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GENDER PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF MT. CALAVITE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY AND MT. ARAYAT PROTECTED LANDSCAPE IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract:

This study examines the gender responsiveness of management practices in two Protected Areas (PAs) in Luzon, Philippines: Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary (MCWS) and Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape (MAPL). Using a descriptive-quantitative approach, data were gathered through surveys and external assessments to evaluate the gender sensitivity of Protected Area Management Plans (PAMPs), staff composition, and gender-related initiatives. Findings reveal that although both PAs are rated as gender-aware in their PAMPs, gender imbalances persist in staffing, particularly in roles such as Forest Rangers, Information Officers, and Forest Attendants, which are occupied exclusively by one gender. Operational gaps were noted despite gender-responsive plans, especially in MAPL, where some staff believe men are not adequately informed about Republic Act No. 9710 (Magna Carta of Women), indicating a need for training. Funding limitations were also found to hinder the implementation of women-empowerment programs. The study recommends developing policies to eliminate gender bias in job assignments and promoting equal participation of all genders in PA management. Bridging the gap between planning and practice is essential to achieving inclusive, equitable, and sustainable conservation outcomes.

Keywords: Gender And Development, Gender Equity, Protected Area Management

INTRODUCTION

A proper and well-structured management of a PA is vital in ensuring a holistic development and conservation not just in a certain PA but also in its adjacent community. One way to ensure sustainable management is through fostering gender parity in the workplace. As Devi et al. (2024) stated, equality among genders is a key to fighting and abolishing gender-based violence and discrimination. An equal provision of honor, opportunities, and status shall be given to all regardless of gender. Hence, women and men must have equal opportunities in terms of management in a certain area.

Furthermore, the Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary was classified as a PA under the wildlife sanctuary classification, pursuant to Republic Act 7586, or the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act. This classification makes it an ideal site for research and exploration due to its rich biodiversity, minimal anthropogenic disturbances, and potential to provide vital information on



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conservation approaches (Racoma et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the Philippine Congress enacted Republic Act No. 11684 of 2022, or the Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape Act. This law reclassified Mt. Arayat from a natural park to a PA, making it the first and only legislated protected area in the province of Pampanga. The reclassification underscores the importance of conserving its resources and developing its maximum potential for recreation and ecotourism activities (Amatus et al., 2023).

In fulfilling the mandates and goals of PA management, it is essential to promote gender equity across all levels of organizational operation. Doing so not only enhances inclusivity but also contributes to eliminating gender-based violence and discrimination within the management system. This paper examines the gender responsiveness of two PAs in Luzon, Philippines.

As the 2030 deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approaches, the Philippines continues to face significant challenges in realizing Goal 5: Gender Equality (Joudane, 2024). Regalado (2024) reports that women in the country still experience workplace discrimination, including unequal pay, limited access to training and education, and underrepresentation in leadership positions. Addressing gender participation and responsiveness in organizational structures is therefore vital to advancing the SDG agenda and fostering equitable, inclusive development.

This study aims to assess the gender responsiveness of the management and workplace practices within the two aforementioned protected areas. Specifically, it seeks to:

- a) Evaluate the gender responsiveness of the PA management plan and the accomplishment report for the second semester of Fiscal Year 2024;
- b) Determine the roles of both men and women in the management of the PAs.
- c) Identify gender-related issues faced by personnel in PA management; and
- d) Examine the practices and programs implemented by the Protected Area Management Office (PAMO) that promote gender equality and responsiveness.

The overarching goal of this study is to foster gender-responsive participation and recommend strategic initiatives that can be integrated into conservation efforts. Ensuring gender parity and promoting inclusive programs can significantly enhance the effectiveness of PA management. The findings of this study serve as a basis for future project implementation, management planning, and the creation of inclusive, equitable workplace environments. Additionally, it aims to support institutions such as the PAMO in eradicating gender-based discrimination and harassment while cultivating a gender-responsive organizational culture.

METHODS

The study covered the management of two protected areas, namely: Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape (MAPL) in the province of Pampanga, and Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary (MCWS) on the island of Mindoro.



