

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

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Final Report

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Executive Summary

Project Summary Table

UNDAF Outcome(s):	n/a
<p>UNDP Strategic Plan (2014-2017) - Primary <u>Outputs:(2.5)</u> - Legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions enabled to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, in line with international conventions and national legislation; <u>and</u> Secondary Output <u>(1.3)</u> Solutions developed at national and sub-national levels for sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste.</p> <p>Other relevant programmatic links at the corporate level: [From <i>UNDP's Biodiversity and Ecosystems Global Framework 2012-2020</i>:] Signature Programme #2: Unlocking the potential of protected areas (PAs), including indigenous and community conserved areas, to conserve biodiversity while contributing to sustainable development.</p>	
<p>Expected CPD Outcome(s): By 2016, the governance systems, use of technologies and practices and financing mechanisms that promote environmental, energy and climate-change adaptation have been mainstreamed into national development plans. Relevant indicator: Area of terrestrial and marine ecosystems under improved management or heightened conservation status increased by 50 per cent by end of 2016.</p>	
<p>Expected CPAP Output (s): n/a</p> <p><i>Project Objective:</i> 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. [<i>Project Outcome 1</i>]: 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. [<i>Project Outcome 2</i>]: Sustainable Development and CMPA management integrated into broader land/seascape in the Outer Islands.</p>	
<p>Implementing Partner: Ministry of Environment and Energy (MEECC) - Department of Environment (DOE).</p>	
<p>Responsible Party: Island Conservation Society (ICS), Seychelles Island Foundation (SIF), Save Our Seas / D'Arros Research Centre.</p>	

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

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 mid term 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 mid term. 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 mid term 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 tradeoffs (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 mid term (delivery on activities at mid term was around 40%). The factors contributing to these delays were addressed following the mid term 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 its 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 Monsoon 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

No	Recommendation	Responsible party	Completion 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

Acronyms and Abbreviation

AWP	Annual Work Plan
CBD	Convention on Biodiversity
CO	Country Office (UNDP)
DRC	D'Arros Research Centre
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ENGO	Environmental Nongovernmental Organization
ESSP (UNDP's)	Environmental and social screening procedure
FBOA	Fisherman and Boat Owners Association
FFEM	Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
GIS	Geographic Information System
GOS	Government of Seychelles
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
IBA	Important Bird Area
ICS	Island Conservation Society
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
IDC	Islands Development Company
INRM	Integrated Natural Resource Management Framework
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LPAC	Local Project Appraisal Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCSS	Marine Conservation Society of Seychelles
MEECC	Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MHILT	Ministry of Habitat, Infrastructure and Land Transport
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding MPA Marine Protected Area
MSP	Marine Spatial Planning
MTR	Mid Term Review
NPD	National Project Director
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NS	Nature Seychelles
ODA	Official Development Assistance

PA	Protected Area
PAS (National)	Protected Area System
PD	Project Documents
PCA	Plant Conservation Action Group
PCU	Programme Coordination Unit
PIP	Project Implementing Partners
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PPG	Project Preparatory Grant
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RCU (UNDP)	Regional Coordinating Unit
RSC	Regional Service Centre
RSNC	Royal Society for Nature Conservation
RTA (UNDP)	Regional Technical Adviser
SAIAB	South African Institute of Aquatic Biodiversity
SBAA	Standard Basic Assistance Agreement
SCG	Seychelles Coast Guard
SFA	Seychelles Fishing Authority
SMSA	Seychelles Maritime Safety Administration
SPA	Seychelles Port Authority
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SIF	Seychelles Islands Foundation
SNPA	Seychelles National Parks Authority
SOSF	Save Our Seas Foundation
SR	Seychelles Rupee
SSDS	Seychelles Sustainable Development Strategy
SWIOFish3	South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Project (GEF-UNDP)
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNISEY/BERI	University of Seychelles, Blue Economy Research Institute
WHS	World Heritage Site
WIOLab	Western Indian Ocean Land based activities (GEF-UNEP Project)

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and objectives of Terminal Evaluation

The objectives of the 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) is 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. The TOR is provided in Annex 1.

1.2 Scope and Methodology

This TE was undertaken over the period November 2019 – February 2020 by an independent international consultant, contracted for 20 days. The Terms of Reference (TOR) are provided in Annex 1.

The TE follows the approach and method for conducting project terminal evaluations of UNDP supported GEF financed projects. Hence, the evaluation was framed around the following key criteria - relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact, as defined and explained in the UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects. The **Evaluation matrix**, which sets out the evaluation questions covering each of these criteria along with, indicators, sources and methodology, is presented in Annex 4. An inception report was completed prior to the TE mission which identified additional specific questions to be addressed as part of the TE.

A review was undertaken of key sources of information including: the project document, Annual Project Implementation Reports (PIR), Quarterly progress reports and work plans, project budget revisions, midterm review, progress reports, GEF focal area tracking tools, project files, and national strategic and legal documents. Documents reviewed are listed in Annex 3.

The TE has sought to follow a collaborative and participatory approach engaging closely with the Project Team, government counterparts (e.g. the National Project Director (PS Environment)), the UNDP Country Office, UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Adviser, and other key stakeholders.

