

Thematic report on protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity

Please provide the following details on the origin of this report.

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Date of submission:	29 October 2003

Please provide summary information on the process by which this report has been prepared, including information on the types of stakeholders who have been actively involved in its preparation and on material which was used as a basis for the report.

The report was prepared by the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) in consultation with members of the National Committee on Biodiversity, drawn from various agencies, protected area professionals in the research centres and field and management staff of NCWCD. The documents used are listed in the selected bibliography given at the end of the report; in addition several internal documents were also consulted.

Protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity

System of protected areas

1. What is the relative priority afforded to development and implementation of a national system of protected areas in the context of other obligations arising from the Convention and COP Decisions?					
a) High	X	b) Medium		c) Low	
2. Is there a systematic planning process for development and implementation of a national system of protected areas?					
a) no					
b) in early stages of development					
c) in advanced stages of development					
d) yes, please provide copies of relevant documents describing the process					X (see further comments below)
3. Is there an assessment of the extent to which the existing network of protected areas covers all areas that are identified as being important for the conservation of biological diversity?					
a) no					
b) an assessment is being planned for					
c) an assessment is being undertaken					X
d) yes, please provide copies of the assessments made					

Regulatory framework

4. Is there a policy framework and/or enabling legislation in place for the establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) in early stages of development	
c) in advanced stages of development	
d) yes, please provide copies of relevant documents	X - The following laws give the legal basis for establishing and managing protected areas: Act Establishing the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development.

	Royal Decree No: M-22 dated 12-9-1406 H (1986 G); Act for Establishing Protected Areas for Wildlife. Royal Decree No: M-12 dated 26-10-1415 H (1995 G), and its bylaws.
5. Have guidelines, criteria and targets been adopted to support selection, establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) in early stages of development	
c) in advanced stages of development	
d) yes, please provide copies of guidelines, criteria and targets	X (see further comments below)
6. Does the management of protected areas involve the use of incentive measures, for instance, of entrance fees for park visitors, or of benefit-sharing arrangements with adjacent communities and other relevant stakeholders?	
a) no	
b) yes, incentive measures implemented for some protected areas (please provide some examples)	X (see further comments below)
c) yes, incentive measures implemented for all protected areas (please provide some examples)	

Management approach

7. Have the principal threats to protected areas and the biodiversity that they contain been assessed, so that programmes can be put in place to deal with the threats, their effects and to influence the key drivers?	
a) no	
b) an assessment is being planned for	
c) an assessment is in process	
d) yes, an assessment has been completed	
e) programmes and policies to deal with threats are in place (please provide basic information on threats and actions taken)	X (see further comments below)

8. Are protected areas established and managed in the context of the wider region in which they are located, taking account of and contributing to other sectoral strategies?	
a) no	
b) yes, in some areas	X (see further comments below)
c) yes, in all areas (please provide details)	
9. Do protected areas vary in their nature, meeting a range of different management objectives and/or being operated through differing management regimes?	
a) no, most areas are established for similar objectives and are under similar management regimes	
b) many areas have similar objectives/management regimes, but there are also some exceptions	
c) yes, protected areas vary in nature (please provide details)	X (see further comments below)
10. Is there wide stakeholder involvement in the establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) with some, but not all protected areas	X (see further comments below)
c) yes, always (please provide details of experience)	
11. Do protected areas established and managed by non-government bodies, citizen groups, private sector and individuals exist in your country, and are they recognized in any formal manner?	
a) no, they do not exist	
b) yes, they exist, however are not formally recognized	
c) yes, they exist and are formally recognized (please provide further information)	X - The Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu, an agency mandated with the promotion of industrial development and a recipient of UNEP's Sasakawa Environment Prize, manages three protected areas within its areas of operation.

