



CAN THE IUCN 2008 PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT CATEGORIES SUPPORT PACIFIC ISLAND APPROACHES TO CONSERVATION?

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ABSTRACT

Many Pacific island nations lag behind more developed countries with respect to achieving Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) targets for protected area coverage. The modified definition of protected areas under the IUCN's 2008 *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories* offers opportunities for Pacific islands nations to formally recognize indigenous community conserved and locally managed areas under a range of management styles. However, there are elements to the new definition and principles that are unlikely to be compatible in the context of customary tenure prevailing in the Pacific. The first principle requiring nature conservation to be the primary objective of protected areas runs counter to the majority of functioning Pacific island protected areas that have been established with sustainable livelihoods as the major driver. Furthermore, the definition of conservation as perceived by most Pacific island cultures is inextricably linked with 'sustainable use'. In this context, we offer suggestions for moving forward, including raising awareness of these issues, consulting on the appropriate definitions of protected areas that fit the legal and cultural context of each country, and avoiding incorporating the language of the 2008 Guidelines into definitions or wording for national policy and legislation until broad consensus and understanding is reached.

KEYWORDS: Pacific, IUCN management categories, Locally Managed Marine Area, customary tenure

INTRODUCTION

In decision VII/30 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Conference of Parties (COP) established a target to effectively conserve at least 10 per cent of each of the world's ecological regions by 2010 (UNEP/CBD, 2004). Although global coverage of terrestrial protected areas reached more than 12 per cent in the 2000s, coverage of ecoregions has been uneven and geographically biased to Europe, North Eurasia and North America (Chape et al., 2005; Jenkins & Joppa, 2009).

The global push to increase the coverage of protected areas met with little success in most Pacific island countries until the late 1990s, when appropriate management approaches for the Pacific were developed that recognized the value of customary institutions in decision-making for resource management (Cinner & Aswani, 2007; Govan et al., 2009a). For example, the Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) network grew from the principle that local people can be more effective than central governments at implementing management

because of strong ties to the environment through customary tenure and cultural practice (Ruddle et al., 1992; Veitayaki et al., 2003). Due to the strength of participatory planning processes to express community aspirations and foster community implementation, progress in Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands has resulted in over 400 locally managed areas documented in these countries alone, with considerably more throughout the region (Figure 1). It has become clear that lasting success of these initiatives relies on development and achievement of local objectives, which largely focus on improved natural resource availability yet still provide tangible benefits to biodiversity (Govan et al., 2009a).

In Pacific island countries with scarce government resources and a majority of land and inshore marine areas under customary tenure, these community-based approaches offer countries the most cost effective and practicable way of achieving most of their international obligations to protected area coverage under the CBD (Govan et al., 2009a; Govan et al., 2009c). Without relying substantially on local management, Pacific countries will not achieve targets from the CBD's new

