

(139)

Comparative Study on Innovative Financing Strategies in Protected Area Network Management; India, Indonesia, Thailand, South Africa and Sri Lanka

Wijethunga, A.R.L.^{1*}, Perera, S.², Abeyratne, S.³

^{1, 2} *United Nations Development Programme, Colombo 07, Sri Lanka*

³ *University of Colombo, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka*

**ramithalk@yahoo.com*

Abstract

Global biodiversity is threatened due to many reasons and biodiversity hotspots are in the forefront of the risk posed by declining biodiversity. Protected Area which is defined by International Union for Conservation of Nature as a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values, play a significant role in conservation of biodiversity, and the effectiveness of Protected Area management has direct and indirect impact on the overall biodiversity management in the countries and globally. However, limited financial resources for biodiversity conservation through traditional public financing mechanisms has been identified as one of the fundamental challenges of Protected Area management, and its effectiveness. In this context, innovative financing mechanisms become the alternative. Objective of this comparative study was to examine the potentials, challenges and approaches of innovative financing solutions, which increase the volume, efficiency, and effectiveness of financial flows for Protected Area management. Among 36 listed biodiversity hotspots, India, Indonesia, Thailand, South Africa and Sri Lanka were selected due to the locational factors, percentage of declared Protected Areas, and availability of literature, including the officially validated reports on the use of innovative financing strategies. Adhering to the qualitative methodology and case study strategy, primary and secondary data were gathered through the reviewed journals, officially validated reports, and having ten Key Informant Interviews with the relevant sector officials and experts. The NVivo 10 version was utilized for the analysis. The percentage of Protected Areas in India is 5.28%, 15% in Indonesia, 17% in Thailand, 9.2% in South Africa and 30% in Sri Lanka. Key findings of the study were the need to adapt Protected Area management strategies to match with the evolving conservation policies which will reduce misalignments between the policies and practices; need to identify a balance of conservation priorities between the intrinsic conservation value and monetization of ecosystem services provided by the Protected Areas; need to consult and involve stakeholders including the communities living in close vicinities to the Protected Areas in developing and implementing innovative financing instruments; and the need to introduce internationally comparable mechanisms and tools such as Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool to improve cross learning between the conservation managers operating in similar contexts.

Keywords: *Protected areas, Innovative finance, Management effectiveness*