

## Original Research Article

# Assessment of Capacity Building of Staff in Biodiversity Conservation of a Protected Area: Case Study of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove

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### Abstract

*The role of manpower in nature conservation cannot be overemphasized. Capacity building for protected area staff is imperative in ensuring effective management of protected area systems. Capacity building assessment for staff in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove was conducted through questionnaire administration and personal interview. A total of sixty self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the staff of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove and forty-five were retrieved. Results showed the availability of seventy-four personnel in nine (9) departments of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in charge of the management of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove. Results also revealed that capacity building programs had been in place over time but there was a decline due to inadequate fund to sponsor training programs. A larger percentage (40%) of staff attended training just once after joining the service of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove. About 58% had gone for national training and the highest number of attendance was once in five years (38%) followed by annual attendance (22%). This study therefore recommends that staff of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove should be educated on the necessity for capacity building and its importance to their effectiveness and development. Adequate fund should as well be channeled into the Grove to facilitate training programmes. Training should be reinforced through better collaborative efforts with other institutions. Staff should also be committed to training by seeking grants and aids from international organizations.*

**Keywords:** Assessment, Capacity Building, Management, Protected area, Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove.

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## Introduction

For decades, global forums such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), World Park and World Conservation congresses, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Conference of Parties (COP), and others have focused considerably on the need to enhance effective management of Protected Area systems to ensure their sustainability as a means for conservation. Effectively managing the world's growing system of protected areas is a key challenge for global biodiversity conservation in the 21st century. An expanding array of external threats continually tests the abilities of protected area professionals to maintain the integrity of the protected area units and systems for which they are responsible (Chape *et al.*, 2008). In the past few years, capacity building has become central in the sustainable development agenda and was reaffirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) (2002).

Capacity building is defined as “activities which strengthen the knowledge, abilities, skills and behavior of individuals and improve institutional structures and processes such that the organization can efficiently meet its mission and goals in a sustainable way (WCO, 2013). However, capacity development further emphasizes the overall policy framework in which individuals and organizations operate and interact with the external environment, as well as the formal and informal relationships among institutions. Capacity is not the mere existence of potential, but rather, the ability to harness and utilize existing potential to identify and solve problems is what constitutes capacity (UNDP, 2014).

Most international organizations which aim at sustainable use of natural resources recognize the major role of capacity building for protected area staff in improving the management efficiency of the areas.

Qualified, competent and committed staff are central to the success of protected areas. It is therefore not surprising that strengthening the capacity of protected area agencies and the individuals working in them has become one of the priorities in the development of protected area systems over the last decade (IUCN, 2009). “The capacity to manage is the product of willingness, competence, skills, capability, and adequate resources” (IUCN, 2009).

Lack of sufficient and qualified staff is detrimental to efficient management of protected areas. The right number of staff is not enough; there is a need to have well-seasoned and up-to-date staff in the field of conservation. Capacity building serves as a means of empowerment of skills and dissemination of adequate information needed by these staff for sustainability.

Protected Areas are short-staffed or have, more often than not, staff without a management, conservation or planning background (Di Carlo *et al.* 2012). To respond to this, several efforts have addressed the need to build protected area management capacity. At the same time, the demand for more effective planning and management continues to increase (Di Carlo *et al.* 2012).

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (1994) emphasized that competent professional staff are vital to the successful management and development of protected areas throughout Europe and that their training should be a top priority in order to equip them with a wider range of backgrounds including a high level of managerial and communication abilities.

One of the recommendations emerging from a workshop stream entitled “Developing the Capacity to Manage Protected Areas” pointed to the need for enhanced national and international collaboration in capacity development activities. Specifically, participants suggested that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and its World Commission on Protected

Areas (WCPA) should promote the sharing of best practice experience among a suite of global partners and thereby enhance the ability of protected area managers worldwide to develop appropriate responses to change (IUCN-WCPA, 2007).

The 5th World Parks Congress (2003) declared that effective management of protected areas in the context of global change requires that managers, protected areas staff including rangers, local communities and other stakeholders have the knowledge, attitudes, skills, capabilities and tools to plan, manage and monitor protected areas.

Appropriate skills and knowledge in the field of natural resources conservation are therefore of utmost importance in the management of protected areas.

The Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove is located along the bank of the Osun River in Osogbo Local Government Area of Osun State, South Western Nigeria. The Grove is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that was enlisted on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2005. Heritage site is a broad concept that includes the natural as well as the cultural environment. It encompasses landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, as well as biodiversity, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences. (ICOMOS, 2002). How well and often staff of the Osun Osogbo Sacred grove are developed cannot be ignored also. It is in view of the above that assessment of capacity building of staff of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove was embarked upon.

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***The Study Area***

The research was carried out at Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove, Osun state, Nigeria. Osun Osogbo Grove is located along the bank of the Osun River in Osogbo Local Government Area of Osun State, South Western Nigeria. Its geographical coordinates are 7° 45' 02"N and 4° 38' 08"E. (Enemu and Oduntan, 2012). The Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove is a thick forest which is on the outskirts of Osogbo along the Osun River in Osun state, Nigeria. It occupies an area of 75 hectares, and it is one of the last remnants of primary high forests in south-western Nigeria, which extended to the edges of most Yoruba cities before extensive urbanization eroded its reach.

### ***Data Collection and Sampling Procedure***

#### ***Data sources***

This study employed both primary and secondary data sources. The primary sources include interview and administration of structured questionnaires among the staff of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove while the secondary source involved review of management plan and literature.

#### ***Data collection***

#### ***Interviews***

Personal interviews were coordinated for staff of the grove to elicit information on the programmes in place for capacity building for staff in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove.

#### ***Questionnaire Administration***

Sixty copies of a self-administered questionnaire were distributed to the staff of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove and forty-five were retrieved. The questionnaire was adapted from International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines for Capacity building.

### *Data analysis*

Data obtained from the study were analyzed descriptively. The data gathered using questionnaire was first arranged and organized in tables and changed into frequency and percentage, and then it was used to classify and tabulate. Percentages were dominantly employed since it was used to evaluate and analyze the staff capacity building for the management of the grove.

## **Results and Discussion**

Results of the demographic information of the respondents revealed the gender representation of staff to 56% males and 44% females which implies that we have more male than female at Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove (OOSG) (Table 1). A greater percentage (40%) of the staff working in Osun

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	25	55.6
Female	20	44.4
<b>Age (Years)</b>		
18 – 25	6	13
26-30	10	22
31-40	18	40
41-50	9	20
51 above	2	5
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	9	20
Married	35	78
Divorced	1	2
<b>Education level</b>		
Primary	1	2
SSCE/WASSCE/GCE	8	18
Diploma	15	33
BSc above	21	47
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	27	60
Muslim	18	40

**Source:** Field survey, 2016

Osogbo Sacred Grove were of middle age class, 13% were between 18 and 25 years, 22% were between 26 and 30 years while only 5% were 51 years and above. In terms of marital status, 78% were married, 20% were single and 2% were divorced, which implies that greater percentage of staff of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove was married.

Educationally, 45% of the respondents were B.Sc. degree holders, 42% were Diploma holders, 11% were SSCE/WASSCE/GCE result holders while only 2% were primary school leavers. In terms of religious inclination, 60% of respondents were Christians while 40% were Muslims.

Furthermore, result obtained from interview with the grove staff shows that there were nine (9) departments in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove which include the Curator, the education department, Documentation and Technical Unit, Heritage Caretakers/Security Personnel, Administration unit, Heritage guides/Officers, Monument Guards/Masons, Research, Publication and planning, and Traditional Artisans/Carpenter which are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Department and Post in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove

S/N	DEPARTMENT	POST
1.	Curator	Head of Site
2.	Education	Higher Chief Museum Education Officer Principal Museum Education Officer Education officers/guides Higher assistant Museum Education Office
3.	Documentation and Technical unit	Technical officers Higher executive officers Assistant museum officers Principal museum executive officers Antiquity protection officers Chief monument caretaker
4.	Heritage Caretakers/Security Personnel	Assistant executive officer Security officers Heritage assistant officers
5.	Administration	Head of Department Executive officers Higher Executive officers Assistant Executive officers Senior Admin Officers Account officers
6.	Heritage guides/Officers	Heritage officers Heritage site/museum guide
7.	Monument Guards/Masons	Cleaners Senior messengers
8.	Research, Publication and planning	Planning officers
9.	Traditional Artisans/ Carpenter	Clerical officers Construction workers

**Source:** Field survey, 2016

### ***The number of training attended by staff***

A higher percentage (40%) of the respondents attended training once, 20% of them attended two times, 15% attended three times, 18% of the respondents attended no training at all and 7% attended more than three trainings which reveals that highest number of staff in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove attended training at least once (Table 3).