A mission was undertaken from the 1st – 11th December 2019 during which time face to face interviews were held with key project partners and other stakeholders engaged in related initiatives in the Seychelles. These verbal discussions were cross referenced with the available documentation and differences in opinion have been recorded in this report where relevant. No site visits to the Outer Island project sites were possible due to difficult weather conditions and flight availability. It was not possible therefore to witness first hand the activities supported by the project on the Islands or the operating conditions. A validation workshop was held on 10 December 2019, which was attended by 27 stakeholders. The agenda for the mission and workshop agenda are presented in Annex 2. The draft report was also made available to stakeholder for their review.

1.3 Structure of Report

The rest of this report is organized as follows: Section 2 sets out the context to the study and describes the project; Section 3 presents key findings of the TE as they relate to three main

areas – project design and formulation, project implementation and project results; Section 4 present conclusions, lessons and recommendations.

2 Project Description and Development Context

2.1 Background context

The territory of the Republic of Seychelles in the Western Indian Ocean consists of a landmass of 455 square kilometers (km²) forming 115 islands, and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) covering 1.374 million km². The archipelago is divided into two groups: the mostly granitic islands (or 'Inner Islands') within the Mahé Plateau, and the outer coralline islands (or 'Outer Islands'), surrounded by a vast seascape southwest from the Plateau.

The Outer Islands encompass (inter alia) several significant islands groups, notably:

- the **Amirantes Group**, which includes African Banks, Desroches, D'Arros and St. Joseph's, Poivre, (location of 2 of the 5 proposed PA sites)
- the **Alphonse Group**, which includes Alphonse and St. François
- the **Farquhar Group**, which includes Providence and Farquhar; and
- **Aldabra Group**, which includes Aldabra, Cosmoledo, Astove and Assumption.

The Amirantes are closest to the Inner Islands; to the southwest of them is the Farquhar group, and in the far south-west are the high coralline islands of the Aldabra group.

Seychelles is located in the Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands Region, which has been classified as a global biodiversity hotspot. Seychelles harbors two UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Aldabra Atoll and the Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve) and three Ramsar wetland sites (Mare aux Cochons High Altitude Freshwater Wetlands, Port Launay Coastal Wetlands and Aldabra Atoll). The unique biodiversity of Seychelles has developed largely because of its long geological isolation.

Seychelles has the highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Africa (\$15,410 in 2016).¹ Since the early 1990s, Seychelles has transformed its economy from being mostly agrarian (based on cinnamon and copra plantations) to becoming chiefly dependent on high-end tourism and fishing (mainly tuna exports). However, increasingly the effects of climate change are placing its economy at risk.

The Outer Islands, which were traditionally managed for production of copra (coconut) and timber (casuarina), have transitioned to a high end tourism-based economic model in the past 10-15 years, commercial and recreational fishing are also important. Many visitors come specifically for world-class fly fishing. Fly-fishing on the reef flats is the most popular recreational fishery, although there is also traditional blue-water fishing, as well as fly-fishing for blue-water species (e.g. marlin). Recreational / sport fishing grounds are situated at Alphonse and St François, Poivre, St. Joseph, Desroches, Remire, Farquhar, Cosmoledo and African Banks, with the fishing season limited to November-April (the months when the Southeast monsoon is not active). All recreational fishing activities are catch and release. One of the most important commercial fisheries is the sea cucumber fishery, with more than 20 commercially viable species; other fisheries include grouper, octopus, and shark, as well as the industrial pelagic fisheries primarily made up of foreign vessels licensed to fish under the Seychelles flag. Mariculture using species such as Sandfish (sea cucumber), Rabbit fish, Tropical groupers, Yellowfin tuna, and crabs is also being considered for the Outer Islands. Fishing pressure

¹<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/seychelles/overview>, accessed 28 December 2019

around the Outer Islands is likely to increase as fish stocks in the Inner Islands are being depleted.

Tourism development, although limited so far to a few islands², has had some negative impacts in terms of habitat transformation, erosion and sedimentation, and increased demand for fisheries resources. Similarly, illegal and legal fishing has impacted specific populations and species in the Outer Islands, particularly sharks, sea turtles, and sea cucumbers. These threats to biodiversity and ecosystem functioning / services are exacerbated by emerging threats in the Outer Islands, including increased fishing pressure, the impacts of climate change (e.g. sea temperature increases leading to coral bleaching, sea level rise impacts on mangroves, seagrass beds, coastal erosion, and saltwater intrusion), and the emerging / potential impacts of marine pollution, development of mariculture, and expected oil and gas development in the region.

The Protected Area (PA) Policy (2013) sets out the commitment made by the Government of Seychelles to protect at least 50% of its terrestrial area and 30% of its marine environment³. This commitment was given by the President of the Republic of Seychelles at the Rio+20 conference⁴ in June 2012. In 2013, the government announced its intention to proclaim 30% of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) - a further 410,000 km² - as protected of which 50% will be a no-take zone, in exchange for debt buy-back negotiated with the Paris Club. A marine spatial planning exercise with the support of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) started in 2014 and is on-going. Using the current National Parks and Nature Conservancy Act, in April 2019 the Government have gazetted 26%, (approx. 350,915 km²) of the EEZ as protected areas. The areas are: (i) 'Aldabra Group Marine National Park' 177, 479 km²; and (ii) Amirantes to Fortune Bank Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' 173,468 km².