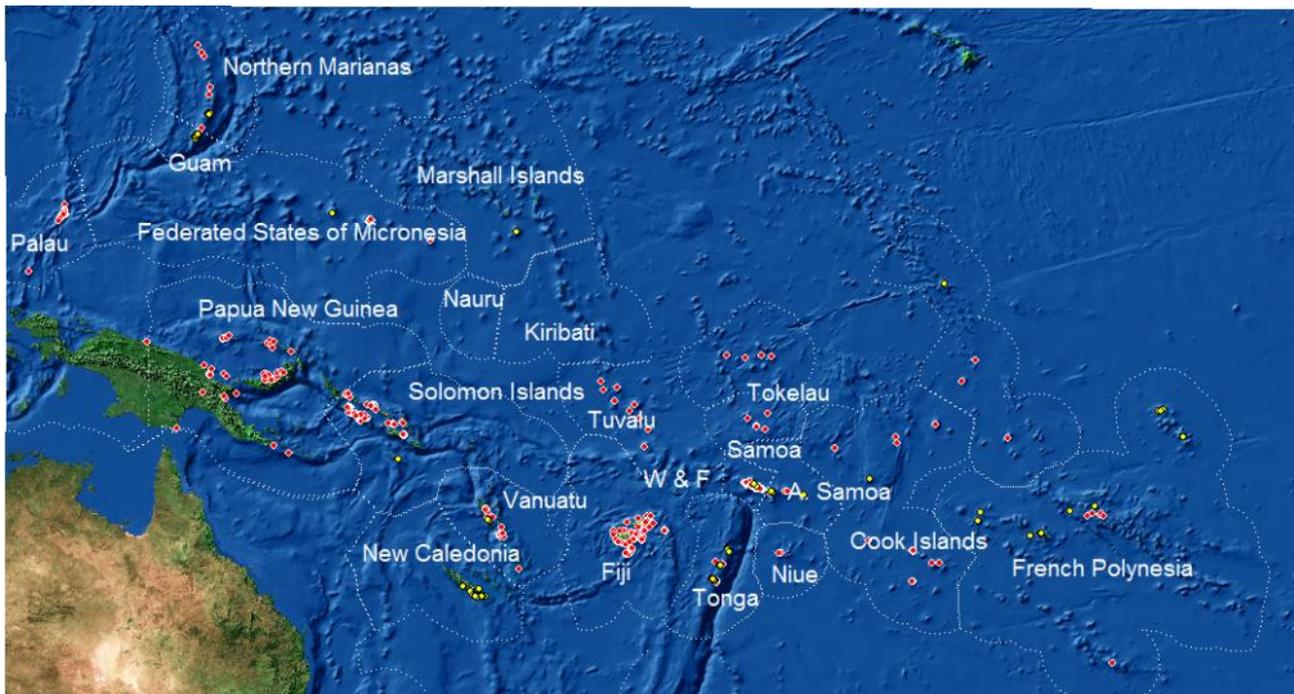


Figure 1: Map showing 743 Pacific Island MMAs recorded as of 2009. The 565 classified as locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) are shown in red. Source: Govan et al., 2009a and <http://pacificgis.reefbase.org>

Strategic Plan under Decision X/2 (the Aichi Targets) to effectively conserve 17 per cent of terrestrial/inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal/marine areas by 2020 (UNEP/CBD, 2010).

Some national governments such as Samoa, Vanuatu and Tonga have already incorporated community-based approaches into policy and legislation. Others, such as Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, are in the process of updating the conservation and resource management policy and legislation in the light of more than a decade of experience in community-based management. Developing such legislation represents a considerable challenge given current limits on the extent to which indigenous communities can regulate activities that impact species and habitats and resourcing required to embed institutional support for indigenous community conserved areas (ICCAs) within government agencies (Clarke & Gillespie, 2008; Vukikomoala et al., 2012).

In response to worldwide concerns on the impact of protected areas on indigenous and local people, as well as conflicts with extractive industries such as mining, the IUCN developed and modified guidance on the definition of protected areas and management categories in 2008 (Dudley, 2008; Dudley et al., 2010). These *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories* (hereafter 2008 Guidelines) made slight changes to the definition of a protected area that gives extra weight to long-term and effective management.

OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE IUCN PROTECTED AREA GUIDELINES

The IUCN's 2008 Guidelines seem to offer useful guidance in the development of appropriate legislation in the Pacific islands, but also raise a number of issues with potentially serious consequences. In terms of advantages, the 2008 Guidelines provide opportunities for Pacific island resource managers to clarify the status of their protected areas. For instance, Dudley (2008) discusses how the new definition can provide recognition of ICCAs and South Pacific community managed areas, such as Samoan community fishing reserves, as long as they meet the protected area definition and its associated principles.

The 2008 Guidelines provide a new definition of protected area to be "A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values". The definition is applied in the context of eleven principles, the first of which reads: "For IUCN, only those areas where the main objective is conserving nature can be considered protected areas; this can include many areas with other goals as well, at the same level, but in the case of conflict, nature conservation will be the priority".

Further, the 2008 Guidelines outline and clarify six categories of protected area management with a wide



Community member from Totoya Island, Fiji, places a cibicibi tree into the reef to mark the location of a sacred, no-take protected area © Keith A. Ellenbogen

spectrum of potential management objectives. The most applicable in the Pacific context may be category V, that can include ‘the preservation of long-term and sustainable local fishing practices or sustainable coral reef harvesting...’, and category VI, that may be ‘predominantly natural habitats but allow the sustainable collection of particular elements, such as particular food species or small amounts of coral or shells’ (Figure 2). The 2008 Guidelines also open the door to different zones within a protected area being placed under different categories, such as the zones within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (Day, 2002), and thus some current closed areas could conceivably be assigned to the most restrictive IUCN categories. For marine protected areas (MPAs), the guidelines were further refined by Day et al. (2012) such that ‘the appropriate IUCN category is

assigned based on the primary stated management objective of the MPA (which must apply to at least 75 per cent of the MPA), or a zone within an MPA.’ Cases where ‘seasonal, temporary or permanent controls are placed on fishing methods and/or access’ could also qualify as MPAs if they meet the protected area definition and have a primary aim to deliver nature conservation.

