

INTRODUCTION

In most countries, conservation policies are focused on the conservation and protection of diverse ecosystems. One of the ways leading to ecosystem conservation has been through the creation of protected areas (PA), as it entails developing a series of guidelines, laws and regulations to govern the use of natural resources.

PA are conservation instruments created to protect a countries' natural resources; but PA should also constitute important tools for equity development among the populations settled within and around protected areas.

Such understanding about conservation poses several challenges:

- Ensuring social participation, regardless of the type of PA.
- Development of new methodologies to address PA from broader points of view and theoretical and practical references.
- Participation of all staff involved in PA in ongoing training and refreshment courses.
- Promoting political goodwill among decision makers to change the traditional notions about conservation.

The book **"In Search of the Lost Gender"**, is a conceptual and methodological proposal that provides tools, techniques and recommendations to build processes to promote gender equity perspectives in PA. This document was developed to facilitate PA planning, management and administration, to seek greater social equity, particularly among women and men. We strongly hope this will contribute to the achievement of the above-mentioned challenges.

Background

During the 80's, several of the regional offices of IUCN (The World Conservation Union) initiated a process to seek recognition throughout the institution's activities about the significance of the gender equity issue. Thus, methodological proposals were developed, and a gender awareness and training process was undertaken to link gender equity and an equitable distribution of costs and benefits to the conservation and sustainable use of resources.

The above efforts are part of an extended process, which culminated in a resolution issued during the first World Conservation Congress, held in Canada, in 1996. Among other issues, the resolution urged IUCN to "integrate a gender perspective into its program". In 1998, a Political Declaration and an Action Plan were developed to mainstream a gender equity perspective. Both documents highlight the significance of equity in the achievement of IUCN's mission.

At the present, IUCN has a Gender Senior Policy Advisor, and during the past ten some of IUCN's regional offices, have been developing methodological proposals to address gender mainstreaming in the most practical manner in field¹ initiatives and projects.

"In Search of the Lost Gender", stems from an initiative shared by several IUCN sectors; namely: the Programme on Protected Areas, the World Commission on Protected Areas, Gender Senior Policy Advisor, and the Mesoamerican Regional Office.

It should be mentioned that over the past decade, several regions around the world, have been working at a local and international level on environmental and gender equity issues, and that IUCN has also taken up the contributions generated by these movements.

Nonetheless, PA work from a gender equity perspective is incipient still, the range of topics is broad, and may be approached from different points of view. It should be recalled that, regardless of the type of PA, social participation based on gender equity is a pre-requisite towards the achievement of conservation and sustainable development.

¹ ____ Among these, should be mentioned the "Towards Equity" series, (Aguilar, L., Coordinator, 1999), "The Unavoidable Current. Gender Equity Policies Within the Mesoamerican Environmental Sector". (Aguilar, L. *et.al.*, 1999) and "About Fishermen, Fisherwomen, Oceans and Tides: a Gender Perspective in Marine-Coastal Zones" (Aguilar, L. and Castañeda, I., 2000).

How was this book conceived?

PA are located within varied ecosystems, and the populations and stakeholders settled within or around the PA, as well as the social and ecological processes involved in each PA, deserve to be approached individually. Thus, the need to assess the complexity of the subject, as each PA group or classification is based on different objectives.

To achieve the objective proposed in this document, **the conservation² initiative** was selected as the unit for analysis, as such broader conception is appropriate to illustrate the methodological guidelines of the gender equity approach in PA.

This document presents a methodological proposal; it is not a guide or manual, and the guidelines provided should be adjusted to each PA, in accordance with its category, size and particular characteristics.

We should like to point out that, in order to attain a wider vision about the reality experienced in PA, this book was validated in three countries: Costa Rica, Mexico and Kenya. The following specialists participated in the validation process: Montserrat Blanco, Florangel Villegas, Marcela Mora, Alberto Salas, Ronald McCarthy, Lourdes Godínez, Rebeca Salazar, Sergio Graf, Gustavo Sánchez, Denise Soares, Edmundo Sánchez, Edmund Barrow, Milcah Ongayo, Makhanu Rudolf, Irene Kamua, Florence Chege, Humphrey Kisioh and Macharia Gathuku. Their contributions and recommendations on the subject were extremely valuable.

We will also like to recognize the technical and financial support provided by the Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT) from Mexico for the validation of this book.

This book does not intend to substitute the technical-scientific proposals of conservation initiatives; it does, rather, hope to enhance them. It was conceived as a dynamic instrument subject to feedback, improvement, and updating, for which reason a field validation process is fully recommended.