The rationale for integrating the Outer Islands into the country's PA estate is that at project design the country's protected area system was primarily situated in the Inner (Granitic) Islands of the country. The Outer Islands of the Seychelles constitutes more than 80% of the country's Exclusive Economic Zone, makes up more than half of the total number of islands within the archipelago and includes nine of the twenty Important Bird Areas (IBAs) of Seychelles, but at project design there only two fully gazetted protected areas in the Outer Islands: Aldabra Special Reserve (15,260 ha terrestrial and 23,100 ha marine) and the African Banks Protected Area (2 ha terrestrial and 3 ha marine). There were also two declared Nature Reserves (Boudeuse and Etoile, each less than 1 ha.). Of these only the Aldabra Atoll Special Nature Reserve is actively managed, a UNESCO World Heritage site, by the Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF), funded through cross-subsidisation from the country's other UNESCO World Heritage Site, Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve on Praslin Island. The African Banks Protected Terrestrial Area, Boudeuse and Etoile Nature Reserves are effectively 'paper parks' with no active conservation management.

Barriers to the creation and effective management of protected areas in the Outer Islands identified in the Project Document (PD) are: (i) inadequate technical and human capacities and resources⁵; (ii) lack of financial resources; (iii) absence of official PA status; (iv) enforcement

²For example, Hotels on Desroches, Alphone, Alphonse, Platte Islands, a fishing guest house on Farquhar, and Cosmoledo, potential hotels / villas on Poivre, Providence, Coetivy and Farquhar.

³In terms of terrestrial PA coverage, Seychelles has one of the highest ratios in the world, with 47% of its total land reserved for protected areas (i.e. 209 km²).

⁴ <http://www.uncsd2012.org>

⁵ According to the Project Document, fiscal reform and restructuring since 2008 has significantly

authority in the marine environment is entirely dependent on official PA designation; (v) lack of ecological and economic data and inadequate systems to ensure that the data that does exist is available for key stakeholders; (vi) limited resources and presence of government and other personnel in the Outer Islands; (vii) lack of an overarching framework and systemic capacities to develop and implement conservation and sustainable development in the Outer Islands; and, (viii) inadequate systems, rules and capacities for planning and decision-making at the individual island level (only Coetivy Island had an official land use plan when the project started).

The Outer Islands⁶, with the exception of D'Arros and St Joseph Atoll, are leased to the **Islands Development Company (IDC)** for 99 years⁷. IDC, a state-owned parastatal company formed in 1980,⁸ is mandated to provide and manage the facilities and infrastructure of these islands in order to facilitate their ongoing sustainable development. IDC selected the Island Conservation Society (ICS) to undertake conservation work on the Outer Islands under its management. IDC has also committed to working with NGOs and private partners to integrate the Outer Islands into the country's PA network, to create a series of PAs and strengthen protected area management.

The **Island Conservation Society (ICS)** has been designated by IDC as their main implementing partner for conservation issues on the Outer Islands⁹. Formed in 2001, ICS has a special interest in biodiversity conservation on the Outer Islands, and at project inception had staff located on the islands of Desroches and Alphonse. Its expertise includes: species conservation; vegetation rehabilitation; eradication of invasive species (rats, cats); endangered species recovery programs; and marine surveys. In addition, ICS has assumed management responsibility for the Aride Island Special Reserve under a lease agreement with the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC).

The **Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF)** was formed as a parastatal in 1979 by Presidential Decree. SIF has the mandate to manage both of Seychelles' World Heritage sites, Aldabra Special Reserve and the Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve; Aldabra is one of only two official Protected Areas in the Outer Islands, and the only one that is actively managed.

decreased the staffing and technical capacities / resources of most government agencies, including the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC). As a result, the mandate and scope of activities for both the MEECC and the Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA) are limited to the Inner Islands.

⁶IDC manages Platte, Desroches, Marie-Louise, Remire, Desnoeuf, Alphonse, Providence, Farquhar, Coetivy, Cosmoledo, Astove and Assumption) as well as one of the largest of the inner islands (Silhouette).

⁷ D'Arros is owned by the Government but managed by SIF, while St Joseph Atoll is privately owned.

⁸ A parastatal is a corporate body established by Government to run various (often commercial) activities in the manner of a business, with a board of directors and a managing director. The Chairman of the Board and the board members of the parastatal are nominated by Government, and the parastatal is ultimately responsible and accountable to the appropriate "parent" Ministry.

⁹ In 2004 IDC signed a MoU with the Island Conservation Society (ICS) that appoints ICS as conservation advisors on all islands owned by IDC. In 2007, this MoU was strengthened into an agreement endorsed by the Ministry of Environment

Box 1: Island Foundations

IDC and ICS have agreed to establish Island Foundations for all Outer Islands where tourism development is expected in the short to medium term, with the idea that it is only those islands with active tourism operations that can financially sustain on-going conservation activities. The Island Foundations represent a model of government-NGO-private (tourism industry) Protected Areas management and financing with potential replication across many of the Outer Islands of the Seychelles.