Available resources

12. Are the human, institutional and financial resources available adequate for full implementation of the protected areas network, including for management of individual protected areas?	
a) no, they are severely limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	
b) no, they are limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	X - There is an inadequacy of the resources available. However this is sought to be addressed by mobilizing funds from the private sector through the promotion of ecotourism centred on selected reserves
c) Available resources are adequate (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	
d) yes, good resources are available	
13. Has your country requested/received financial assistance from the Global Environment Facility or other international sources for establishment/management of protected areas?	
a) no	X
b) funding has been requested, but not received	
c) funding is currently being requested	
d) yes, funding has been received (please provide copies of appropriate documents)	

Assessment

14. Have constraints to implementation and management of an adequate system of protected areas been assessed, so that actions can be initiated to deal with these constraints?	
a) no	
b) yes, constraints have been assessed (please provide further information)	X - A reassessment of the protected area program that is underway addresses these issues as well.
c) yes, actions to deal with constraints are in place (please provide further information)	

15. Is a programme in place or in development to regularly assess the effectiveness of protected areas management and to act on this information?	
a) no	
b) yes, a programme is under development (please provide further information)	X (see further comments below)
c) yes, a programme is in place (please provide further information)	
16. Has any assessment been made of the value of the material and non-material benefits and services that protected areas provide?	
a) no	
b) an assessment is planned	X - There is broad understanding of the potential benefits, for example, the volume of truffle to be collected, the scope of ecotourism in certain reserves, etc. However, a systematic study of such benefits has yet to be completed.
c) an assessment is in process	
d) yes, an assessment has been made (please provide further information)	

Regional and international cooperation

17. Is your country collaborating/communicating with neighbouring countries in the establishment and/or management of transboundary protected areas?	
a) no	
b) yes (please provide details)	X - Discussions are being held with Jordan on establishing a transboundary protected area on the northern border of the Kingdom, and with Qatar and Bahrain on establishing a transboundary marine reserve in Salwa Bay which holds the second largest Dugong

	population in the word.
18. Are key protected areas professionals in your country members of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, thereby helping to foster the sharing of information and experience?	
a) no	
b) yes	X
c) information is not available	
19. Has your country provided information on its protected areas to the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre in order to allow for a scientific assessment of the status of the world's protected areas?	
a) no	
b) yes	X - The latest input was in February 2003
20. If your country has protected areas or other sites recognized or designated under an international convention or programme (including regional conventions and programmes), please provide copies of reports submitted to those programmes or summaries of them.	
21. Do you think that there are some activities on protected areas that your country has significant experience that will be of direct value to other Contracting Parties?	
a) no	
b) yes (please provide details)	X (see further comments below)

Further comments

The National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development coordinates a regional Protected Areas Thematic Centre (PATC) for the countries of West&Central Asia and North Africa (WESCANA), mostly involving the members of IUCN in the region. The PATC conducts thematic workshops and seminars to promote the protected area development in the region. An extensive survey of the protected area issues in the region is currently underway. PATC has recently undertaken field surveys in central Asian countries with a view to formulate ways to fill the gaps in the protected area system in the region. This is part of PATC's program to develop a regional approach to the protected area system. PATC has coordinated the regional input to the V World Parks Congress, which included a number of well received activities.

Selected bibliography:

- NCWCD and IUCN (1990) *A Plan to Protect Areas in Saudi Arabia*. NCWCD, Riyadh
- Abuzinada, Abdulaziz, Goriup and Nader, Iyad (eds) (1989) *Wildlife Conservation and Development in Saudi Arabia*. NCWCD, Riyadh
- NCWCD (2001) *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (Draft) NCWCD, Riyadh
- Grainger, John and Llewellyn, Othman (1994) Sustainable use: lessons from a cultural tradition in Saudi Arabia. *Parks* Vol 4 No 3
- Llewellyn, Othman (2000) The WCPA regional action plan and project proposal for North Africa and the Middle East. *Parks* Vol.1 No.1
- Sulayem, M and Joubert, E (1994) Management of protected areas in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Unasylva* 176 Vol.45
- Faizi, S (1988) An assessment of the economic benefits of biodiversity in Saudi Arabia. *Natural Resources Forum* Vol.22 No.1
- Llewellyn, Othman (1992) Conservation in Islamic law. In *National Legal Strategies for Protected Areas Legislation and Management* Proceedings of IUCN Commission on Environmental Law workshop at the IV World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas, Caracas, Venezuela.

