Terminal Evaluation of the GEF funded Expansion and Strengthening of the Protected Area Subsystem of the Outer Islands of Seychelles and its Integration into the Broader Land and Seascape

Executive Summary

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| **Programme Period:** | **2012 – 2016** | **Total resources required (total project funds):** | **$12,219,549** |
| **Atlas Award ID:** | **00075876** | **Total allocated resources (UNDP**  **managed funds)** | **$1,935,500** |
| **Project ID:** | **00087541** | **Regular:** | **$150,000** |
| **PIMS #:** | **4529** | **GEF (in award 75876)** | **$1,785,500** |
| **Start date:** | **August 2014** | **Other (partner managed resources)** |  |
| **End Date** | **August 2019** | **o Government :** | **$1,042,683** |
|  |  | **o CSOs (incl. Foundations) :** | **$9,131,866** |
| **Management**  **Arrangements** | **NIM** | **o Other (private sector)** | **$109,500** |
| **PAC Meeting Date** | **20 August 2013** |  |  |

**Project Description**

This Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the Expansion and Strengthening of the Protected Area Subsystem of the Outer Islands of the Seychelles and its Integration into the Broader land and Seascape (hence forward referred to as the Outer Island Project (OIP)) was undertaken to assess the achievement of the project’s results, and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from the project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

This five-year project was designed to promote the conservation and sustainable use of terrestrial and marine biodiversity in the Seychelles’ Outer Islands by expanding the protected areas system and strengthening protected area management. To enable biodiversity conservation, the project was to support the official establishment of five new protected areas in the Outer Islands, encompassing 1,237 hectares of terrestrial ecosystems and 76,258 hectares

of marine ecosystems. To enable sustainable land management, the project was to ensure the establishment of the necessary institutional framework (information and planning systems) to support integrated management of the new PA sites that not only addresses biodiversity conservation but also reduces land degradation impacts.

The project’s goal was to *conserve biodiversity in Seychelles Outer Islands through a protected area and sustainable development approach*.

The project objective was to *promote the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine biodiversity in the Seychelles’ Outer Islands by integrating a National Subsystem of Coastal and Marine Protected Areas (CMPAs) into the broader land- and seascape while reducing the pressures on natural resources from competing land uses.*

In order to achieve the above objective, the project’s interventions were organised under two components (outcomes):

• Outcome 1: Management effectiveness is enhanced within a sample of coastal and marine protected areas (IUCN Category I, II and VI) operating under innovative public- private-civil society partnership agreements.

• Outcome 2: Sustainable Development and CMPA management integrated into broader land/seascape in the Outer Islands

**Evaluation Ratings**

Table A presents a summary of the evaluation ratings. Overall the project is rate as

**Satisfactory**.

**Table A: TE Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for project**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Ratings:** | | | |
| **1. Monitoring and Evaluation** | ***rating*** | **2. IA & EA Execution** | ***rating*** |
| M&E design at entry | MU | Quality of UNDP Implementation | S |
| M&E Plan Implementation | S | Quality of Execution - Executing Agency | S |
| Overall quality of M&E | S | Overall quality of Implementation / Execution | S |
| **3. Assessment of Outcomes** | **rating** | **4. Sustainability** | **rating** |
| Relevance | HS | Financial resources: | L |
| Effectiveness | S | Socio-political: | L |
| Efficiency | S | Institutional framework and governance: | L |
| Overall Project Outcome Rating | S | Environmental: | ML |
|  |  | Overall likelihood of sustainability: | ML |

**Notes** : Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, I&E Execution, Relevance are rated on a 6-point rating scale: 6 = Highly Satisfactory (HS), 5 = Satisfactory (S), 4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS), 3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), 2 = Unsatisfactory (U), 1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability is rated on a 4-point scale: 4 = Likely (L), 3 = Moderately Likely (ML), 2 = Moderately Unlikely (MU), 1 = Unlikely (U)

Project progress towards development objectives is rated as Satisfactory (S). At the objective level overall targets are 95% achieved with 1 indicator surpassing its target and 2 indicators slightly missing their targets. To date, at outcome level, 13 indicators are 100% achieved and 1 indicator is 89% achieved.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is rated as Satisfactory overall. The M&E system at entry was

problematic primarily due to a weak Results Framework that was substantially revised following the midterm review (MTR) with changes made to 10 of the 17 indicators / targets. During project implementation M&E was in line with UNDP-GEF requirements. M&E was participatory with the Project Steering Committee (PSC) expanded to include many relevant institutions not been identified in the project document. The MTR is widely credited as having been a crucial mechanism for raising and addressing the difficulties facing the project at midterm. The project M&E system was well used to monitor risks and assumptions and project performance and to adapt to the challenges it faced.