All tourism developers on IDC islands, prior to initiating development, are required to sign an agreement stating that they will create a trust fund which will finance conservation management; these trust funds are then administered by the tourism operators, IDC, ICS (Island Conservation Society) and the Government, and support ICS conservation activities on each island.

The goal of the Island Foundations is to “*promote the conservation, rehabilitation and enhancement of [the given] island to be among the finest restored tropical atoll ecosystems in the world, in harmony with sustainable low impact human development and eco-tourism, and to raise funds in order to do so*”.

2.2 Project description

The goal of the project is: to conserve biodiversity in Seychelles Outer Islands through a protected area and sustainable development approach.

The project objective is 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.

The objective is to be achieved through two outcomes (components), each with several outputs.
Outcome 1: Management effectiveness of Outer Islands CMPAs is enhanced;
Outcome 2: Sustainable Development and CMPA management integrated into broader land/seascape.

To enhance biodiversity conservation, the project was designed to support the **establishment and operationalization** of five new protected areas encompassing both terrestrial and marine ecosystems. This will increase the number of operational protected areas in the Outer Islands from 1 to 6; add 76,258 hectares of seascape and 1,237 hectares of landscape to the national Protected Area (PA) estate; and establish two new organizations as official PA management institutions in the Seychelles. It is expected that these new PA units will also be invaluable **demonstration sites** for the replication of additional sites, using different PA classifications and allowing for different levels of development activities in the Outer Islands.

The five islands / island groups selected as new official Protected Areas in the Outer Islands of the Seychelles were:

- Desroches,
- Alphonse (Alphonse, St. Francois and Bijoutier),
- Poivre (South Island),
- Farquhar (South Island, Ile Goellette and Banc du Sable),
- D’Arros (St. Joseph).

Each site includes both terrestrial and marine areas. Several of the islands were included in the list of proposed new protected areas in a 2011 Seychelles Cabinet Memo proposing designation

of new PA sites¹⁰; the other sites were selected by the Seychelles Ministry of Environment and Energy and Climate Change (MEECC), in consultation with the Island Conservation Society (ICS), the Islands Development Company (IDC), the Save Our Seas Foundation, and other stakeholders. The designation of the proposed sites as PAs will preserve key terrestrial and marine habitats of the Seychelles' Outer Islands, and will contribute to the functioning of marine conservation corridors stretching from the Aldabra Special Reserve in the far southwest to the northern Inner Islands.

The project will also improve PA **management effectiveness** in target sites, mitigating direct threats to biodiversity and maintaining essential ecosystem services. In addition, pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the *wider land- and seascape* will be reduced through an **Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) framework**. This will result in reduced land conversion in areas important for biodiversity conservation and within ecosystems providing important ecosystem services (water provision and flooding control) as an indirect result of improved land use planning. Also, 60 hectares of degraded ecosystems was to be rehabilitated (Invasive Alien Species (IAS) controlled), and the systemic capacity and financing for promoting sustainable development in the Outer Island through INRM across the land- and seascape improved.

The project was to foster the systematic development of PA management capacities, processes and tools, including the mobilization of financial resources to support and sustain the PA expansion effort. In terms of **PA finance**, the project expected to gradually decrease the gap between financial needs and funds actually available for PA management, including the capacity of PA units to generate their own funding through tourism-based revenues.

The project started in August 2014 and was due to complete in August 2019, but was granted a one year extension following the MTR. The revised project closure date is June 2020. The project is executed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and implemented by the Government of Seychelles / Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC) under the National Implementation Modality (NIM) and Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT) procedures. Actual implementation is delegated to the Islands Development Company (IDC) which has in turn delegated its responsibility to the Island Conservation Society (ICS), under a Memorandum of Understanding signed between ICS and MEECC. The ICS collaborates with the private hotels operating on the islands.

The total project cost is \$12,219,549, of which the Global Environment Facility (GEF) contributes US\$ 1,785,500 (15%), Government contributes \$1,042,683 (9%), and Civil Society contributes 9,131,866 (75%).

¹⁰“Proposal to designate 96% of Curieuse Island, South & Goëlettes Islands (Farquhar), Polyte islands and Grande Ile (Cosmoledo), Desnoeuufs Island, Saint Francois & Bijoutier Islands, Assumption Island and South Island (Poivre) as Protected Areas under the National Park and Nature Conservancy Act”

3 Findings

3.1 Project design

3.1.1 Analysis of Results Framework

In line with the Mid Term Review (MTR), the TE finds that the project was designed to address a national development priority and was country driven. The project aligned with the country's conservation and economic development strategies and plans such as: (i) the Seychelles' **Sustainable Development Strategy 2012-2020** (SSDS)¹¹ which recognizes the importance of natural resources and ecosystem services in the economic development of the country; (ii) the **PA Policy** (developed for GOS under previous GEF support 2015), whose goal is to achieve an effective and multi-use protected area system that is representative, comprehensive and balanced. The policy outlines the concept of co-management of official protected areas with NGOs and private partners. The project design supported Seychelles' policies on sustainable tourism development and a blue economy. The project is recognized as a key means for the country's progress towards the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and Aichi targets on biodiversity conservation, PA coverage and PA finance.

