Ohnesorge, Gisela Stolpe).
- Tap into the network of East African Marine Protected Areas that have proven receptive to organisational and professional development to seek their partnership in testing some organisational development strategies. Joint fundraising, tracking and sharing of results (Glenn Ricci).
- ProPark Foundation in Romania will research establishment of an occupational standard for rangers in the European Union (Alina Ionita).
- The WCPA Vice Chair for Capacity Development will promote more consideration of organisational capacity in the WCPA and IUCN programmes, in particular the Green List of Protected Areas (Mike Appleton).
- Explore possibility for collaboration with the Earth Skills Network on organisational CD (Mike Appleton, Marianne Carter).
- Explore possibility for a WCPA publication on organisational capacity development (Kay Farmer).
- All participants will start to seek out and document examples of good practice and innovation in organisational capacity development.
- All participants will encourage their organisations and networks to build organisational capacity development into relevant workshops, conferences, projects etc.

Agenda Summary

Sunday, 8 January

Welcome and Introduction

Monday, 9 January

- What do we mean by organisational capacity?
- What are the specific organisational properties of government organisations?

What makes them different? What are the challenges and specific hurdles to overcome when working on PAs for a government organisation? What limits success and organisational effectiveness?

- Examples and case studies of organisational CD initiatives
- Organisational standards/benchmarking

e.g. ISO9000, the IUCN Green List, IUCN competences, certification, keystone standards, etc.

- Change in Governmental Organisations

What makes an organisation ready for/able to change in terms of institutional capacity? What could we reasonably change in GOs? What cannot be changed or is beyond our capabilities and influence?

- Ways of change

In what ways can change happen (e.g. organisational processes, organisational structures, governance arrangements, position in the government system (department, quasi autonomous agency etc.), using individual CD to build organisational capacity, aspects of applying sound science in decision making, career prospects and adequate pay, developing and applying standards, rules and guidelines for conservation work etc.).

Tuesday, 10 January

- Develop an overarching Theory of Change on Organisational Capacity
- Identification of follow up projects
- Next steps

Participants

Mike Appleton, IUCN/WCPA Vice-Chair for Capacity Development.

Marianne Carter, Director of Conservation Capacity and Leadership, Fauna & Flora International.

Dr. Kay Farmer, University of Stirling / Chester Zoo / Wildlife Impact.

Alina Ionita, PhD, ProPark Foundation for Protected Areas in Romania.

Dr. Jan Kadlecik, State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic.

Eva Knizatkova, Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic.

Bettina Ohnesorge, German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, International Academy for Nature Conservation.

Tomasz Pezold, IUCN ECARO Serbia.

Zeljka Rajkovic, Association BIOM, Croatia.

Glenn Ricci, University of Rhode Island, Coastal Resources Center.

Christiane Röttger, NABU Germany.

Ziad Samaha, Programme Manager of the Marine and Coastal Management Programme IUCN West Asia.

Gisela Stolpe, German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, International Academy for Nature Conservation.

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