



Results of the APAP Questionnaire on COVID-19 and Protected Areas Management

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Background and Overview

- COVID-19 has affected all aspects of society in unprecedented ways, and protected areas in Asia have been no exception. The APAP Questionnaire on COVID-19 and Protected Areas Management was developed to:
 - Help APAP **understand the impacts of the pandemic on the region's protected areas** and the **measures that are being taken to address these**;
 - Identify **future opportunities** for protected areas in the post-COVID-19 era.
- The questionnaire was sent to **all existing APAP members plus other protected areas agencies in the Asia region.**
- From June to the end of July 2020, the APAP Secretariat received completed questionnaires from **12 PA agencies in nine countries:** Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; Japan; Myanmar; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Singapore; and Sri Lanka

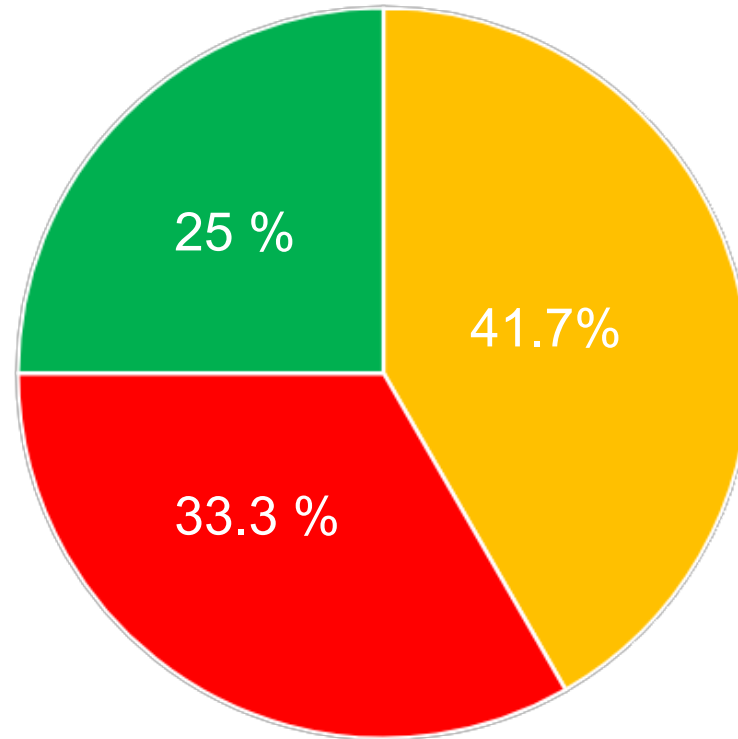


Questionnaire Structure

1. How have **visitor services** been affected by COVID-19?
2. How have **conservation activities** such as patrolling been affected?
3. How have **engagement and outreach with local communities** been affected?
4. How have **PA staffing levels** been affected?
5. How have **staff working conditions** been affected?
6. Are there **any particular measures** that will be **continued** after the pandemic is over?
7. Are there **discussions** underway to **prepare for future outbreaks of infectious diseases**?
8. What **lessons** for protected areas can be **learned** from the COVID-19 pandemic?
9. How might **APAP and IUCN assist** protected areas management authorities in relation to COVID-19?

Results – 1: Visitor services

- **How have visitor services in protected areas been affected by COVID-19?**



Protected areas have remained **open** to visitors **as usual but with social distancing rules.**
(3 respondents)

Protected areas have been **partially closed** to visitors.
(5 respondents)

Protected areas have been **fully closed.**
(4 respondents)

Results – 1: Visitor services

Positive Impacts:

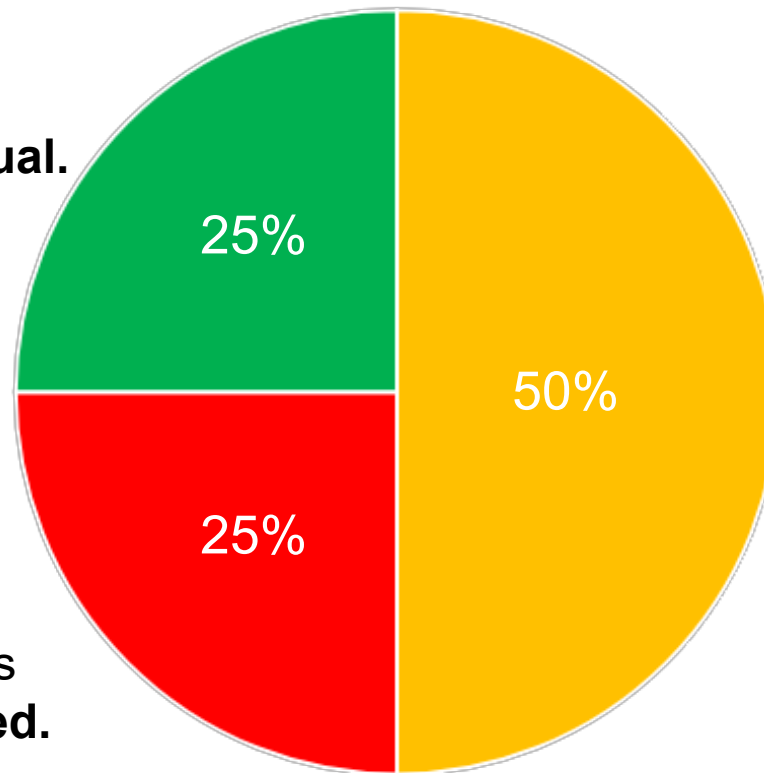
- Wildlife has returned to areas that it previously avoided because there were too many visitors;
- During the closed season, park management has been able to concentrate on the maintenance of park facilities and trails;
- New activities have been introduced to compensate for reduced physical access to protected areas (e.g. Virtual Reality tours).

Negative Impacts:

- The income of local communities has decreased, and this has made them more dependent on park resources.

Results – 2: Conservation activities

- **How has COVID-19 affected conservation activities in protected areas?**



Conservation activities have **continued as usual**.
(3 respondents)

Conservation activities have **continued largely as usual but with some minor modifications**.
(6 respondents)

Conservation activities have **partially stopped**.
(3 respondents)

Results – 2: Conservation activities

Positive Impacts:

- In some protected areas, officers are continuing conservation activities such as patrolling, anti-poaching, habitat enrichment;

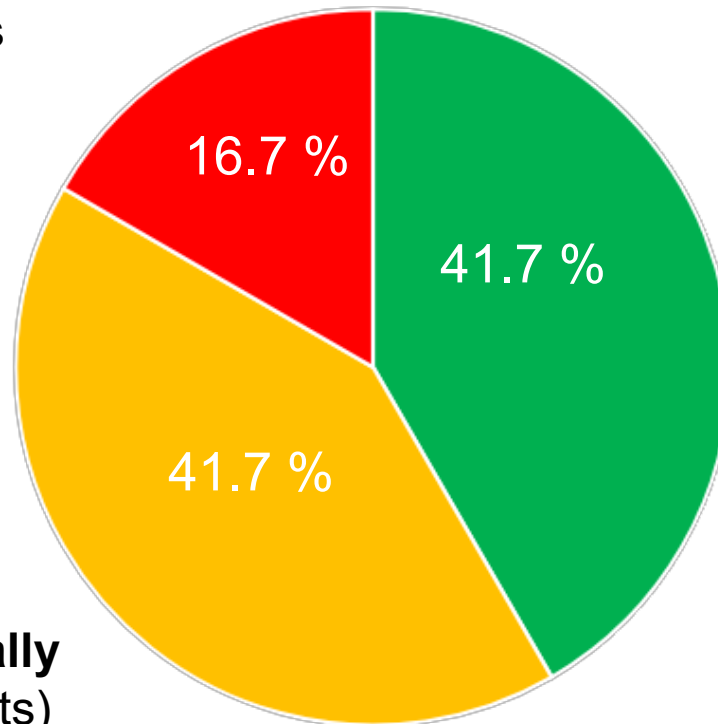
Negative Impacts:

- In other protected areas, the government budget for conservation activities has been reduced by half, affecting patrol, research and other field monitoring;
- Inconsistent data collection due to the halt in research work.

Results – 3: Local community engagement and outreach

- **How has COVID-19 affected engagement, outreach and provision of services from the protected area management authorities to local communities in and around protected areas?**

Engagement with local communities has **entirely stopped**.
(2 respondents)



Engagement with local communities has continued **largely as usual but with some minor modifications** such as social distancing rules. (5 respondents)

Engagement with local communities has **partially stopped**. (5 respondents)



Results – 3: Local community engagement and outreach

- *“Many events, festivals, and official meetings for local communities have been cancelled or turned into virtual events”;*
- *“Visitors are not allowed to visit indigenous peoples’ villages or areas”;*
- *“Engagement with local communities has included implementation of social distancing and the usage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)”;*
- *“We have a community patrolling group (CPG). CPG continued its patrolling during the COVID-19 pandemic. The community monitoring and reporting system is still being implemented by the park authorities to control illegal activities inside the protected areas.”*



Results – 3: Local community engagement and outreach

Negative Impacts:

- Activities requiring public consultations, such as management planning, education and awareness campaigns, and socio-economic surveys have been deferred;
- Due to limited alternative livelihood activities, people are more likely to earn income from illegal hunting, logging and fishing, with negative impacts on biodiversity.