The Theory of Change is not explicitly referred to in the project document or by the MTR, and there is no diagrammatic presentation of the TOC setting out how the project would build from the activity level through to outputs, and eventually impact and the associated drivers (enablers) and assumptions of the various stages. However, the project document does set out a clear definition of the problem and barriers to be addressed.

The project strategy was closely aligned with the government's agenda of addressing threats to biodiversity conservation in the Outer Islands through the establishment and management of a representative system of protected areas, and the integration of biodiversity conservation and ecological function priorities into a spatial development and investment planning framework. The PD recognized that the long-term solution sought by the Government of Seychelles required: (i) the establishment of new official protected areas encompassing terrestrial and marine ecosystems in the Outer Islands to ensure that important ecosystems, habitats and species are effectively conserved; (ii) the development of functional, working partnerships between the government and environmental NGOs (and other partners) in the establishment and effective management of protected areas in the Outer Islands; (iii) the implementation of management strategies that harmonize conservation goals with the interests of various stakeholders in tourism and sustainable resource use (e.g. fisheries); (iv) the rehabilitation of terrestrial ecosystems to restore ecological functioning and diversity and support PA management objectives; and, (v) adequate capacity in public PA institutions, NGOs and other prospective partners to enable knowledge sharing, development of effective interventions (e.g. ecosystem / species assessments, monitoring and conservation) and processes (e.g. creation of PA

¹¹The SSDS covers 13 thematic areas, six of them relevant to the establishment of protected areas and sustainable land management in the Outer Islands: (i) Biodiversity and Forestry (which includes support programmes on terrestrial national parks); (ii) Climate Change, (iii) Fisheries and Marine Resources terrestrial (which includes support programmes on MPAs); (iv) Economics of Sustainability (which includes support programmes on coastal zones and protected area development funding); (v) Land Use, Coastal Zones and Urbanization; (vi) Tourism and Aesthetics; and (vii) Policy, Institutional and Regulatory Frameworks (which includes support programmes on environmental legislative review and enactment / environmental policy and institutional development).

management and business plans). The project design is based on a detailed analysis of the threats to PA expansion and the barriers preventing the country from effectively addressing these threats.

Until 2017, GEF did not have a gender reporting requirement and the project design did not originally include **gender** in its aims and objectives.

While the rationale for the project is well articulated in the project document, the project's Results Framework was weak and was substantially revised following the MTR with changes made to **10 of the 17 indicators / targets**. The main concerns raised by the MTR and how these were addressed are summarized below:

- **At design the Results Framework committed the project to results whose achievement were outside of its control.** Specifically, indicators 3, 6,13, 14, 15, 16 were contingent on the approval of the PA Law (Nature Reserves and Conservancy Act) by the Government, a draft of which was completed in 2015 but which still awaits approval, and /or gazetting new PAs. Following the MTR these six Indicators were amended so that they could be achieved directly by the project.
- **At design the set of ecosystem health indicators (indicators 8, 9, 10 and 11) were liable to be affected by factors outside the control of the project.** For example, the warm temperatures experienced around the Outer Islands in April-June 2016 damaged coral health and Cyclone Fantala in April 2016 caused significant damage on Farquhar Island. Following the MTR the set of ecosystem health indicators were revised to decouple the achievements of the project from the risks of natural disasters and climate change.
- Other changes to the indicators included: (i) Indicator 4 (mapping) was adjusted to broad scale rather than fine-scale marine maps, which was achievable and sufficient for the nomination files; and, (ii) Indicator 15 relating to forest rehabilitation was adjusted to relate to actions that were feasible and preferable to the Islands Development Corporation (IDC).

Annex 5 documents all the changes made to the Results Framework following the MTR. The revisions at mid-term were approved by the Steering Committee and allowed the project to be measured against indicators which were SMART.

A key discussion point of the Terminal Evaluation was the difficulty of reflecting the specific characteristics and challenges of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) within GEF proposals due to the 'one-size fit all' GEF proposal template / requirements. Ideally the GEF documentation would be tailored to better reflect the realities of SIDS. However, if this were not possible, it was felt that the Seychelles needed to be more explicit and honest in the future about what is realistically possible. While this is arguably 'best practice', the rigid GEF requirements and competition for GEF funding, can lead to a tendency to design projects which promise more than is realistically possible, resulting in time consuming revisions of the Results Framework during implementation.

A view was also expressed that some activities such as rain water harvesting were added to meet GEF requirements / look good in the Project Document, but were ill conceived and too small scale to have any impact¹². A study to develop solar desalination would have been more beneficial in the long term, given that the islands are flat and storing water cost money and can

¹²This funding was used to set up a rainwater harvesting system in a turtle pen on Desroches. Alphonse are now reportedly nearly fully served by solar power, an initiative supported outside of the project.

become contaminated.

