

Communication Strategies as a central process to enable participative management of the Natural Protected Areas of Peru

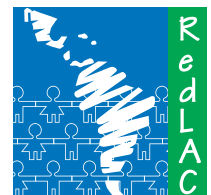
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Case Studies

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Context and main objectives

Profonanpe, the Peruvian Trust Fund for National Parks and Protected Areas¹, is a private non-profit organization created in December 1992 in order to provide stable funding and long-term conservation, protection and management of protected areas and buffer zones. Its mission is to raise, manage and direct financial resources for the conservation of biological diversity of protected areas in Peru. Profonanpe is the first private environmental fund created in Peru, an institution catalyst of change through innovation-oriented interventions in Peru's PA and their buffer zones.

According to its intervention strategy in the National Protected Areas System (SINANPE, for its name in Spanish), Profonanpe supported the National Service of Protected Areas (SERNANP²) in creating conditions for a participative management of protected areas to enhance their management effectiveness, within the project named Participative Management of Natural Protected Areas (GPAN³). The project intervention was carried out considering that the viability and sustainability of conservation in protected areas (PAs) depend on the engagement of local players in the PAs management and on the necessity to align them with a common vision on the PAs development in order to turn them into partners for the areas' conservation. This process of mobilizing local players towards conservation commitments requires that benefits generated by conservation are shared and, on the other hand, that strategic communication tools for social inclusion are applied in the different processes of the participative management.

¹ www.profonanpe.org.pe

² www.sernanp.gob.pe

³ www.profonanpe.org.pe/gpan/

The implementation of communication strategies was a central process to enable the participative management of PAs, in particular in the Salinas y Aguada Blanca National Reserve (RNSAB) in Arequipa, Peru. With this communication strategy, the PAs intended to address these challenges:

- Contribute positioning of the PA, its Manager, the Management Committee and the Management Plan in the subnational level
- Reduce the false perception of the protected areas authority as a land expropriator and the Administration Contracts⁴ as a way of privatization of the PA
- Engage new social actors in the PA conservation activities

The audiences targeted by this communication strategy were the stakeholders in the subnational level with related activities.

Activities

Given the complexity of the objectives, the GPAN Project defined the following action lines and had as a transversal theme the positioning of participative management:

- Communication to position the value of Participative Management;
- Communication to position the PA, its Manager and its Management Committee;
- Communication to follow the updating process of the Management Plan;
- Communication to launch the Sustainable Economic Activities Program, its scope and benefits;
- Communication to generate favorable conditions for the Administration Contracts.

According to the objectives of each action line, several strategies, culturally adequate to each PA, were considered, and the communication mix appealed to various resources and communication media such as:

Entertainment: community theater was a communication resource applied to raise awareness on the PAs, the Management Plans objectives, as well as the scope of the Administration Contracts.

Advocacy: advocacy actions, conducted by the PAs Managers and Presidents of the Management Committees, were fundamental to include the PA in the agenda of the regional and local governments and private companies. In order to achieve this, each PA defined the key messages and elaborated relevant materials such as PAs brochures, videos, webpages, among others.

Media advocacy: this strategy allowed to include the benefits of PAs Participative Management, the value of PAs and the benefits of the Administration Contracts in the agenda of the communication media vehicles in a subnational level (regional and local). The advocacy actions developed with the journalists were key to engage them as positive opinion makers. Workshops for journalists and guided visits to the PAs were some of the developed activities.

Group and inter personal communication: educative sessions were implemented to communicate the value and benefits of the PAs, the roles of the involved actors in their conservation, the benefits of Participative Management, the value and benefits of the Administration Contracts, their expected results, among other topics. The sessions were developed by mixed teams composed of PA personnel, Management Committee members, park rangers and even the PA Manager.

Mass communication: the radio was a key element to the process of positioning the PA, the value of Participative Management and the understanding of the Management Plan. Promotional spots were produced and distributed to main radio broadcasters in the subnational level (regional and local). Micro radio programs about the meaning and scope of the Administration Contracts were also produced by the PAs.

Electronic: the PAs developed their webpage, as well as newsletters to reinforce their positioning to some key actors, especially national and regional ones.

Sources of funding and invested resources

The GPAN Project started its activities in 2003 and was financed with resources from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), through the World Bank, in a total of US\$14,8 million. The project included a simultaneous intervention in 5 PAs, organized in 4 components. The Component I of Participative Management counted on a budget of US\$5,5 million, out of which US\$500,000 were earmarked for Communication (US\$120,000 to the Salinas y Aguada Blanca National Reserve).

⁴ www.sernanp.gob.pe/sernanp/contratosanps/index.html

“ The implementation of communication strategies was a central process to enable the participative management of PAs ”

Partners and suppliers

Firstly, a communication specialist was hired to develop a general strategy for the project. Later, PAs received the support of a communication staff, which designed specific strategies for each intervention site. These strategies involved the participation of PA personnel and Management Committees.

Monitoring and evaluation

During the project implementation, the progress of the participative management was evaluated using mainly the participative management radar and the map of actors. Both instruments were also applied to evaluate the PAs' communication strategy. The radar accounts for the progress of the participative management by qualifying the different aspects of the participative management from 0 to 3 (3 as the optimal situation) and highlighting the aspects that need to be strengthened. The map of actors enables the visualization and measurement of changes in the commitment of each strategic group of actors with the PA management. It monitors the position taken by each actor and formulates individual strategies to engage them in the collaboration process. It is necessary to highlight that the application of both instruments are carried out with the participation of the PA Manager and Management Committee.

In the particular case of the Salinas and Aguada Blanca National Reserve, the results were positive. Nevertheless, it is hard to evaluate such efforts, since there are large difficulties in attributing the general success of the project to the implementation of one single intervention, such as the communication strategy, while not taking into account all other actions.

Conclusions

The communication strategy developed by the GPAN project, applied in a transversal manner across different components of the participative management, allowed social actors to engage and build trust. It also enabled the sum of higher capacities and the establishment of commitments around the complex task of biodiversity conservation in natural protected areas.



The beginning of the project implementation faced an adverse context. Nevertheless, the implementation of the communication strategy in the Salinas y Aguada Blanca National Reserve made it possible to reach the expected results, change the perception of a majority of the local population and engage a higher number of collaborators in the PA management. However, in the Huascarán National Park, due to local conflicts related to the perception that an administration contract meant the privatization of the PA, there was limited intervention. Although the same communication strategy of the RNSAB and three other areas was applied, in the Huascarán National Park the conflict was of such magnitude that it could not be addressed in the short term by the authorities, and even less so by the project.

From this and other developed experiences, it is clear that the good social management in processes that involve human activity is unquestionable and that conservation activities in countries such as Peru depend largely on communication.