Implementation and Execution is rated as Satisfactory overall. The OIP benefitted from strong and stable project management. The National Project Director (NPD) has been committed to the project and his close involvement in other key on-going initiatives such as the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), brought significant strategic benefit. The ability of the project to confront the difficulties it was facing at midterm and adapt to subsequently steer the project to a successful outcome is testament to the project management but also to the core project partners who were able to come together and resolved problems and change modes of working to the project’s benefit. The OIP built strong collaborative arrangements with the PSG (in particular the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC), Islands Development Company (IDC) and the Island Conservation Society (ICS)), which held regular biannual meetings, and other projects and initiatives. Of note is the relationship with the Marine Spatial Planning initiative, which has been mutually beneficial for both parties exploiting synergies and enhancing dialogue. The project has strong financial controls and financial management in place in line with UNDP and Government of Seychelles guidelines.

Project outcomes are rated as Satisfactory overall. The project was highly relevant addressing a national priority and is aligned with the country’s conservation and economic development strategies based on a blue economy and sustainable tourism development. The project was integral to the Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) initiative, the overarching strategic framework for marine conservation in the Seychelles. Furthermore, the project has relevance on the international stage with the growing awareness of the importance of a blue economy, marine conservation and the implications of climate change, heightened by the strong international interest in Seychelles’ marine conservation innovations including the SeyCATT, MSP and initiatives in coral restoration. Effectiveness is rated as Satisfactory. Despite the significant reworking of the Results Framework the project’s outcomes/outputs remained commensurate with what was originally planned. The project has successfully set the foundation for conservation and sustainable use of the OI through the comprehensive set of management tools produced and the associated training. The interventions / tools are in some cases already being implemented and have the potential to lead to positive impacts in terms of (global) environmental benefits, but are contingent on the endorsement of the PA Bill and sufficient funding for monitoring and enforcement and continued cross sectorial dialogue to management trade-offs (conflicts) in the operationalization of the MSP and site level management plans. Efficiency is rated as Satisfactory. The project was awarded a one-year no cost extension due to delays in delivery at midterm (delivery on activities at midterm was around 40%). The factors contributing to these delays were addressed following the midterm review to ensure efficient project execution in the second half of the project. These factors included capacity issues at ICS, access to the islands and initial disbursements issues. The project ultimately has surpassed 4 of it targets and gone beyond its planned activities in a number of cases (e.g. support to LUP documentaries).

Sustainability is rated as Moderately Likely overall. Financial risks to sustainability are considered to be low at the project sites based on the Trust Fund system institutionalized on Outer Islands suitable for tourism activities, a high level of co-finance, and potential support from SeyCATT for conservation efforts / research within MPA. However, there are also reasons to be cautious and to continue to seek out new and innovative funding for the area given that the costs of managing PA on the OIs are extremely high and innovative financing and cost savings will be needed to fully enforce protection and conservation of existing site and expand to other high value areas that are unsuitable for tourism. Socio-economic risks to the sustainability of the project outcomes are countered by the high level of country ownership of the project, private sector and civil society involvement in the project and awareness of the importance of biodiversity conservation to the economic development of Seychelles. A key risk however is the potential opposition to restrictions on fishing and charter operations introduced through the gazetting of marine areas. The sustainability of institutional framework and governance is rated as Satisfactory. In general, Seychelles’ legal framework, policies and governance structures support conservation. The PA Policy (2015) allows participation of the private sector and NGOs to manage PAs in partnership with government, and Island Foundations are established on all of the projects Islands. Furthermore, the MSP will by 2020 have designated 30% of EEZ under conservation and sustainable use, in fulfilment of the debt buy back agreement endorsed by the Government. The project has worked closely with core partners (ICS, IDC, MEECC) who support the on-going use of the project’s planning and management tools. The project has also enhanced institutional capacity; however, further capacity development and support is needed at ICS and in specific areas, e.g. data management. Furthermore, the pending government recognition of the islands as official protected areas, with approved management and land use plans, hinders sustainable development. Environmental sustainability is rated as Moderately Likely. The health of the corals and other marine life is vulnerable to climate related factors such as high sea temperatures, cyclones and hurricanes.

**Conclusions, Lessons and Recommendations**

The high-level conclusion of this TE is that the project has paved the way for enhanced management of Protected Areas in the Outer Islands. The project is the first of its kind focusing on OIs and has served as a valuable learning process on how best to operate in the IOs. As a result of the project stakeholders have a better understanding of the difficulties of operating in the Outer Islands and how these may be tackled. The OIP has developed and tested a comprehensive set of tools needed to manage the project’s demonstration islands, which can be replicated on other islands. At the site level these management tools include: land use plans, conservation management plans, business plans, pest abatement plans, a harmonized set of monitoring protocols and nomination files. The project has also laid the groundwork for other donors and partners to capitalize on through further investments and projects. Additional conclusions are found in the main report.

Key lessons include:

• It is important to be realistic and honest at project design about the realities of working in Outer Islands and avoid being overambitious. The logistical challenges of working on the OI need to be fully built into project proposals (these include access to the island, costs of operating on OI, restrictions due to weather such as the SE Monson when work on the OI is not possible). Risks also need to be properly identified. This includes recognition of a perceived increased risk of cyclones for the country’s southern islands.

• Indicators and targets should be within the control of the project and realistically set taking into consideration the challenges of working on the OI.