3.1.2 Assumptions and Risks

The project design was based on an analysis of risks and assumptions and suggested mitigation measures. However, several assumptions did not hold frustrating project implementation, as highlighted through the MTR, prompting corrective actions (Table 1). In addition, project design did not adequately take into consideration the **realities of accessing the Outer Islands**. It is not possible to carry out most assessment and monitoring activities on the Islands during the South East Monsoon (May/June to Sept/Oct) due to weather challenges. IDC does not operate regular flights to the islands during these times and Alphonse Lodge closes down during this season (although it is currently piloting being open all year round).

Project design also did not adequately consider the capacity challenges of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The project was complex with 39 different activities, the majority of which were to be supported by consultants. Project design did not take into consideration the small pool of national consultants qualified to support the project and provided only two ICS staff members per Island, when 3 to 5 staff members are ideally needed.

Table 1: Risks and assumptions and their effects on project implementation and achievements

Risk/assumption	Effect on project implementation
<p>Adequately qualified consultants / contractors can be sourced to provide technical support to project activities; and, The appointment of consultants / contractors is not unduly delayed by bureaucratic processes</p>	<p>Seychelles like other Small Island States has severe shortage of qualified consultants and depends largely on consultants sourced internationally. While ICS did everything to recruit national consultants, the best qualified were not always available. The difficulties hiring staff resulted in the delayed establishment of baseline values, and development of management and business plans and nomination files. These delays were exacerbated up to mid term by weak systems of managing consultants to ensure timely delivery of quality reports (e.g. establishing and agreeing deadlines, following up on deadlines and commitments diligently).</p>
<p>Legal gazetting of new Protected Areas is not held up by bottlenecks in the executive or legislative branches of the Government</p>	<p>The new Nature Reserves and Conservancy Act has not yet been approved by Cabinet. However, indicators contingent on this were revised following the MTR, and marine protected areas have been submitted under MSP Milestone 3.</p>
<p>Climate impacts (cyclones, storm surges, coral bleaching) do not reduce coral, mangrove and seagrass bed cover / functioning above background levels; and, Poor resilience of marine and terrestrial ecosystems to the effects of climate change</p>	<p>Farquhar was hit by a cyclone in 2006 and the risk of a new cyclone hitting island was not considered adequately at project design. Farquhar was hit by Cyclone Fantala three times in 2016, destroying all infrastructure previously established by IDC and the project. The project provided 100% of the equipment required for conservation work on Farquhar; although equipment such as engines and boats were not destroyed, the facilities for ICS staff needed to be rebuilt. Costs of repairing the damage to Farquhar were estimated at \$4.5 million by the World Bank, with an estimated loss of revenue accruing from the island of \$500,000 during the recovery phase (this includes loss of revenue paid by tourism operators towards biodiversity management etc.). From April-June 2016, the target Islands experienced high sea temperatures and significant coral bleaching</p>

<p>Tourism development proceeds on Farquhar and Poivre, generating new income streams for PA management at those sites</p>	<p>Tourism development on Farquhar was held back by the cyclone. Currently, there is small scale tourism on the island (e.g. fly fishing by Blue Safari/Alphonse Fishing Company is offered 6 months a year).</p> <p>Poivre is not yet generating any revenue since there are no facilities for tourism or for ICS staff to undertake conservation work. There is a runway but no resort.</p>
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Source: Updated from MTR

3.1.3 Lessons from other relevant projects incorporated into project design

As stated in the MTR the project design incorporated lessons from several existing initiatives and partners; notably, i) implementing marine monitoring activities (water temperature; benthic; species) from Seychelles Islands Foundation (from SIF supported activities on Aldabra); ii) On coral reef monitoring from ICS and D'Arros Research Centre (DRC); iii) On technical and legal/policy aspects of expanding the marine protected zones from SIF (based on a similar initiative around Aldabra).

3.1.4 Planned stakeholder participation

The project was formulated over a one-year period through a Project Preparatory Grant (PPG), and was informed by the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders.

The Islands Development Company manages most of the Outer Islands (on behalf of Government of Seychelles) and provides most of the air and shipping services to the region. It therefore plays a critical role in granting and providing access to the Islands. Without IDC support, it is impossible to implement any activities on the Outer Islands. Given this critical role, it was expected that IDC would play an active role in the project implementation and the Project Steering Committee (PSC).

The Island Conservation Society (ICS) were to play a leading role in implementing on the ground activities at 4 PA sites in the Outer Islands; activities at the 5th PA site was to be managed by the D'Arros Conservation Centre (DRC).

The Seychelles Islands Foundation was to collaborate with both ICS and DRC on various activities, and implement certain activities at the existing Aldabra Special Reserve. Existing hotel management companies at Desroches and Alphonse islands were also to provide support for conservation activities. Other interested Environmental Non-governmental Organizations (ENGOS) were to be invited to participate in the implementation of certain activities under the two components.