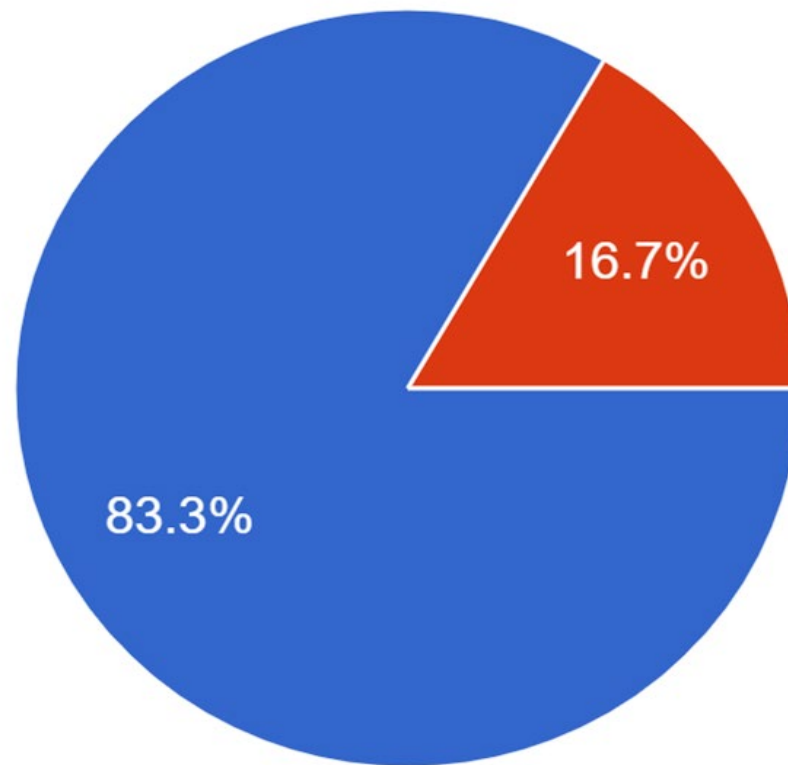


Results – 3: Local community engagement and outreach

- **Provision of special support for local communities vulnerable to COVID-19:**
 - Providing CSR to mountain guides and porters;
 - Providing discounts to private operators operating within the parks, at least for the duration of the Movement Control Order;
 - Providing logistical support for local communities, especially indigenous people, during the pandemic.
 - Implementing social contribution activities, such as donating special funds, providing emergency supplies, and operating drive-through farmers' markets.

Results – 4: Staffing

- How has COVID-19 affected protected areas staffing levels?



Protected area staffing levels have **decreased**.
(2 respondents)

Protected area staffing levels have **remained unchanged**.
(10 respondents)

Results – 4: Staffing

- *“Staff numbers have remained the same; however, staff from HQ and other enforcement agencies have been deputed to help in patrolling.”*
- *“Two shifts (split teams 50% at office and 50 % working from home alternatively)”*
- *“The government has decided not to recruit additional PA staff due to limited budget; no salary increments for existing PA staff; no increased mission budget.”*
- *“Some officers faced problems in reporting for duty because of the curfew situation.”*

Results – 4: Staffing

Positive Impacts:

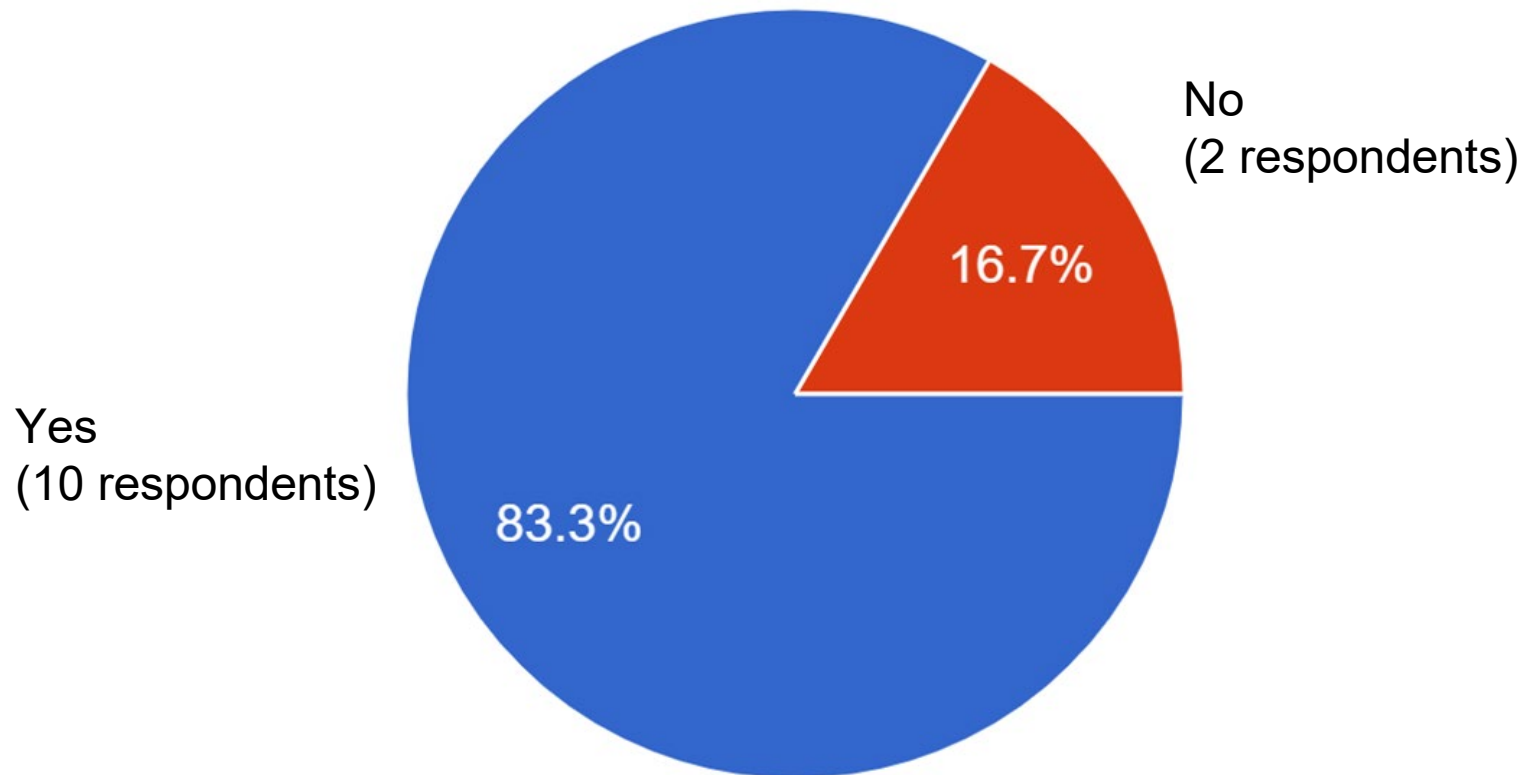
- The workload has been reduced as a result of fewer visitors.

Negative Impacts:

- Staff are vulnerable to coming into contact with people who have the virus but are asymptomatic;
- Staff capacity building, training and awareness programmes are no longer permitted;
- In addition to their regular work, staff are required to carry out extra duties such as advising park visitors to abide by safe distancing measures;
- Workload has increased due to continued implementation of preventive measures against epidemics and increased patrolling;

Results – 5: New measures introduced in response to COVID-19 that will be continued after the pandemic is over

- **Are there any particular measures that were introduced in protected areas in response to COVID-19 that will be continued after the pandemic is over?**