POTENTIAL THREATS OF THE IUCN 2008 GUIDELINES TO PACIFIC ISLAND PROTECTED AREAS

In the above respects, the 2008 Guidelines appear to be an opportunity for Pacific islands to ensure that their efforts towards sustainable marine resource management are more widely recognized as protected areas and,

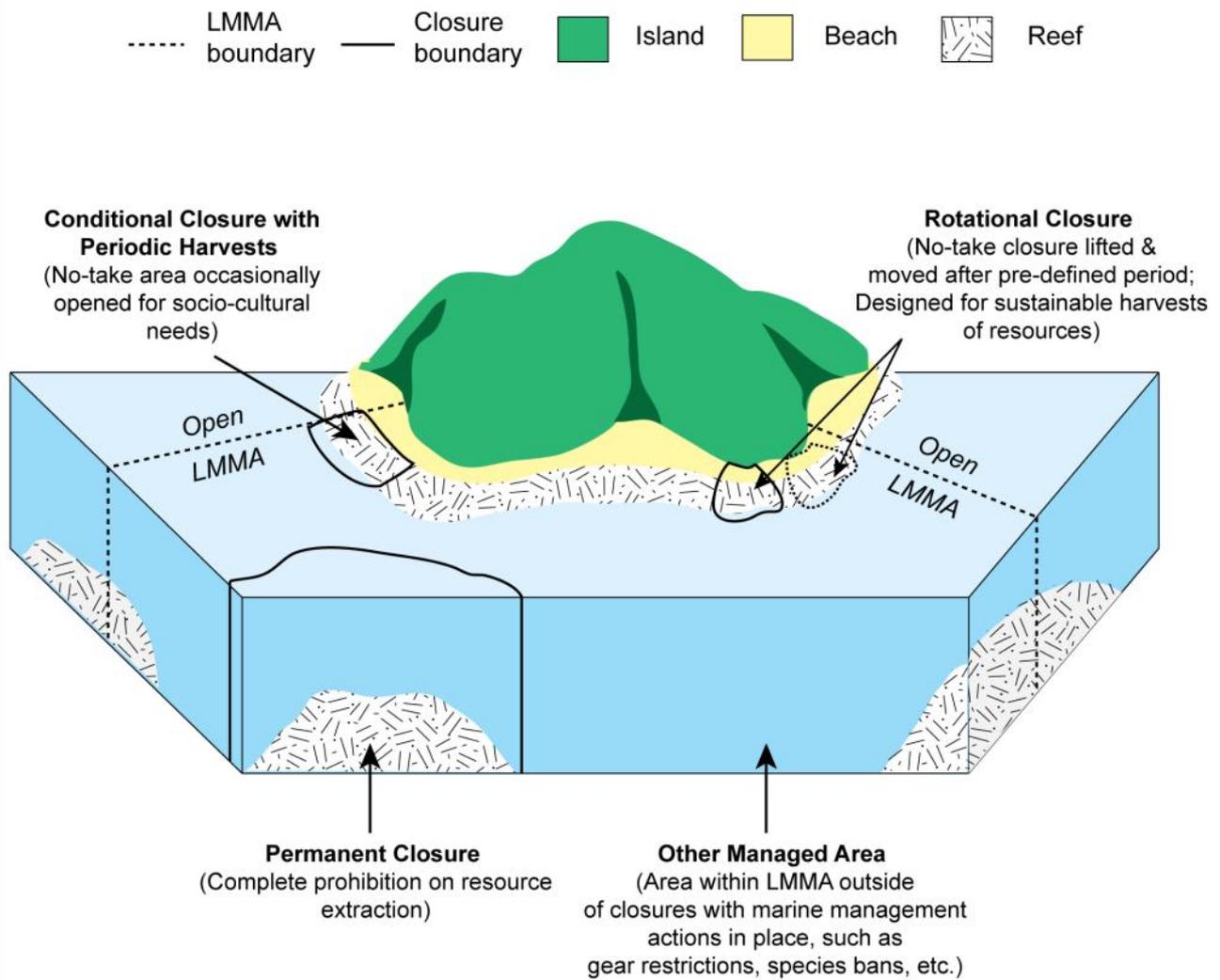


Figure 2: Schematic of a suite of management actions that may be employed within a Pacific Locally Managed Marine Area

therefore, count towards their international commitments and obligations. However, there are two elements to the new protected area definition and principles that are unlikely to be compatible in the Pacific context: (1) the primacy of the nature conservation objective; and (2) the definition of conservation (PIRT, 2008). Further, there may be constraints to providing a basis for legal recognition of locally managed areas if it removes the authority of community decision-makers to flexibly adapt their management rules and objectives in response to environmental or social change (Clarke & Jupiter, 2010).

