



Introduction

With the establishment of UNESCO's World Heritage Convention (WHC), there was a change in the management of heritage globally. Through this Convention, UNESCO designed and implemented the first global system of managing the world's cultural and natural heritage, the World Heritage List (Di Giovine, 2009). Since the adoption of the WHC in 1972, over 900 sites have been listed, both natural and cultural, as representative of the world's universal heritage.

The Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre, Mr Kishore Rao, called for a review of the process of identification, nomination and inscription of World Heritage sites (Rao, 2010). Rao recognises a disconnect between the founding principal of international cooperation, 'the heart of the Convention' and its application today (Rao, 2010, p. 164). There is a lack of collaboration, at the international level from Advisory Bodies, with State Parties in the initial stages of site identification and the creation and review of tentative lists.

Importantly, a lack of general cooperation from the international through to the local level was noted in *The Heritage-scape – UNESCO, World Heritage and Tourism*. It is the local level cooperation that will be the primary focus for this paper, as the local communities' role in heritage management and tourism development in heritage areas, has changed in the last few decades (Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher, 2005; Millar, 2006).

Protecting heritage

The establishment and management of protected areas is the focus for much contemporary research (Jenkins & Wearing, 2003; Puhakka, Sarkkib, Cottrell & Siikamaki, 2009; Strickland-Munro, Allison & Moore, 2009), as the benefits reach local and international communities. Specifically, the spotlight has been on local communities and residents, and their perceptions of, and involvement in, protected

area management and tourism development (Jimura, 2010; Li, Wu & Cai, 2008; Nicholas, Thapa & Ko, 2009; Simmons, 1994; Simpson, 2008; Ying & Zhou, 2007).

The involvement of community in the World Heritage program has recently been acknowledged and documented. In 2007, the 'Pacific Appeal,' to the WHC saw *community* added to the strategic directions¹ for World Heritage in the Pacific region. This shift in focus from the international organisation has aided the justification of local involvement in the establishment of policy formulation.

The Pacific region has specifically been identified as underrepresented on the World Heritage List (UNESCO, 2010e). In 2009, the WHC adopted a regionally focused program designed to rectify this underrepresentation and increase the Pacific's uptake of World Heritage: The World Heritage Pacific 2009 Programme. In 2004, a workshop was held in Tongariro National Park, New Zealand, establishing the Five Year Action Plan for the Implementation of the World Heritage 2009 Pacific Programme (UNESCO, 2004). This was designed to assist Pacific Island Member States with the challenges they face regarding the uptake of the World Heritage Convention. Figure 1 is a timeline of World Heritage in the Pacific, demonstrating the important changes in the region.

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a South Pacific island nation and the home to the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges, currently a site on the Tentative List for World Heritage consideration (UNESCO, 2010b). The Kokoda Track runs through the Owen Stanley Ranges and was the scene of a tough and bloody battle between Japan and PNG, Australia and New Zealand in World War II (Wearing, Grabowski, Chatterton & Ponting, 2009). This site also represents an important tourism product for the people of PNG and a source of development for the 14 tribes that reside on the 96 km track (Wearing et al 2009).

Is Kokoda ready for World Heritage status?

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¹ The Strategic Objectives, or 'Five C's' as they are called include credibility, conservation, capacity-building, communication and community were included in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention in 2008: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines>

Local communities and landowners of the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges are central to all current and future development programs. The concept of World Heritage is a component of development the communities need to understand and accept, if the process is going to begin. Currently, the level of understanding in the communities is low, (according to the spokesperson for the landowners) despite the message being given to the landowners.

The local people were informed in the urban areas, especially, Port Moresby city, of the possibility of enlisting the Kokoda Track and the Owen Stanley Ranges area under the World Heritage listing. This information has been communicated to the people along the Kokoda Track. According to my assessment, all the people within communities along the Kokoda Track do not understand what World Heritage Listing means and do not know what the benefits are of making the Kokoda Track a World Heritage listing area. (Community Member, 2010).

Other stakeholders have confirmed this lack of understanding on the

communities' behalf. There is confusion in the region about PNG tentatively listing the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges; particular groups and communities actually believe the area is already a World Heritage site. This confusion is common without a comprehensive understanding of the procedures of the WHC (Di Giovine, 2009). The lack of understanding spans locals, to government representatives and other key stakeholders, who do not fully understand the scope of the concept.

Numerous interviewees identified World Heritage as a low priority for local communities, with basic services such as food supply, health and education at the forefront. A representative from the Kokoda Track Authority stated that:

If you live in a village, what your concerns are is health, education, just basic services. So, a concept of World Heritage, just in your Maslow hierarchy of needs is just so far beyond what they are interested in. (Kokoda Track Authority, 2010).

The same person stated that it is hard to see how World Heritage could make

a big difference in the lives of the villagers. This is a valid concern and addressing this issue will be a primary focus for the government if they do wish to pursue a protection plan and a future nomination of the region.

