

## **Addressing shifting governance contexts and development objectives in the Quirimbas National Park, Mozambique**

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### **Abstract**

Marine protected areas (MPAs) are one of the most commonly applied spatial management tools for biodiversity conservation. Considering their history, MPA planning and management have evolved to address multiple objectives and consider different approaches to ensure their success and sustainability. In terms of planning, MPA objectives have included ecological processes and various threats to ensure persistence of biodiversity, and various social, economic, and political considerations to reduce conflict between protected area management and stakeholders and increase compliance. Management has also evolved to become more adaptive to increase MPA effectiveness. Despite the considerable strides, MPA planning and management have yet to learn to be more dynamic to keep up with shifting governance contexts and development objectives to ensure their success and sustainability. There are 154 MPAs in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), and these were established with different objectives and are managed using different approaches. Using the Quirimbas National Park (QNP) in Mozambique as a case study, the paper describes the lessons learned from the protected area review process. The lessons presented in this paper are envisioned to provide insights as to how the development trajectories of Mozambique have influenced governance of the QNP, and consequently the proposed downgrading of regulations and expansion of protected area boundaries. The paper recommends that;

- Management effectiveness assessments should be included in MPA management plans and should be conducted regularly as part of the adaptive management cycle.
- Research on protected area downgrading, downsizing, and degazettement (PADDD) supported and developed to understand its implications on achievement of conservation, social, and economic objectives.
- A more inclusive approach to MPA management be promoted by considering access, use rights, and cultural and historical values of local communities to reduce PADDD.
- Complementary financing sources (e.g., sustainable tourism, nature-based solutions, biodiversity offsets) should be identified and encourage broader stakeholder engagement to sustain MPA management.
- Criteria and guidelines as part of the regional MSP implementation process should be formulated to accommodate current and future transformations caused by social, economic, political and climate change events to minimize the negative impacts of PADDD.