3.1.5 Replication approach

A core expectation of the project as designed was that the PA units established with the project's support would serve as **demonstration sites** that could be replicated at additional sites, using different PA classifications and allowing for different levels of development activities, over the long-term in the Outer Islands. However, there was no specific replication approach set out in the Project Document. The selection of project sites was based on ecological and functional criteria, given the costs and challenges of establishing protected areas in the remote Outer Islands of the Seychelles. The sites reflect varying levels of resource use and development, and are said to collectively provide models for replication at almost all of the other Outer Island sites (Project Document). The criteria used for selection were:

- **Tourism Development:** The islands selected had already or were poised to have tourism development, which would provide on-going financing for Protected Area management at each site.
- **Logistics, Infrastructure and Personnel:** Each of the islands selected has a functioning airstrip, facilitating the ability to travel to and supply the islands by air for tourism development. Furthermore, ICS had a conservation team on Desroches and Alphonse islands, with accommodation and offices, and an on-going agreement for the hotels on each island to feed the ICS staff (future PA staff). On Farquhar and Poivre, there were IDC facilities that could be converted to provide accommodation and offices for ICS staff.
- **Biodiversity & Ecosystem Values:** All of the selected islands / island groups contain globally significant biodiversity and ecosystems that merit their inclusion in the Protected Areas system of the Seychelles. In addition, because Farquhar and the selected sites in the Amirantes Group of islands do not form part of the Aldabra Group of islands, they encompass a different mix of terrestrial and marine habitats that are not currently represented in the official PA system, and due to their position relative to one another and within the overall Seychelles archipelago, a system that included PA sites at Aldabra, Farquhar and the Amirantes would create a valuable network that protected important biodiversity corridors within the western Indian Ocean.

The fifth site – privately **D’Arros Island**, was selected because it had an agreement with the Government of the Seychelles to establish an official protected area and because the island owners have significant financial resources and a strong commitment to conservation, as well on account of the globally significant biodiversity found at the site.

3.1.6 UNDPs comparative advantage and linkages between projects and other interventions within the sector

The project was able to build on UNDP’s previous projects in PA management notably UNDP-GEF NGO PA project, and create synergies with other on-going GEF projects in this area – notable the Protected Areas Finance Project (PAF).

For both official protected areas and other types of conservation zones, it was anticipated that an Ecosystem-wide Strategy would utilize the results of the on-going UNDP-GEF NGO PA project¹³, making it more robust for the Outer Islands. The Strategy was ultimately taken over by the Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) with the advent of the Debt for Climate Change Adaptation Swap. The Project Document noted the forthcoming MSP, although it could not be known precisely at the design stage how the project would need to adapt to best align with the overarching MSP initiative. In effect, the advent of the MSP brought many benefits and synergies for both the OIP and MSP as elaborated on further below. Through the MSP 30% of the EEZ will be designated, a legal framework developed for governing the MSP and an Ocean Authority established. The OIP also collaborated with SWIOFish3, which is focused on the designation and implementation of sustainable use zones.

3.1.7 Management arrangements

The management arrangements are clearly set out in the Project Document and were in place at project entry, as set out below, along with counterpart resources. However, the project

¹³UNDP-GEF NGO PA project, includes “consolidating data on the marine extensions of IBAs and integrating it into an overall protected area gap analysis, in order to define targets and map priority areas for protected area expansion on the basis of an analysis of species, habitats and ecological processes”.

document did not identify a possible reduction of capacity of key partners as a risk, as materialized at the start of the project when ICS' capacity declined due to frequent staff changes at senior management, mid-management and operations levels. This exacerbated weak systems of procuring and managing consultants, causing delays in the deliveries of project outputs.

As set out in the Project Document, the project is implemented by the MEECC, in line with the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA) between the UNDP and the Government of Seychelles (GOS). The MEECC has the overall responsibility for achieving the project goal and objectives and is directly responsible for creating the enabling conditions for implementation of all project activities. The Principal Secretary for Environment acts as the **National Project Director (NPD)** who is responsible for providing the strategic oversight and guidance to project implementation. The NPD signs and approves the project financial reports and the financial requests for advances under any contracts issued under NIM.

A centralized **Programme Coordination Unit (PCU)** has been established by UNDP and MEECC to oversee, support, administer and coordinate the implementation of all GOS-UNDP-GEF environment and energy projects in Seychelles. The PCU comprises a Programme Coordinator, Project Managers for the GOS-UNDP-GEF projects under implementation and financial and administrative support staff.

Working in close cooperation with MEECC, IDC and ICS, the **UNDP Country Office (CO)** provides support services to the project. Specifically, the UNDP CO is responsible for: (i) providing financial and audit services to the project; (ii) recruitment and contracting of project staff; (iii) overseeing financial expenditures against project budgets; (iv) appointment of independent financial auditors and evaluators; and, (v) ensuring that all activities, including procurement and financial services, are carried out in strict compliance with UNDP and GEF procedures. Strategic and technical oversight is provided by the **UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisor (RTA)** responsible for the project.

The Island Conservation Society (ICS), is the Responsible Party (as defined in POPP¹⁴), engaged by MEECC to provide services for 4 project sites proposed as Outer Islands Protected Areas. The project document allocated 60% of the outputs directly under ICS - all of Outputs 1.1 (apart from some activities on Aldabra Island), 1.3, as well as parts of Outputs 1.2, 1.6, 1.7, and 2.4., 2.5 and 2.6. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the MEECC and ICS describes the roles and responsibilities of each partner, PCU and PSC, as well as the financial and reporting arrangements and procedures for the project. The original MoU was revised following the MTR (as discussed below).