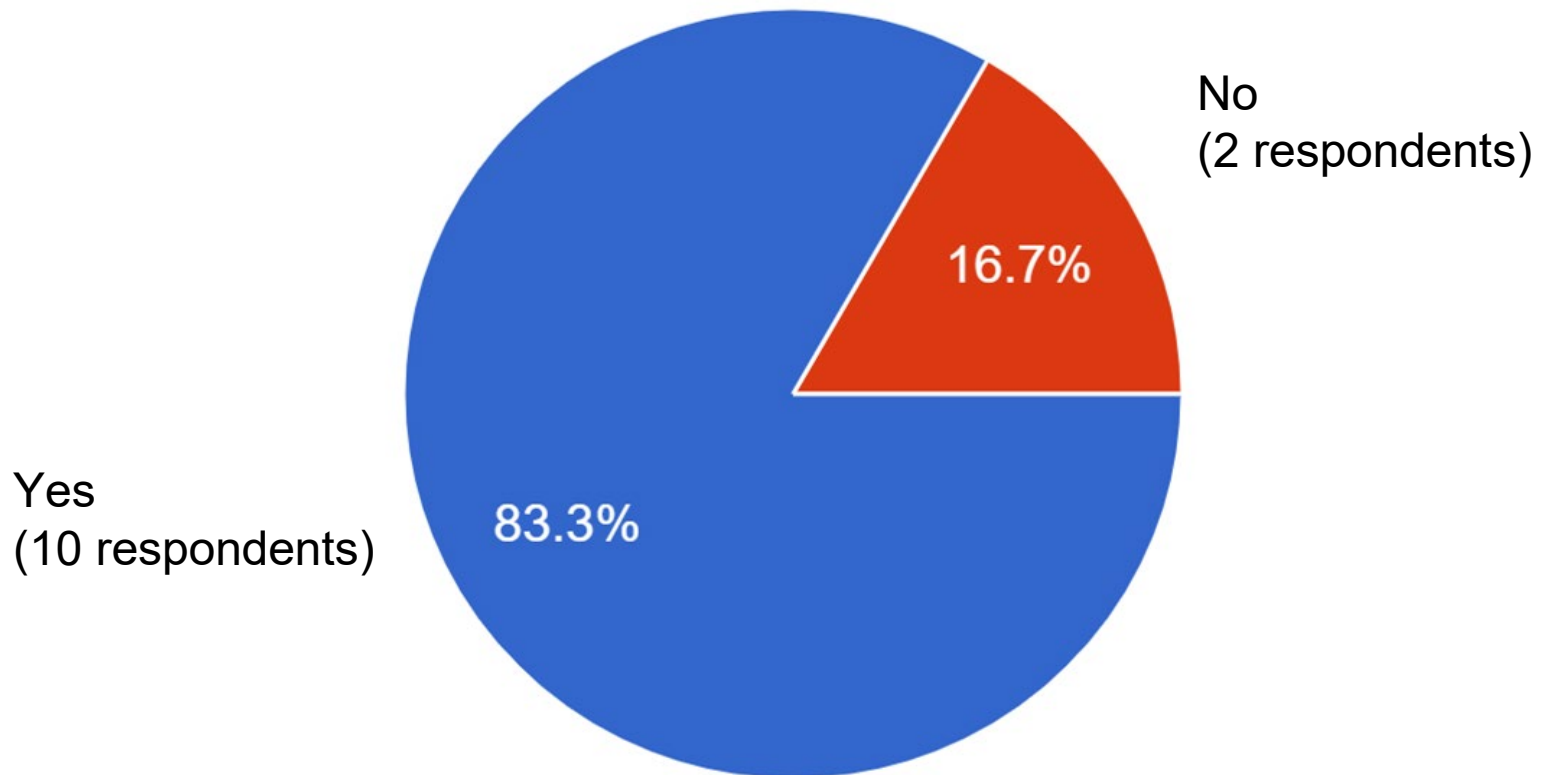


Results – 5: New measures introduced in response to COVID-19 that will be continued after the pandemic is over

- Health precautions will be maintained (park visitors, park staff);
- Virtual Reality and YouTube will be used to develop nature interpretation programs;
- Strict Standard Operating Procedures will be maintained;
- CCTV will be used to help count visitors and gauge the status of visitation to protected areas.

Results – 6: Discussions underway to prepare for future outbreaks of infectious disease

- Are there any discussion underway in your organisation to prepare for future outbreaks of infectious diseases?





Results – 6: Discussions underway to prepare for future outbreaks of infectious disease

- Carrying capacity determination and online ticketing system;
- Health precautions;
- Developing a procedure for visitor management to prevent infectious disease;
- Use of technology and less reliance on human resources.



Results – 7: Lessons learned for protected areas

- The importance of sanitation in parks;
- The usefulness of engaging technological assets (e.g. drones) in patrolling;
- The need for rules and regulations related to social distancing (between people and between people and wildlife);
- In the post-COVID-19 era, the priority for PA management should be conservation and restoration of habitats for wild species;
- Increasing public awareness of the importance of protected areas.



Results – 8: What can APAP/IUCN do?

- Collate and share information, case studies, and policy changes;
- Organise capacity building of park staff in relation to safety and health issues;
- Disseminate up-to-date research findings on the impacts of COVID-19, focusing on wildlife and socio-economic aspects;
- Search for funding opportunities.

Thank you for listening!