Figure 1. Location Map of the study area



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The study utilized a descriptive-quantitative method in collecting data on the gender responsiveness of the management of the two PAs. The respondents include all personnel directly involved in managing the PAs, comprising a total of 33 staff members from both PAs (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of respondents from the selected Protected Areas in Luzon, Philippines

Protected Area	Respondents
Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape	16
Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary	17
Total:	33

Four external evaluators were also surveyed to assess the PAMP for the fiscal year 2025 and the 2024 second-semester accomplishment report. The evaluators were the designated Gender and Development (GAD) focal persons from various offices, namely the Forest Management Bureau (DENR-FMB), Urban and Biodiversity Research Development and Extension Center (ERDB-UBRDEC), Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) Dinalupihan, Bataan, and CENRO San Jose, Occidental Mindoro.

In selecting the external evaluators, non-probability sampling was utilized. Nikolopoulou (2022) stated that non-probability sampling utilizes non-random factors such as the availability of the prospective respondents. Hence, the available yet credible evaluators from any bureaus and offices under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) can be interviewed, if they are either GAD focal persons or the heads of offices.

This study utilized a survey questionnaire specifically designed to achieve the study objectives. The survey questionnaire consists of both open-ended and closed-ended questions, incorporating a Likert scale. It is divided into sections, including the respondent's profile, assessment on the gender responsiveness of the management plan and accomplishment report, determination of gender-related issues and activities/programs being conducted, and identification of the roles of PAs' staff.

Moreover, the second part of the questionnaire is intended for the evaluator of the PAMP for the fiscal year 2025 and the 2024 second-semester accomplishment report. This part of the instrument was adopted and modified from Anariba et al. (2024).

The data gathered were analyzed using descriptive statistics. For the analysis of responses, a simple frequency distribution, percentage, and mean were used to account for the answers of the respondents. In interpreting the results from the external evaluators, the researchers applied the following criteria and score interpretation, adopted from the study of Upara and Chusanachoti (2023), where constant and uniform intervals were used to minimize bias. Specifically, intervals of 0.74 and 0.75 were applied (Table 2).

Table 2. Score interpretation for the rating scale, as adopted from Upara and Chusanachoti (2023)

Mean	Interval	Interpretation
1.0 - 1.74	0.74	Gender incipient
1.75 - 2.49	0.74	Becoming gender aware
2.50 - 3.24	0.74	Gender aware
3.25 - 4.00	0.75	Gender Transformative

RESULT AND DISCUSSION



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Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (PA Staff). The gender distribution of MAPL staff reveals a relatively small difference in the number of staff members, with 9 males (56.25%) and 7 females (43.75%). In contrast, the gender distribution of MCWS staff shows a clear dominance of male staff, with 12 males (70.59%) and only 5 female employees (29.41%) (Figure 2). These results indicate a disparity in gender representation among PA staff and reflect a global trend in which women are underrepresented across various sectors. According to IUCN (2020), this underrepresentation limits women's participation in decision-making processes, particularly in environmental sectors. Cultural norms and household responsibilities often hinder women's involvement, resulting in their needs and perspectives being overlooked in natural resource management (IUCN, 2020).

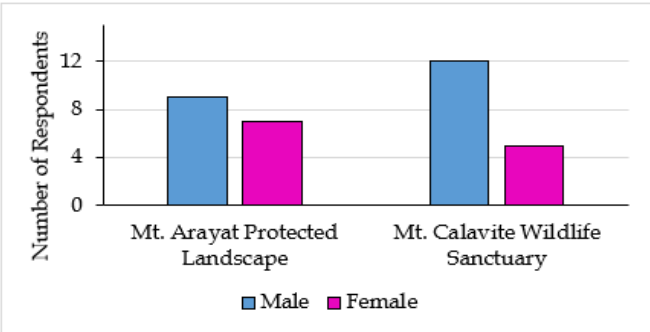


Figure 2. Gender distribution of the respondents from the selected Protected Areas in Luzon, Philippines

In terms of the marital status of MAPL and MCWS staff, result indicates that the largest portion of MAPL staff consists of eight (50%) non-married individuals. In contrast, the marital status of MCWS staff is illustrated differently, with a larger portion being married (58.82%) (Figure 3). In the study by Atif and Zubairi (2018), they found a significant difference between married and single employees in terms of job satisfaction and work-life balance. However, in contrast, there was no significant difference in organizational commitment. This result suggests that, regardless of marital status, an employee's commitment to the organization and its success depends primarily on the individual.