### ***Hindrances to staff development***

Result from the study (Table 4) indicates that the most common hindrance to staff development was inadequate fund (64%), while the other challenges such as Government policy, lack of incentives, and lack of training had 29%, 5% and 2% respectively; conclusions can be drawn from this that inadequate fund was the greatest hindrance to staff development in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove.

**Table 3:** The number of training attended by staff

<b>Training Attended</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Never	8	18
1	18	40
2	9	20
3	7	15
Above 3	3	7
Total	45	100

**Source:** Field Survey, 2016

**Table 4:** Hindrances to staff development

<b>Hindrances</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Inadequate funding	29	6
Government policy	13	29
Lack of incentives to staff	2	4
Lack of training	1	2
Total	45	100.0

**Source:** Field Survey, 2016

### ***Hindrances to staff development in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove***

Table 4 presents the hindrances to staff development in the Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove. The result indicates that the major hindrance to staff development was inadequate funding (64%), while the next most important challenge was adjudged to be Government policy is (29%). Lack of incentives to staff (5%) and lack of training (2%) were considered the least important hindrances by the respondents. This is in tandem with the findings of Svetlana *et al.*, (2011) who reported that

inadequate funding was the most typical problem of a modern Protected Area. According to the authors, there are several ways to solve such a problem. Innovative conservation finance mechanisms can be investigated (business planning, payments for ecosystem services, environmental funds etc.) specially designed to attract additional funding and/or raise the cost-effectiveness of Protected Area operations. To benefit from these schemes, the manager needs to understand economics, financial management, strategic and financial planning, marketing and legal issues. Also, new sources of funding may be available. Fundraising skills are therefore required as well as project management and reporting. The result is also consistent with the findings of Browne (2013) who listed hindrances to effective training and development as budget, lack of belief by management in the training and development of their employees as well as lack of time, funding and staffing for training. This is also in tandem with Flynn *et al.* (1995) who stated how costly it is to train employees but eventually give back more than it took in the long run. Furthermore, Brown *et al.* (2001) opined that capacity-building depends on financial, human and information resources, as well as the flexibility of planning and strategic functions.

Lack of training was also a hindrance to staff development. This is tandem with the findings of Hockings *et al.* (2006) that expertise of protected area professionals was found to be lacking in several key areas, including natural resource management principles, research and monitoring techniques, general leadership and communication skills, and the ability to understand and provide adequate opportunities for the involvement of local stakeholders in management decisions.

### ***Capacity-building for staff in Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove***

Thomas (1997) stated that it is very difficult for an employee to perform well at the job place without any pre-training and re-training. Findings from the study showed that staff were sent for training about once in five years. Training undertaken by staff included international (2%), national (58%) and local (40%) training. Information obtained revealed that National trainings available for Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove staff covered orientation and schedules of their duties, knowledge of natural museums, in-house seminars, and national seminars and workshops. Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove also collaborated with some universities like Osun state university and National Open University of Nigeria for trainings of staff.

Personal communication with the staff of the Grove revealed that capacity building had been on the increase until recently when it declined due to the economic situation of the country. This is consistent with the findings of Brown *et al.* (2001) that capacity building is dynamic and multidimensional, difficult to capture since it is never static, and can improve and also decline.

## **Conclusion**

Capacity building has become central to the development of protected area staff. Training and re-training are key factors and important for good performance and effective delivery of conservation goals and objectives of the protected areas. The study found that there were nine (9) departments/units and seventy-four personnel of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments that took care of the Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove in Osun State, Nigeria. They were

the ones in charge of the management of the Grove. A greater proportion of the staff were trained once in five years, mainly through national training programmes. Funding was the major hindrance to staff development and capacity building for staff of the Grove.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings from the study, the following are therefore recommended:

It is becoming increasingly obvious that government alone may not be able to finance most projects in Nigeria. Private institutions should therefore be brought on board to aid in financing the Grove toward better management as well as better sponsoring of training for Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove staff. Training should be intensified through better collaboration with other institution. Staff should also be committed to training by seeking grants and aids from international organizations.

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