2 ____ It refers to a protected area, considered on an individual basis, but placed within a broader context.

To whom is it addressed?

The document expects to be useful to all people interested in promoting gender equity in PA conservation initiatives, whether implemented by governmental or non-governmental institutions, academic organizations, or institutions from the social sector.

Nevertheless, it was developed thinking, primarily, about the staff responsible for PA planning and management, as well as stakeholders directly involved in PA management and administration; therefore, the entire team, including environmental professionals, specialists, and promoters, and the PA population as a whole.

Given the fact that the teams or groups may possess different levels of knowledge and experience about gender, certain concepts are repeated throughout several chapters. Text boxes in each section highlight key concepts and ideas.

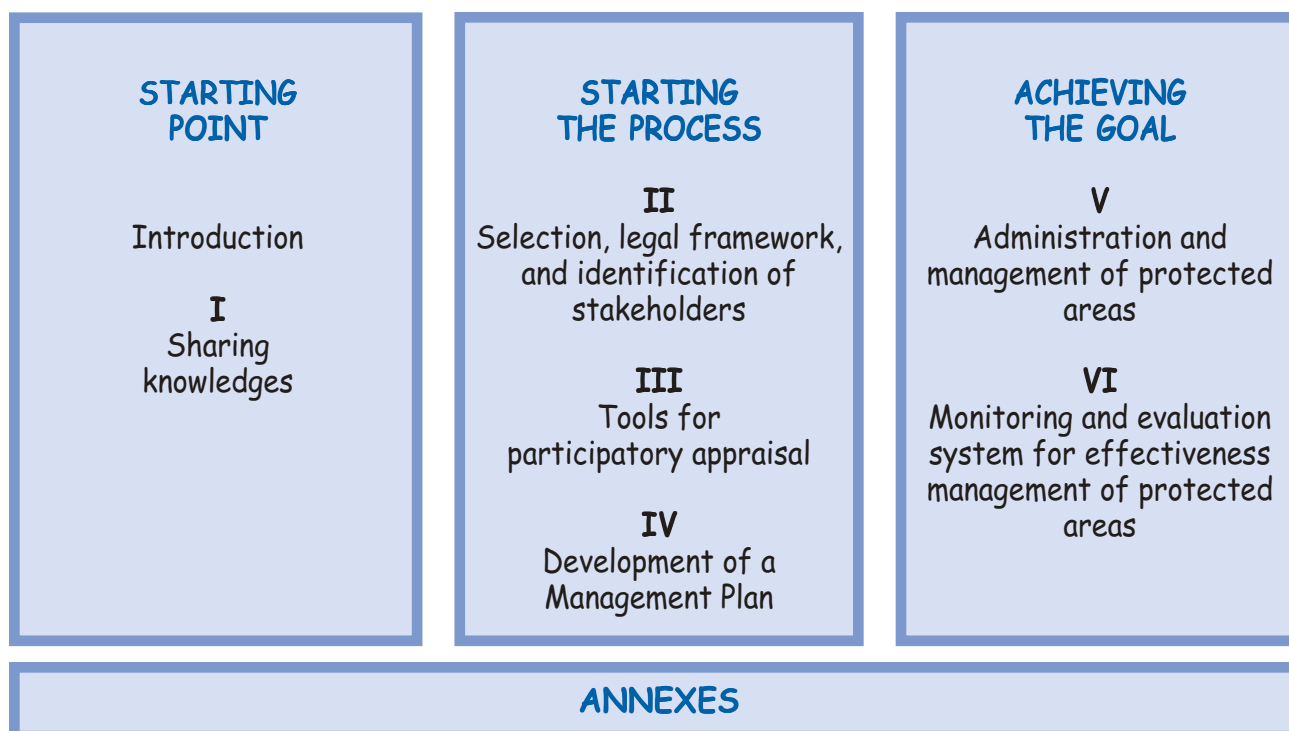
The authors have gone to great lengths to consider the various ecological, social, economic, cultural, and political realities experienced in PA. Thus, several examples used make reference to different world regions.

Consequently, we have used some concepts and words indistinctly, like—for instance—the “sustainable” or “viable” development concept, without engaging in the debates taking place at an international level about these terms, and showing consideration for the indistinctive use prevailing in many countries.

As this book will be edited in IUCN's three official languages (English, French and Spanish), the reader may find words or interpretations in various languages.