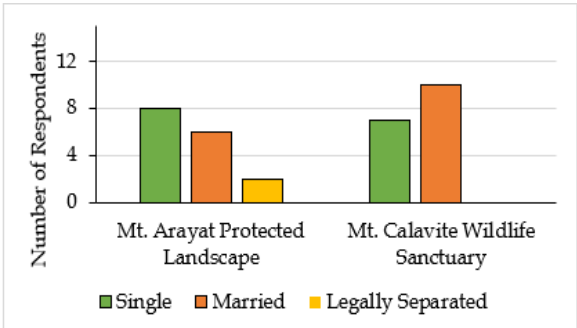


Figure 3. Civil Status of the Personnel from the Selected Protected Areas in Luzon, Philippines

The result on the educational attainment of MAPL staff reveals that 12 (75%) staff members are college graduates (Figure 4). Similarly, the educational attainment of MCWS staff indicates that the largest portion, comprising 10 (58.82%) staff, are also college graduates. It reflects the



qualifications or job requirements for various positions within a PA. Positions, such as Protected Area Superintendent, Assistant Protected Area Superintendent, Forester II, Forest Technician I, and Environmental Management Specialist, among others, typically require a college degree to be qualified, such as forestry, agroforestry, environmental science, and other allied fields. This result is supported by the study of Cortado (2024), where college graduates with a program in forestry enter various fields, including forestry-related jobs, at least six months after their graduation, with a primary consideration of the salaries and benefits they might have.

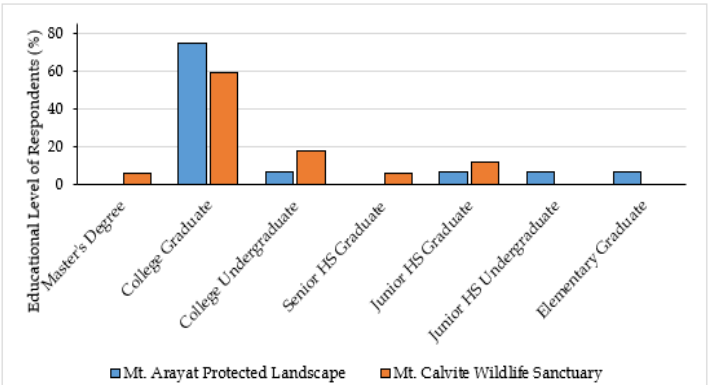


Figure 4. Educational Attainment of the Respondents from the Selected Protected Areas in Luzon, Philippines

Gender Responsiveness of the Pas’ PAMP and Accomplishment Report. Both PAs were generally assessed as gender-aware across most evaluation categories, except for the category on gender roles and power relations, where the PAMP of the MCWS was rated as becoming gender-aware (Figure 5). It indicates that while both areas demonstrate a commitment to integrating gender considerations into their management practices, there are still gaps, particularly in addressing the dynamics of gender roles and power structures. The recognition of MCWS as becoming gender-aware in this category highlights a transitional phase, where gender equity is acknowledged but not yet fully embedded in policy and practice. These findings reflect the ongoing efforts and challenges in promoting gender equality within environmental governance. Further, the classification of these PAMPs as gender-aware signifies proactive efforts by the PA management bodies to foster gender equity. It aligns with the findings of Sarmiento and Pranitasari (2024), who emphasized the importance of developing and advocating for policies that support women across all sectors, particularly in leadership roles within political, economic, and social spheres. The gender-aware rating implies that the PAMPs are moving beyond mere recognition of gender issues toward implementing inclusive and equitable policy measures that aim to address this timely issue.