• A theory of change should be made explicit as part of the project design, summarized in diagrammatic form to facilitate understanding of the project’s contribution to the specified impacts and factors that have contributed to or hindered project progress towards impact.

• The team designing projects need to have a practical and technical understanding of the OI as well of the Seychelles’ political context. More time is needed to plan and consult with stakeholders to ensure that the project is well grounded.

• The project covered four island groups, which was very challenging. Every Island is a challenge and a focus on 1-2 OI sites would be more manageable for future projects.

• The GEF project document format is inflexible and unable to accommodate the requirements of SIDS/ OI. The one size fits all framework does not adequately take into account national circumstances such the size of countries, and issues related to SIDs.

• A comprehensive capacity assessment of the responsible partners should be done at project design to avoid implementation issues.

• **Coordination and cooperation across stakeholders with diverse interests is essential to successful working in OI**. Everyone needs to understand what others are doing, what is working, and how work can be harmonized and synergies capitalized on. Bringing people together is a lot of work, it takes time, energy and commitment but is critical to reach a common understanding and agreement across stakeholders.

• Having the same people sitting on the committees of related projects helps with understanding the issues and with integration.

• **Close communication and working with IDC** is critical to ensuring delivery of projects in OI as is IDC’s commitment to initiatives.

• **Processes operating at different scales** have to find a connection point, so that they don’t operate as parallel processes, but rather become mutually beneficial and aligned. This was achieved through the projects strong relationship with the MSP, with the MSP focusing at the macro level and OIP focusing at the micro level and the two initiatives benefitting from each other.

• **Inter-disciplinary teams** bring benefits. Interaction with others increase the understanding of issues and hence the quality of outputs as witnessed with, for example, the LUPs. Inter-disciplinary expeditions to the OI can also be cost effective.

• **Given the limited pool of national consultants**, projects need to factor availability of consultants into their planning and allow realistic timeframes for completing assignment.

• **Seychelles has a strong ecosystem based approach to the development of its Blue Economy.** This can inform other SIDS as Blue Economy approaches in other countries typically take industry as their basis.

The recommendations are summarized in Table B, highlighting the responsible party and timeframe for implementation. The recommendations are categorized as: (i) actions needed to reinforce the initial benefits from the project; and, (ii) proposals for future programming, which can be championed by a range of stakeholders including UNDP, MEECC, IDC and ICS. The recommendations are elaborated on in the main report.

**Table B: Recommendations**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Recommendation** | **Responsible party** | **Completio n date / Timeframe** |
| **Actions needed to reinforce the initial benefits from the project** | | | |
| **1** | Collation of lessons learnt and their dissemination nationally and internationally. | PM | June 2020 |
| **2** | Set out the potential replicability of plans and tools that have been developed. | PM | June 2020 |
| **3** | Dissemination of project outputs and lessons learnt on international stage in 2020 | PM | June 2020 |
| **Recommendations for future programming** | | | |
| 4 | Incorporate OIP lessons in project design into GEF7 proposals. UNDP Seychelles should also consider working with the RTA to determine how a case for SIDS / Seychelles tailored GEF design features can be made to the GEF Council. | UNDP Seychelles / RTA | End of  2020 |
| 5 | Focus on consolidation, implementation and learning, rather than on further expansion of protected area network in the near term. There is a need to test the Management Plans and protocols developed to better understand what works and what elements require further strengthening. | MEECC ICS UNDP | On-going |
| 6 | Focus on cross sectoral / institutional / stakeholder dialogue going forward. The OIP along with the MSP has set a strong precedent for integrated dialogue across all concerned stakeholders. This will be even more important going forward when restrictions on use come into force with varied distributional impacts | MEECC UNDP | On-going |
| 7 | Develop data management capacity and processes. A continued focus on building capacity in GIS and data management in future projects is needed to build on the work done by the OIP. More support is needed to complete the ICS geo-database and to move to centralized data storage at MEECC as well as to further build capacity. | MEECC | On-going |
| 8 | Support the development of PA regulations. Once the PA Bill is approved, work will start on the detailed regulations, which would benefit from the project’s expertise in cross sectoral dialogue and ecosystems knowledge | UNDP | Following approval of PA Bill |
| 9 | Enforcement capacity needs to be enhanced. Enforcement of the areas once gazetted will be critical going forward, this is when tensions are likely to emerge over use and access. | MEECC, ICS, IDC, Tourism operators | On-going |
| 10 | Cost saving mechanisms need to be identified and tested. Given the high costs of operating in the OI identifying cost saving approaches are central to providing the level and scale of protection that will be needed. | MEECC, ICS, IDC, Tourism operators | On-going |
| 11 | Support for the development of a systems approach to PA financing. While much progress has been made in terms of sustainable financing through the PAF project, SeyCATT and other initiatives, more support is needed to accelerate towards a systems approach to PA financing, which is of particular importance for the OI. | MEECC | On-going |
| 12 | Capacity / Institutional Capacity needs further developing. It is recommended to explore and develop options for attracting and retaining expert staff on the OI and for increasing staff numbers on OI | MEECC ICS | End 2020 |