OBJECTIVES OF PACIFIC PROTECTED AREAS

The first principle to which protected areas must adhere under the IUCN definition states ‘only those areas where the main objective is conserving nature can be

considered protected areas’ sits ill with the bulk of functioning Pacific island protected areas that are driven by local aspirations to achieve sustainable livelihoods based on healthy resources (Govan et al., 2009c). Specifically, the new MPA Guidelines assert that ‘community areas managed primarily for sustainable extraction of marine products’ should not be automatically classified as MPAs if they do not have nature conservation as the primary objective (Day et al., 2012). The question of how to honestly determine the ‘primary’ objective of a Pacific island locally managed area remains a challenge, let alone expressing this in terms that are compatible with the jargon of western conservation. The principle and definition also seem to limit the opportunities for strategies based on sustainable use, even if these are more likely to accrue precisely the long-term conservation benefits intended under the new IUCN definition and guidelines.



Sign denoting community conservation area in Sisili Village, Solomon Islands © Stacy Jupiter

DEFINITION OF CONSERVATION

The 2008 Guidelines define conservation as ‘the in-situ maintenance of ecosystems and natural and semi-natural habitats and of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings’. Previously adopted global, as well as Pacific, definitions of conservation included ‘sustainable use’ as an integral component (IUCN/UNEP/WWF, 1980; PIRT, 2007). Sustainable use was removed from the 2008 Guidelines owing to concerns over abuses by large corporations and even governments in the mining and forestry sectors (Dudley et al., 2010). However, in the Pacific context, concepts equating to ‘conservation’ have dimensions not contemplated in contemporary western culture. Such is the case of the *vanua* (Fiji), *fenua* (Tuvalu), *enua* (Cook Islands), *kaitiaki* (Maori) and the *puava* (Marovo, Solomon Islands), with similar concepts in most of the traditional Pacific societies. These cultural beliefs affect resource allocations and access rights, and environmental stewardship is intrinsic to these property rights regimes (Ruddle et al., 1992; Hdiving, 1996; Berkes, 2004). This contrasts markedly with the demonstrated pitfalls of the western open access approaches (Keen & Lal, 1992). It is unlikely that ‘extraction’ and ‘sustainable use’ are facets that can be meaningfully separated from the Pacific islanders’ concepts of ‘duty of care’ for the environment and conservation in general.

CODIFYING OR GAZETTING PROTECTED AREAS

Discussions on strengths of cultural approaches often highlight the risks involved in trying to define or constrain approaches that function essentially because of their adaptability and flexibility. Many communities may be wary of completing application formalities to codify or

gazette their protected areas, including defining objectives, because of perceived constraints to their capacity to adapt conservation or other strategies in the face of variability. For example, under the current Fiji Fisheries Act, if communities wish to gazette their marine protected area, they must agree to the management authority of the government (Clarke & Jupiter, 2010). Thus, very few communities find this option acceptable, though this could change in the case of Fiji which is producing a revised Inshore Fisheries Decree. Little if any uptake is apparent in Vanuatu, a country with specific provision for Community Conserved Areas and the role of custom in its recent Environmental Management and Conservation Act. Reasons for this lack of uptake include lack of capacity to fill out the requisite paper work, as well as a common perception that that the potential benefits do not outweigh the risks of entering contractual arrangements with the State, known to have limited capacity for enforcement (Govan et al., 2009c).

NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD

There have been several instances of Pacific island government and national technical advisers receiving encouragement to adopt the 2008 Guidelines as part of national policy or legislation, such as during the drafting of the Solomon Islands Protected Areas Act. In the past, Pacific legislation that did not recognize the cultural distinctions between western and Pacific islander world views created conflict. For instance, the New Zealand Conservation Act of 1987 directs the Department of Conservation to undertake co-management of protected areas with Maori under the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi that involve ‘the preservation and protection of ... resources for the purpose of maintaining their intrinsic values’, which is at odds with the Maori concept of sustainable use (Roberts et al., 1995; Berkes, 2004).

Based on the arguments above, it is clear that further discussion and written clarification is needed before Pacific island governments should adopt the 2008 Guidelines. Certain interpretations could exclude many, if not all, the community managed protected areas that currently form the major thrust in meeting their CBD obligations, leaving little in the way of viable alternatives. Driving a wedge between conservation and sustainable use/fisheries management also risks dividing the efforts of government and non-government agencies that are seeking to rationalize approaches and reduce costs through collaboration.