Moreover, both PAMPs were evaluated as gender-aware in the category of gendered use and values, reflecting an equitable distribution of and access to resources among all genders. This result is significant when contrasted with the study of Alabi et al. (2024), which reported that men in Nigeria have significantly greater access to land and other resources than women. Alabi et al. (2024) also noted that education can be a key factor in bridging gender gaps in resource access. In this context, the results from the two PAs suggest that gender equity in resource management can be achieved through an intensive and feasible policy design and inclusive practices.



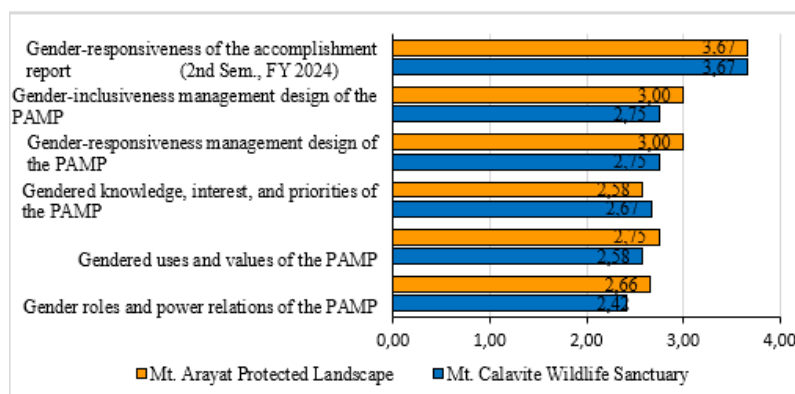


Figure 5. Gender responsiveness of the 2nd Semester Accomplishment Report (FY 2024) and the Protected Area Management Plan (FY 2025) of the Selected Protected Areas in Luzon, Philippines

In terms of gendered knowledge, interests, and priorities, the gender-aware rating further underscores the efforts of both PAs to eliminate gender bias and stereotyping in their management approaches. The PAMPs of both areas show a commitment to valuing the interests and professional development of all genders, especially women. This approach promotes inclusive participation and the creation of equal opportunities within environmental management. As noted by Galsanjigmed and Sekiguchi (2023), gender-based stereotypes can limit women’s professional growth and contribute to unequal treatment. Therefore, the prioritization of inclusive knowledge systems within these PAMPs is a step toward dismantling such barriers.

With regard to gender inclusiveness and responsiveness, both PAMPs were again rated as gender-aware, reflecting an acknowledgment of the importance of gender equity in planning and implementation. It includes the consideration of sex-disaggregated data, gender norms, and affirmative action strategies. These findings support the conclusions of Son Hing et al. (2023), who argued that initiatives such as equal employment opportunities and inclusive policies can reduce gender disparities, provided they are implemented with sufficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Interestingly, the gender-aware rating in the category of gender-inclusive management contrasts with the findings of Budiono et al. (2024), who documented that forest resource management decisions are still largely dominated by men in many contexts, often due to patriarchal cultural norms. In contrast, the findings in the present study suggest a shift toward more inclusive decision-making processes, at least within the context of the two PAs examined.

Lastly, the 2nd Semester Accomplishment Reports for both PAs were rated as gender-aware, indicating that the implementation of management activities was aligned with gender-transformative goals. It suggests that gender equality was not only integrated into planning but also reflected in the actual accomplishments and outputs of the protected areas. This outcome echoes the conclusions of Chetia and Dutta (2024), who asserted that achieving women's full potential requires collective societal support for gender equality and empowerment.

Various roles of men and women in the management of Protected Areas. The data gathered on the various roles of men and women in the two PAs reveals that the Park Ranger position is predominantly held by men, which accounts for 64.71% of the total staff of MCWS and 18.75% for MAPL. However, it is worth noting that the PA technical staff consists of only two men in MAPL and two women in MCWS. This gender imbalance, particularly in technical roles, reflects global trends in conservation, where men often dominate field-based positions, while women are underrepresented in technical and decision-making roles and are typically assigned to office or

administrative work. In addition, Clabots (2013) stated that gender stereotypes hinder women's participation in Marine Protected Area management, and that enhancing women's empowerment should go hand in hand with fostering societal acceptance of changing gender roles. Moreover, Dayaday et al. (2025) found in their study that although the individual pay gap seems minor, the aggregate data showed a significant bias favoring men over women.