Structure or parts conforming the book

The book comprises six chapters, in addition to the introduction, which we have clustered in three blocks. Four annexes have also been included to provide a broader and deeper view about certain topics, which are considered as mainstreaming axis.



This book may be used as a unit, but also separately. Although the chapters are interrelated, they are independent from each other; thus, they may be used at different times during the cycle of the conservation initiative. However, the suggested methodology should, ideally, be applied at the onset of the conservation initiative.

The methods and tools herein presented may be applied at different moments during the implementation of a conservation initiative within a PA, and have been conceived as a process undergoing continued revision and adjustment, rather than as a lineal sequence. Furthermore, throughout the various chapters, reference is made to a series of textbooks and manuals containing techniques for direct field application, that may be used to complement the broader guidelines presented. Some chapters present methodological tools that may serve for field application purposes.

This book stemmed from two principles:

Principles

1. Conservation as an opportunity towards equity promotion

One of the challenges faced by development and conservation initiatives, is the creation of spaces and mechanisms to undertake actions that will simultaneously meet the objectives of conservation and equity promotion.

Conservation and sustainable development initiatives involve undertaking a series of activities in the PA. Frequently, the formal structures of ownership, men's access to and control of the natural resources, determine that these actions are based on pre-established models for the assignment of "feminine" and "masculine" tasks, supporting—thus—the traditional roles that promote and strengthen gender inequality and inequity.

Quite often, the projects implemented in protected areas propose setting up women's activities within the "household component". This component is limited to activities such as the installation of firewood saving stoves, poultry breeding, and vegetable gardens, among others. These activities are usually considered of secondary importance, their budget allocation is scarce, and they have no real impact on the achievement of PA objectives. Thus, women are excluded from the primary activities of conservation initiatives, including the benefits generated from such activities, strengthening—at the same time—the traditional roles that promote and reproduce gender inequalities.

As pointed out by Velázquez (2001), "an analytical gender perspective does, consequently, help to understand an additional social differentiation form that bears impact on environmental management. Therefore, a gender perspective allows building equitable and fair environmental administration and management processes, whereby neither women nor men are excluded from the benefits obtained from sustainable environmental management practices. This does not only refer to the possibility of including women in environmental management activities and programs, but also to the possibility of building processes that may directly and indirectly promote greater equity in terms of the distribution of economic and social benefits generated by appropriate environmental management practices".

Conservation is considered as an equity promoting opportunity, since many of the actions, which may be new to the PA communities in terms of conservation and management of natural resources, have not been labeled and classified as applicable to one sex or the other. For instance, animal-breeding farms is a "neutral" activity from a gender point of view; it is socially assigned neither to men nor to women. Therefore, those who impulse conservation actions have the enormous possibility to develop proposals based on equitable participation, allowing men and women to work under equal conditions in the development of innovative activities.

In this way, it will be possible not only to achieve the objectives of conservation, but also, at the same time, contribute to decrease discrimination and inequity, through the creation of possibilities for an equitable access to opportunities and benefits.

2. Social equity: essential requirement for conservation and sustainable development

Conservation activities within PA require the participation of human populations associated with the PA. These populations are conformed by extremely diverse groups, for which reason, it is essential to acknowledge social diversity and promote equitable participation from the various sectors and groups conforming the social setting.

In the search for conservation and sustainable development, each one has his/her own responsibilities and tasks, which, as a whole, will contribute to attain the changes proposed. Should there be participants in a position of disadvantage, subordination, or oppression (due to gender, age, religion, political views, ethnic groups, or socio-economic status), it will be hard to reach even small agreements regarding social participation and equity towards conservation and development.

Based on this principle, all stakeholders should be viewed, consulted, and involved under equal conditions in the various stages of conservation and management of natural resources (from the pre-planning stage to the monitoring and evaluation stages).

Through this book, we attempt to prove that by working from a gender equity perspective, far better results may be obtained regarding the conservation of natural resources.

Scope and limitations

As this document is intended for international coverage, it was decided to use IUCN's PA classification system as a universal reference. Quite possibly, there will be some generalizations that will not apply to certain regions and under certain circumstances. However, for other types of PA, such as farmers', private, or community conserved areas and holy sites, the theoretical-methodological proposal is—indeed—applicable, since the work method proposed, may be adapted to different realities.

Great importance has been attached to the issues dealing with the link between equity and socio-environmental sustainability, given the fact that, in most cases, people and institutions living and working in PA, possess valuable knowledge about ecological and environmental aspects.

Bibliography

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