Internet sources:

NCWCD's official web site www.ncwcd.gov.sa

A thematic web site on the conservation efforts to restore populations of Arabian oryx, including the details of the related protected areas: www.arabianoryx.com

Faizi, S (2002) Research, policy and implementation linkages in biodiversity management in Saudi Arabia. A case study at the Global Development Network website:

http://www.gdnet.org/subpages/RAPNet/Case_Studies/Case_Study_19_Full.html

2 d)

A national system plan for protected areas was developed in 1990 through a process that involved extensive field surveys and wide range of consultations over a period of two years. The system plan has identified 104 sites, terrestrial and marine, representing the key biotopes and landscape features and covering the habitats of critical species in the Kingdom. In formulating the management regime for protected areas, it has adopted several of the principles of the Hima system, the traditional system for sustainable resource management. This plan is being implemented by NCWCD. Hard copies of the system plan and the appendix are enclosed.

5 d)

The criteria used by the system plan involve: representational coverage of the Kingdom’s physiographic units and ecotypes, based on a division of the country into 7 physiographic regions and 30 sub-regions and 31 major ecotypes; geopolitical representation; species coverage including the coverage of endangered species, flagship species, game species, endemics and culturally important species; level of local interest; logistical issues, etc.

As for target the system plan has proposed 104 sites covering 10% of the land area of the country. Currently 5% of the land area has been protected through the 15 protected areas managed by NCWCD and the 12 national parks established by the Ministry of Agriculture.

6 b)

Provision for multiple uses, through zonation, is provided in many of the protected areas. Access for local communities to certain resources within the area is regulated spatially and temporally. Grazing of sheep is allowed, for example, in the Ibex Reserve and Harrat Al Harrah in certain areas during parts of the year. Collection of dry wood is permitted for example in Farasan Island and Saja ar-Rimth. Truffle collection is allowed in Harrat Al Harrah in the winter. Honey bee hives are allowed to be kept and harvested in Raydah.

The rangers are recruited from the local communities.

There is no entry fee charged on visitors. Camping is permitted at selected locations with the reserves.

7 e)

Such assessment is an ongoing process. Some of the problems arise due the loss of access to the protected areas for the traditional users of the land. This is being solved by providing them regulated access and by increasingly involving them in the management of the protected areas. Historical endangerment of some species has been a critical problem and this has been addressed by reintroducing/restocking such species through captive breeding (see item 20 for details).

8 b)

Although protected area project was stated to promote sustainable rural development as well as wildlife conservation, its linkage with the regional sectoral plans is only beginning to take shape. The regional plans for development for the next 25 years formulated by the provinces of Madina, Hail and Jizan have incorporated protected area programs.

9 c)

While focused on biodiversity conservation the protected areas often differ in management objective, but more often a single protected area addresses multiple objectives. For this reason the Kingdom has developed its own typology of protected areas which corresponds to the IUCN categories as follows:

<i>Saudi Arabian Category</i>	<i>IUCN Category equivalent</i>
Special Natural Reserve	Ia Strict nature reserve Ib Wilderness area II National Park
Natural Reserve	II National Park III Natural monument IV Habitat/Species management area
Biological Reserve	Ia Strict nature reserve Ib Wilderness area IV Habitat/Species management area

Resource Use Reserve	V Protected landscape or seascape VI Managed resource reserve
Controlled Hunting Reserve	VI Managed resource reserve

10 b)

NCWCD is currently expanding the level of local community participation in protected area management. A Liaison Committee established with the representatives of the villages adjoining the Ibex Reserve has proved to be particularly useful in addressing some of the lingering issues. The people also developed a sense of ownership of the reserve and now they have a greater concern for its sustainable management. A Consultative Committee established with the local communities belonging to the twenty villages adjoining the 'Uruq Bani Ma'arid reserve at a meeting they had with the Second Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom has proved to be a critical factor in achieving success in the reintroduction of the Arabian oryx in this reserve in the Rub Al Khali sand desert.

15 b)

The protected area monitoring program does undertake periodic evaluation of the effectiveness certain protected areas. The management interventions such as reintroductions are evaluated by the dedicated research centres. However, a streamlined program for assessing the management effectiveness has yet to be instituted and this is currently being developed.

21 b)

Saudi Arabia's experience in successfully restoring endangered species by reintroducing them in protected areas may be of interest to some others. A few protected areas are managed with the specific objective of restoring critically endangered species. The Arabian oryx which became extinct in the wild in the mid seventies was successfully reintroduced at Mahazat As Sayd and 'Uruq Bani Ma'arid following a successful captive breeding program on the species. Houbara bustard that has become endangered was also similarly reintroduced/restocked. Sand gazelle is another endangered species that was successfully reintroduced.