Some of the interviewees for this study mentioned that some of the benefits of World Heritage listing were associated with tourism growth and international marketing. Reference was made to broadening the scope of visitors and diversifying tourist markets. Additionally, some interviewees juxtaposed increased tourism from World Heritage listing with income generation for the local communities. While both these options are possible with site designation, there is still limited understanding of the breadth of benefits and effects associated with a listing. Education and realisation of the full range of benefits will need to be a focus in the development of a management plan for the region.

Responses from two private sector representatives varied widely in relation to World Heritage understanding. At one extreme, there was a lack of understanding of the WHC and what the real benefits of a designated World

Figure 1 Pacific World Heritage Timeline

2002 – World Heritage Committee adopts the Four C's (Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-building and Communication as Strategic Objectives for the World Heritage Convention at its 26th session in Budapest (UNESCO, 2004)

2004 - Action Plan for the Implementation of the World Heritage Pacific 2009 Programme produced at Pacific Workshop in Tongariro National Park, New Zealand (UNESCO, 2004)

2006 - Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Range is inscribed on PNG's Tentative List (Department of Water, 2008)

2008 - Pacific Islands World Heritage Workshop in Cairns regarding capacity-building for heritage site management (UNESCO, 2010d)

2009 - Pacific Islands World Heritage Workshop in Maupiti, French Polynesia (UNESCO, 2010c)

2008 - UNESCO produces first Country Programming Document on PNG (States, 2009)

2010: Phoenix Islands Protected Area, Kiribati inscribed on World Heritage List (UNESCO, 2010i)

2002

2003 - World Heritage Convention launches Pacific 2009 Programme with focus on The Four C's (UNESCO, 2010j)

2004

2005 – World Heritage Pacific Regional Workshops in Vanuatu produced Thematic Framework for World Cultural Heritage in the Pacific (UNESCO, 2010f)

2006

2007 – The Appeal to the World Heritage Committee from Pacific Island State Parties. This 'Pacific Appeal' included initiated the inclusion of a fifth Strategic Objective, *Community* to be added to the Four C's (UNESCO, 2007)

2008

2008 - Chief Roi Mata's Domain, Vanuatu inscribed on World Heritage List (UNESCO, 2010g)

2008 – Kuk Early Agricultural Site, PNG inscribed on World Heritage List (UNESCO, 2010h)

2010

2010 -onwards: Implementation of Pacific World Heritage Action Plan 2010-2015 (UNESCO, 2010e)

Heritage area would be to the region. Conversely, the other interviewee appeared to have an appreciation of World Heritage, yet articulated that designation of any area in PNG is not something that will happen anytime in the near future. This second interviewee believed that the 'big brother' relationship between Australia and PNG is the barrier to progress in relation to heritage and a potential listing.

The Australian government demonstrates a clear understanding of the application of World Heritage and has successfully inscribed 18 sites on the World Heritage List (UNESCO, 2010a). The government's role in the WHC is to demonstrate leadership in the Pacific and one of their key goals is to assist the PNG Government in their uptake of the Convention. Following the guidelines of the bilateral agreement between the two countries, Australia's knowledge of the WHC has been requested by PNG and it is their obligation to guide and assist them in their journey to World Heritage nomination.

A statement from a member of the Australian Government taskforce clearly expressed that the process of World Heritage listing is a long one, where a nomination is an accolade for a job well done.

So that it's not looked at in just a, 'let's just nominate this place for World Heritage listing' it's looked at from the ground up and that you know, your longer term goal is... So in a sense the World Heritage Convention... and an understanding of that in any sophisticated way is a journey, along with most other Melanesian countries anyway still need to go, and we're sort of very well aware of the dimensions of that journey that they need to take and we're committed to assisting them. (Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2010)

The following two statements clearly confirm what lies at the centre of this research: PNG is a unique case. Due to customary land ownership and the current levels of development, there is no textbook definition of sustainable development to fit this region. Expert

assistance in relation to developing a customised regional strategy plan for designating World Heritage sites in PNG is needed. This plan can potentially be adapted and applied to other Pacific island nations to assist them in their uptake of the WHC and the process of World Heritage site designation.

PNG is very aware of the need to develop and grow World Heritage in a way in which local landowners who own 97% of the land in PNG are going to be comfortable or at least, come to terms with the concept of world heritage, what it means, the fact that it doesn't mean losing their land rights. (DEWHA 2010)

We've got to come up with tangible benefits. This World Heritage listing is a concept that suits developed countries really well. (Kokoda Track Authority, 2010)

Planning for World Heritage

Capacity within PNG in terms of progressing towards a nomination is probably going to take a number of years (DEWHA 2010). Nonetheless, planning stages are visible and clearly the current focus is environmental protection, landowner involvement and participation, and the role tourism will play in the potential World Heritage area. These three areas will be central in developing an overall management strategy for the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Range region.