Additionally, they cited that parenting responsibilities hinder women's career advancement. On the other hand, in the study of Hilavano et al. (2024), it was revealed that majority of their respondent especially men, acknowledge the critical involvement of women in the management of Forest Over Limestone (FOL) in their study area, however they have concluded that there is a limited literature on the role of gender and age in the participation in forest governance and it is also essential to create and enforce policies and programs that empower women to take part in the governance of FOL, while promoting balanced representation of both men and women across different age groups in the management of FOL. Overall, the present study provides insight into the gender dynamics, role distribution, and disparities within these PAs.

Table 3. Roles of Men and Women in MAPL and MCWS

Position/Designation in the Protected Area	Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape		Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary	
	Man	Woman	Man	Woman
Park Attendant				1
Forest technician I		1		
Park Maintenance Foreman	1			
Forest Ranger	2	1		
Forester II		1		
Asst. Protected Area Superintendent		1		
Protected Area Superintendent	1			1
Environmental Management Specialist		3	1	1
Park Ranger	3		11	
PA Technical Staff	2			2

Gender-related issues faced by both men and women in the management of the Protected Areas. Overall, the staff members of the PAs perceived that the listed issues and concerns regarding gender and development are not significantly present or experienced in their workplace (Table 3). It is worth noting that the majority of staff from both PAs strongly agreed that there is no gender-based bullying in their workplace, the PA management has equal recognition to men and women, both staff and visitors, and women and men are allowed to lead a team within the PA management. Furthermore, the PA management is inclusive and open to hiring individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+, and women have equal rights as men in terms of supervising the PA.

According to the data gathered on the gender-related issues perceived by the PAMO staff in the management of protected areas, six staff members agreed that the MAPL experiences a lack of awareness among male staff regarding RA 9710, also known as the Magna Carta for Women (Figure 7). In contrast, only one staff member agreed that MCWS faces the same issue. Moreover, at MAPL, one staff member noted that the protected area's Information, Education, and Communication



Campaign (IEC) does not adequately highlight men's contributions. Similarly, one staff member from MCWS perceived that men are not involved in the execution of IEC activities. Interestingly, one respondent from MCWS observed that men receive fewer designations or assignments compared to women.

Maintaining gender balance in the management of protected landscapes—such as by involving both men and women in IEC campaigns and fieldwork assignments—promotes both productivity and equity, rather than favoring one gender. As Tena (2015) stated, women have significant potential to enhance MPA management due to their family roles and unique strengths. Encouraging their participation is not about replacing men, but about recognizing their perspectives and contributions to improving the management of protected areas, including Marine Protected Areas.

These findings suggest that while gender discrimination against women may not be prevalent, there are issues that need to be addressed regarding men's participation in protected area management. The results highlight the importance of promoting gender equality and inclusivity in the success of the conservation efforts, as Clabots (2013) stated that a lack of gender considerations in protected area management can undermine long-term success.

Table 4. List of gender-related issues in the management of Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary and Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape, Philippines

ISSUE	Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape Percentage						Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary Percentage					
	5	4	3	2	1	No Answer	5	4	3	2	1	No Answer
1. Women have equal rights as men in terms of supervising the Protected Area	81.25	18.75	0	0	0	0	82.35	17.65	0	0	0	0
2. The women were being assigned to field activities.	62.5	37.5	0	0	0	0	64.71	29.41	5.88	0	0	0
3. Women and men are allowed to lead a certain team with regard to PA Management	75	25	0	0	0	0	70.59	29.41	0	0	0	0
4. The PA management is inclusive and open to hiring individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+	81.25	18.75	0	0	0	0	76.47	23.53	0	0	0	0
5. There is no gender-based bullying in the PA	75	25	0	0	0	0	47.06	47.06	0	0	0	5.88
6. There is equal participation of men and women.	62.5	37.5	0	0	0	0	70.59	29.41	0	0	0	0
7. There is enough support to promote GAD	62.5	37.5	0	0	0	0	70.59	29.41	0	0	0	0



and management of the PA												
8. The PA management has equal recognition of men and women, whether staff or visitors	75	25	0	0	0	0	76.47	23.53	0	0	0	0
9. The office/PA has enough funds that can be used to empower men/women	37.5	62.5	0	0	0	0	58.82	41.18	0	0	0	0
10. The facilities of the PA are gender-friendly (e.g., Office area, Toilet)	68.75	31.25	0	0	0	0	76.47	23.53	0	0	0	0

