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MWIOPO Factsheet :

Marine Programme

Marine Protected Areas Network of the Indian Ocean Commission Countries

BACKGROUND

The Indian Ocean region encompasses the coastal and offshore waters of Madagascar, Reunion (France), Mauritius, Comoros, the Seychelles, and their respective small island dependencies. The region's oceanographic conditions, biogeography and biodiversity are strongly influenced by a system of oceanic currents and monsoon seasons. This system of oceanic currents plays a critical role both in transporting and ensuring recruitment of living organisms, and in the productivity of different ecosystems.

The conservation of marine biodiversity, the maintenance of productivity of marine ecosystems and the contribution to the economic and social welfare of human communities, which constitute the essential components of sustainable development of coastal and marine environment, will be best achieved through the establishment and the management of marine and coastal marine protected areas. Although the Indian Ocean region presents 26 marine protected areas, many weaknesses are still occurring including habitats representativeness, protection of flagship species, research and monitoring, capacity building, sustainable mechanisms, management effectiveness, fisheries management, and local population participation.

WHY THE PROJECT?

Facing these common issues amongst the region, the WWF November 2003 initiative in Antananarivo led to an unanimous agreement from marine protected areas (MPAs) managers and practitioners in the region on the value of a MPA network. This necessity was then reaffirmed through the Council Minister and the Heads of States meetings of the Indian Ocean Commission (COI), which regroups the five Islands States Seychelles, Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros and Réunion (France). Moreover, the COI has put on its agenda as priority objective for Islands sustainable development, the management and the protection of marine resources. Therefore, supported by WWF and Conservation International, the COI sets up the Project "Marine Protected Areas Network of the Indian Ocean Commission Countries".





WHAT ARE THE PROJECT OBJECTIVES?

The Overall Goal of the Project is to “Contribute to the maintenance of the biodiversity and coastal and marine resources of the Marine Ecoregion of the Western Indian Ocean”, through a regional network of effectively managed marine protected areas.

To reach this Goal, the Project aims to:

- Identify a network of priority areas, of major interests for the conservation of the biodiversity and coastal and marine resources in the region based on ecoregional analysis.
- Support the implementation of a functional network, through the creation of new marine protected areas, and/or the enforcement of existing one, and encourage the designation of sites of international importance.
- Develop a regional forum of marine protected areas managers in order to improve management capacity through exchanging experiences and good practices.
- Develop Awareness and Communication Programme related to the Project.

The COI will be the “Maitrise d'Ouvrage”, and the WWF Madagascar and West Indian Programme Office as the Executing agency. The total funding is 1,944,000 € with contribution from FFEM (Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial) of 700,000 €, 500,000 € from WWF, 444,000 € from Conservation International, and 300,000 € from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France.

During its three-year duration, the Project is planned to prepare the Indian Ocean Commission Countries to the implementation of the IXth European Development Fund – Regional Programme for the Sustainable Management of the Coastal Zones of the Countries of the Indian Ocean – which is currently in its instruction phase.

