



Vanessa Muianga Marine Ecosystem Manager at Maputo National Park



First Female Level 2 WIO-COMPAS accredited
Mozambican

What is your role in MPA Management?

I'm the Marine Ecosystem Manager at Maputo National Park. As a manager, I work directly with:

- ✓ Administration (contracts, payments, logistics, assets, among others);
- ✓ Marine conservation (monitoring programs, restoration, research, etc.);
- ✓ Support for the monitoring, community, tourism, and infrastructure sectors.

How long have you worked in MPA Management?

I have been working at the National Park since 2022.



Maputo National Park coastline
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What was your first role, and how did you get to where you are now?

I have a degree in Marine Biology from Eduardo Mondlane University. My career began with an internship at the Natural History Museum, where I was assigned to the natural sciences department. I had the opportunity to work with the collection process of fish and invertebrates, learning everything from identification, cataloging, and conservation for museum collections. After my wonderful time at the NHM, I had the opportunity to join the Marine Megafauna Foundation (MMF). It was a very good experience. I received several training sessions on megafauna, with an emphasis on whale sharks and manta rays... I also received diving training, BRUV training... and identification of coral reef fish, monitoring, and underwater photography. In October 2022, I joined Maputo National Park for the Blue Action Fund Kuvikela Project. It brought a different perspective beyond science, the positioning of conservation, and monitoring. One of the biggest challenges was working with law enforcement (which was all new, really), focusing more on legislation, and balancing it with management measures for biodiversity conservation. As the Park Warden says, **“think like conservation, not science.”** In three years of work, I can confirm that Marine Protected Areas are special places and require constant monitoring and frequent studies to assess the resources and ecosystems that exist there and establish management measures to ensure their vitality.

What would a typical day in your job look like?

A normal work day always starts very early (working with rangers means you practically don't sleep), but it's summarized in field activities and a little bit of office work, as there are activities going on and my main function is to ensure that all activities (monitoring, law enforcement, administration) are fully operational.



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What is your favourite thing about your job?

This one is quite difficult, because at first it was more about monitoring artisanal and recreational fishing—working with fishermen and communities is always challenging, and I enjoy it. But monitoring sea turtles is a magical time; observing the entire process from nesting to hatching, accompanying the newborns at sea, is rewarding. I also learned to enjoy working with mangroves and grasses; I was already passionate about coral reefs, so it's really hard to decide.



What is the biggest challenge you face in your work?

Working with 90% men, most of whom are rangers... Establishing a balance between respect and consideration for the position I hold and the gender issue.

Congratulations on your WIOCOMPAS Level 2 award!

Would you recommend that your colleagues apply for L1 and L2 accreditation in future?

Yes, definitely, I would recommend it to my inspection colleagues, colleagues from NGOs who support the work with the Community Fishing Councils, as they work directly in marine protected areas and this recognition will be of great value to them.

How are you planning to adapt your work/share your learning with others in your team?

This knowledge is already being shared directly with my colleagues. However, I intend to develop an improvement plan with the Park Warden to benefit the Maputo National Park.

Do you have any feedback to share on your experience with WIOCOMPAS? Or any tips that may help others going through the process in future?

The process is complex, the evaluation is intense, because there's nothing more difficult than talking about yourself. But if I managed to go through the entire process when I was 8 months pregnant, I invite everyone (women in particular) to believe that anything done with dedication can yield good results. **Always challenge yourself.**



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