Legend: 5- Highly Agree, 4- Agree, 3- Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1- Highly Disagree

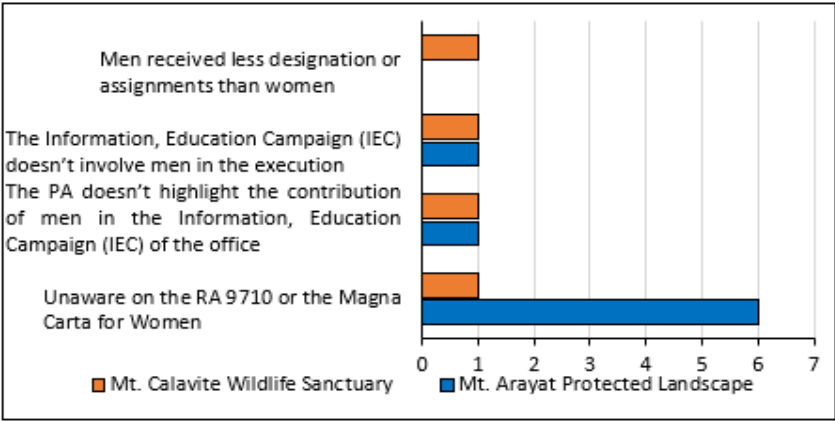


Figure 6. Gender-related issues in Mt. Calavite Wildlife Sanctuary and Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape, Philippines

Practices and programs of the Protected Area Management Office that promote gender responsiveness and equality. Both PAs are implementing robust strategies to ensure that management is gender-responsive and fosters gender equity. These strategies and programs are vital to ensure that both genders have equitable access to resources, their knowledge and opinions are equally considered, and equal opportunities for professional and personal growth are provided. Both PAs enable both genders to participate in seminars, trainings, and workshops, particularly those related to GAD. Specifically, MAPL has not only ensured attendance of its staff in these activities but also incorporated GAD into its PAMP, which was rated as gender-aware by the external evaluator.

Meanwhile, MCWS, in addition to attending seminars and workshops, consistently involves both genders in field activities, such as biodiversity monitoring and signage maintenance, with women being hired for positions tasked to conduct field activities, demonstrating the PA's commitment to gender inclusivity. The activities undertaken in the two protected areas align with the recommendations of Ahmad and Aushiq (2023), who emphasized the need for appropriate measures to empower women in decision-making, extension activities, and skills training. Their recommendations include promoting rural women's empowerment through training, education, and capacity building; acknowledging and rewarding women's contributions to natural resource management through incentives and recognition; and encouraging and supporting women's active



participation in the decision-making process for natural resource management. These strategies and practices are steps towards addressing gender disparities in the workplace and management. As Devi et al. (2024) stated, gender equality is crucial in addressing gender-based violence and discrimination. They also emphasized the importance of gender sensitization and mainstreaming in fostering equality between genders.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals a gender imbalance in staff composition within both the MAPL and MCWS, with the disparity more pronounced in the MCWS. While both protected areas have Protected Area Management Plans that are rated as gender-aware, certain positions, such as Forest Rangers, Information Officers, and Forest Attendants, remain exclusively occupied by one gender. The findings also highlight a need for MAPL to conduct training or workshops on Republic Act No. 9710, the Magna Carta of Women, as some personnel perceive a lack of awareness among male staff regarding the law's provisions. Furthermore, both protected areas are encouraged to allocate additional funds, where feasible, to support programs and initiatives that promote women's empowerment. Overall, while gender responsiveness is evident in the management plans, operational practices, particularly in the equitable distribution of roles, require further improvement. Based on these findings, the study recommends the formulation of a policy that addresses gender-based role segregation and promotes equal opportunities for all genders to contribute meaningfully to protected area management.

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