However, a nomination for World Heritage status for the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Range is some time away. The issues and obstacles relevant to this region are vastly different from those identified in World Heritage literature as PNG sits within the preparatory phase of World Heritage designation. This exploratory research into pre-World Heritage designation demonstrates the complexities of protected area management and tourism development in a region that still practises a system of customary landownership. Despite this, efforts are being made to prepare for a potential listing and certain stakeholders are more focused on this and capacity-building for long-term benefits and sustainability.

PNG really hasn't begun to do any form of assessment in the preliminary sense of the biodiversity values of the region and we're sort of assisting in building capacity within the Department of Environment and Conservation, which does chair the National and World Heritage Committee within PNG as well as the national taskforce of the sustainable development of the region. Our Joint Understanding does refer to assisting PNG with an implementation of a feasibility study of the region for possible World Heritage values, which it would need to look at the outcomes of that study before it decides whether or not to progress a nomination. (DEWHA 2010)

The feasibility study being undertaken has an environmental focus. The conservation and protection of the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges were key themes established by both governments in the study. The spokesperson for The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) in PNG, a World Heritage and Protected Area Specialist, highlighted some of the future steps required to protect this region:

If you're talking about steps there is going to be lots of many small steps because firstly before any nomination, the area must have a protection regime in place and a management plan. Before there is any protection there needs to be consultation between each and every group of customary land owners and that will be a slow, slow process. Now the way that it would probably take place is the Department of Environment and Conservation would consult with customary landowners to see if they are prepared to commit to protecting their land in a formal way, probably under the Conservation Areas Act. That consultation of course, and any agreement must include arrangements regarding any assistance, or financial or livelihood aspects to benefit the landowners. (DEC 2010)

Sustainable forms of tourism are going to play a key role in the provision of benefits to local landowners however, for investment to occur certainty is an important consideration:

It's very difficult to provide certainty and it's very difficult to get investment because...it's variable. Investment requires certainty. Sustainable tourism requires certainty. Our challenge is to provide that certainty and that's what we are struggling with. (Kokoda Track Authority 2010)

Pederson (2002, p. 33) notes that the 'interaction between tourism development and a community has been shown to be difficult to predict, with few consistent relationships or patterns' (Pedersen, 2002, p. 33). This highlights the degree of work required if sustainable tourism is going to exist and aid the process of World Heritage designation and management. Understanding these complexities and focusing on them has clearly been a goal of both federal government agencies and the local agency in the region.

The delicate balance between tourism growth and sustainable management is fundamental in a potential World Heritage area. It is important to recognise without overestimating tourism potential, and avoid reliance on unsustainable economic growth. In this region, this is a valid concern considering the delicate natural environment and the type of tourism developing in the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges.

As a means of supporting the World Heritage...protected area, (tourism) is significant but not major at least in the case of the Owen Stanley Ranges. The Owen Stanley Ranges are a very rugged mountainous landscape access is fairly...well very poor so that limits the range of tourism opportunities within the area. (DEC 2010)

There needs to be careful communication of this limitation and appropriate tourism growth strategies to be designed accordingly.

What we're doing here in Papua New Guinea, as much as through necessity as anything else, it's got to be built from the bottom up so that the last step in the whole process is a listing. And that's way off in the future in most cases (DEC 2010).

The implementation of projects and development programs, focused on increasing livelihoods are actually building capacity and competency working towards the goal of a World Heritage area.

As in most cases, there is no standardised framework to follow. The case of World Heritage in PNG is complex and unique, with a number of stakeholders, different development programs and two governments involved. These factors, juxtaposed with cultural traditions and customary landownership legislation, make this case multifaceted. At this point in time, little research has been undertaken in the area of pre-World Heritage designation, leaving countries with little or no representation on the World Heritage List without assistance or much guidance.

In this case study, planning for World Heritage in PNG can be greatly assisted by Australia's past experience and knowledge of the Convention. Currently there is little assistance from the WHC and its Advisory Bodies to countries in the preparatory phases leading towards World Heritage nomination. This was identified through findings in this study and on a global scale by the Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre suggesting 'a new paradigm to overcome the assessed limitations, principally by enhancing international cooperation to marshal and provide the best technical knowledge upstream of and throughout the process of identifying, nominating and including properties on the World Heritage List' (Rao, 2010, p. 161). The Pacific region lacks representation on the World Heritage List and efforts were made with the development of the 1994 WHC Global Strategy to rectify this. Whilst this has aided more developed countries and those who have already ratified the Convention to list additional sites, little progress has been made in the smaller, less developed island nations. The introduction of the Pacific Programme and more importantly the workshops of 2008 and 2009 (shown in figure 1) are particularly encouraging for countries like PNG, and the future development of World Heritage areas in this region.

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by Ian J. Mann



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