

# Protecting marine areas more effectively

Under the impetus of major international treaties, marine protected areas have multiplied over the last twenty years with the aim of conserving marine ecosystems. But without the backing of all stakeholders, who sometimes have divergent interests, the effectiveness of these areas is compromised.



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Fishing boat in the Mediterranean, Alboran Marine Protected Area, Morocco.

The zoning of marine protected areas (MPAs) is decided by state institutions or major international NGOs on the basis of criteria for the protection of species and their habitat areas. There is little involvement of local authorities, economic stakeholders or associations, which leads to conflicts and difficulties in implementing MPA management plans.

The case of the Alboran marine protected area in Morocco is a prime example of this. In 2015, a study involving the protected area's management services and local small-scale fishermen led to the installation of small reefs in the MPA to prevent the passage of trawlers, which cause a great deal of damage. However, no sooner than they were installed, these lightweight structures were moved by trawlers, as a ministerial decree had authorised fishing in the area.

... In addition to deciding on zones for marine protected areas, there is a need to create forums for consultation to ensure that all stakeholders are on board ...

In this example, small-scale fishing and trawler fishing, with divergent interests and working with different government departments, were in competition with each other, which had an impact on the effectiveness of the MPA. This is a recurring problem, not least because the managers of these protected areas are unfamiliar with the fishing territories and have no grasp of the social conflicts in the different countries. As a result, only a tiny proportion of the 10% of marine areas that should be protected internationally are actually protected.

To improve effectiveness, it would be necessary to involve all the economic stakeholders, to take account of the diverse range of interests, to adopt a multi-sectoral approach and to put in place a compensation

“By studying the Alboran marine protected area (MPA), the Integrated Coastal Management in the Moroccan Mediterranean project (Gilmar) has highlighted the complex nature of integrated coastal management in the Moroccan Mediterranean, involving fishermen, farmers and tourism stakeholders. The team has produced scientific knowledge, trained students and managers, and used the results of its research to support decision-making. Its collaboration with public, professional and voluntary bodies lays the foundations for a new approach to MPA projects in Morocco.”

Hicham Masski, National Institute for Fisheries Research, Morocco

Mohamed Naji, Hassan II Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine, Morocco



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Fishing nets drying on Aouchtam Beach, Alboran Marine Protected Area, Morocco.

policy when adaptation is not possible, which is often the case for certain categories of fishing. In the absence of support, monitoring and consultation, these fisheries come into conflict with each other and compromise the success of the conservation project.

Hence the need to develop alternative management scenarios and create forums for dialogue to generate consensus, even if this means redefining the zoning and structural diagnosis of MPAs.

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# OUR SHARED OCEAN

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Science in the Global South  
for a Sustainable World

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IRD Éditions  
Collection Grands enjeux  
Marseille, 2025

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Children fishing on a reef flat in Reao, French Polynesia. © IRD/S.Andréfouët

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ISBN Papier: 978-2-7099-3070-3

ISBN PDF: 978-2-7099-3071-0

ISBN Open/epub: 978-2-7099-3072-7

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