Local fishers from Kia Island, Fiji, with a catch from their adjacent LMMA © Stacy Jupiter

As an alternative, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the CBD (Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Marine and Coastal Protected Areas) adopted the following definition: “Marine and Coastal Protected Areas mean any defined area within or adjacent to the marine environment, together with its overlying waters and associated flora, fauna, and historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by legislation or other effective means, including customs, with the effect that its marine and/or coastal

biodiversity enjoys a higher level of protection than its surroundings” (SCBD, 2004). In addition, at the CBD COP 10, Parties committed to achieving the Aichi Targets, including proportions of each state conserved through protected areas and “other effective area-based conservation measures” (Target 11). For the moment, therefore, and notwithstanding efforts to tighten its interpretation (e.g. Woodley et al., 2012), it appears that the CBD text and definitions are more appropriate for Pacific island policy makers and planners in terms of

protected area accounting, especially as it is to the CBD that the main national obligations on protected area coverage pertain.

In moving forward, we offer three potential recommendations for action. First, Pacific island governments and NGOs should be made aware of the issues and implications relating to the current 2008 Guidelines. Secondly, the language of the 2008 Guidelines, particularly the principles, should not be incorporated into definitions or wording for national policy and legislation until broad consensus and understanding is reached. Finally, there appears to be a need for regionally appropriate guidance to be developed through wide consultation and discussion in Pacific island countries which should ensure particular involvement of land-owning communities, as well as government and non-government organizations.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Stacy Jupiter has been working with the Wildlife Conservation Society Fiji Program since 2008, first as an Associate Conservation Scientist and then as Program Director. She specializes in working with local communities to design networks of protected areas tailored to their management needs. She has additionally led the marine working group of the National Protected Area Committee to conduct a national gap analysis to assess how well coastal and marine habitats are effectively protected through locally managed marine areas in Fiji. *Email:* sjupiter@wcs.org

RESUMEN

Muchas naciones insulares del Pacífico van a la zaga de los países más desarrollados con respecto al logro de metas para la cobertura de áreas protegidas del Convenio sobre la Diversidad Biológica (CDB). La definición modificada de áreas protegidas en las Directrices para la aplicación de las categorías de gestión de áreas protegidas (UICN 2008), ofrece oportunidades a las naciones insulares del Pacífico para reconocer formalmente las áreas conservadas y gestionadas localmente por las comunidades indígenas bajo diferentes enfoques de gestión. Sin embargo, hay aspectos de la nueva definición y principios que son incompatibles en términos del contexto de la tenencia consuetudinaria prevaleciente en el Pacífico. El primer principio que requiere que la conservación de la naturaleza sea el objetivo principal de las áreas protegidas va en contra de la mayoría de las áreas protegidas establecidas en las islas del Pacífico, cuyo principal impulsor es asegurar medios de subsistencia sostenibles. Por otra parte, la definición de la conservación según la percepción de la mayoría de las culturas de las islas del Pacífico está inextricablemente ligada con el "uso sostenible". En este contexto, ofrecemos sugerencias para seguir avanzando, incluyendo aumentar el conocimiento sobre estas cuestiones, realizar consultas en torno a las definiciones sobre áreas protegidas que más se ajustan al contexto legal y cultural de cada país, y evitar la incorporación del lenguaje de las Directrices de 2008 en las definiciones o redacción de las políticas y leyes nacionales hasta alcanzar un amplio consenso y comprensión.

RÉSUMÉ

De nombreuses îles-nations du Pacifique sont moins bien classées que les pays plus développés en ce qui concerne la réalisation des objectifs de la Convention sur la diversité biologique liés aux aires protégées. La modification de la définition des aires protégées dans les Lignes directrices pour l'application des catégories de gestion aux aires protégées de l'UICN, publié en 2008, permet aux îles-nations du Pacifique de reconnaître officiellement les aires conservées par les communautés autochtones et localement gérées et de les classer ainsi dans plusieurs catégories de gestion. Cependant, certains éléments présents dans la nouvelle définition et les principes seront certainement incompatibles avec les régimes fonciers coutumiers qui prévalent dans le Pacifique. Le premier principe, selon lequel la conservation de la nature doit être le principal objectif des aires protégées, s'oppose à la majorité des aires protégées en fonctionnement dans le Pacifique, pour lesquelles le principal moteur est la création de moyens de subsistance durables. En outre, la définition de la conservation est perçue par la plupart des cultures des îles du Pacifique comme inextricablement liée à « l'utilisation durable ». Dans ce contexte, nous proposons donc d'aller plus loin et de vulgariser ces questions, de s'interroger sur les définitions appropriées des aires protégées qui correspondent au contexte culturel et juridique de chaque pays, et d'éviter le langage des Lignes directrices de 2008 dans les définitions ou l'énoncé des politiques et législations nationales, jusqu'à trouver un consensus et une entente satisfaisants pour tous.