The day-to-day administration of the project is carried out by a **National Project Manager (NPM)**, on behalf of MEECC. The NPM's prime responsibility is to ensure that the project produces the results specified in the project document, to the required standard and within the specified constraints of time and cost. The NPM is responsible for preparing Annual Work Plans

¹⁴ Ibid: "A Responsible Party is defined as an entity that has been selected to act on behalf of the implementing partner on the basis of a written agreement or contract to purchase goods or provide services using the project budget. In addition, the responsible party may manage the use of these goods and services to carry out project activities and produce outputs. All responsible parties are directly accountable to the implementing partner in accordance with the terms of their agreement or contract with the implementing partner. Implementing partners use responsible parties in order to take advantage of their specialized skills, to mitigate risk and to relieve administrative burdens. [...]"

(AWP) in advance of each successive year and submitting them to the **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** for approval. The NPM is tasked with liaising and working with all partner institutions to link the project with complementary national programs and initiatives. The NPM reports to the PCU's Programme Coordinator and is accountable to the National Project Director.

The **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** provides overall policy guidance to the project and has the overall responsibility for achieving the project goal and objectives. Chaired by the National Project Director (NPD), the PSC is made up of representatives from Islands Development Company (IDC), Island Conservation Society (ICS), Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF), Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA), Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA), Ministry of Habitat, Infrastructure and Land Transport, Seychelles Coast Guard, Seychelles Maritime Safety Administration, Seychelles Port Authority and UNDP. The PCU is the Secretariat to the PSC. The PSC was expanded at Inception to include the Tourism Department, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Initiative, the Fisherman and Boat Owners Association, University of Seychelles, and Desroches Island Development Company/ Four Seasons Resort. The South African Institute of Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB) was withdrawn from the PSC.

3.2 Project Implementation

3.2.1 Adaptive Management

The project had a challenging start and was rated as Moderately Unsatisfactory at mid term. Following the MTR the project restructured and accelerated delivery to achieve nearly all its (revised) objectives and targets. To a large extent this was due to the project's willingness and ability to adapt to address the difficulties it was facing in project design and implementation. A one year project extension was requested and approved as per the recommendations at MTR, resulting in the new project closure date of June 2020.

There were extensive changes made to the Results Framework and overall management of the project based on the recommendations of the Mid Term Review (MTR) and approved by the Project Steering Committee.

As described above, 10 out of 17 of the indicators / targets were revised to be within the project's control following the MTR. This allowed improved planning and effective implementation of the project activities to achieve indicators that are SMART (PIR, 2019, Management Response 2017).

The project logframe was also discussed during the **Inception Workshop** and a few changes were made, namely:

- **Indicator 15** (Extent (# of hectares) of Desroches and Alphonse Islands with restored native habitats) the number of hectares to be restored were reduced to be more realistic from 30 to 15 on each island. The target was changed again following the MTR to the formulation of vegetation management plans (VMPs) for each Island covering 22.3 and 17.1 hectares respectively – these being the total areas identified as suitable for restoration on the two Islands and a preferable target for the IDC.
- **Indicator 14** (Pressures from competing natural resources uses in the Outer Islands land- and seascape are reduced through an integrated natural resource management (INRM) framework, including Overall Planning Framework and Land Use Plans). Given that the MSP exercise involves the entire Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and is the

overarching Government led planning exercise for the EEZ, it was agreed that the Outer Island project would provide detailed planning at the micro-level for the target sites.

Indicators 8-11 were also discussed at the Inception Workshop but *no changes* were made at this time. It was noted that indicators 8 to 11 had no baseline data and hence it was not possible to set clear targets. As there was no budget for baseline data collection, all the baseline values were obtained from secondary literature, dating as far back as 2008, hence there was no uniform baseline for one particular year. The Inception Workshop also noted that these indicators measure parameters which either cannot be influenced by the project alone (e.g. coral reef health), or require the Protected Areas to be set up and the marine areas managed under PA status for several years before any change can be registered (e.g. mangroves, fisheries). The MTR concurred with this, and recommended that the project focus on setting the baselines for the future monitoring of these parameters, along with a revision of the indicators / targets so that they could be attained by the project and not vulnerable to factors outside of the project's control.

Another key adaptation following the MTR was the reformulation to the **Project management approach** which greatly improved planning and delivery (implementation). ICS were responsible for 60% of project outputs, but there was a lack of management capacity at ICS in the early years of the project due to high staff turnover and difficulties hiring a CEO. The MTR triggered a comprehensive review of the project to address the issues that had been raised. This review process included: Implementation of an independent capacity assessment and a Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) re-assessment of the Responsible party - ICS¹⁵; (ii) a series of discussions with the Responsible Party (ICS) to reformulate the project, including their role and responsibility under the project; (iii) high level meetings with Minister of MEECC and CEO of IDC on how the recommendations of the MTR would be addressed; (iii) reformulation of the project logframe, activities and budget and management arrangements in discussion with the UNDP-GEF RTA to ensure GEF procedures were followed; and, (iv) a validation workshop with project stakeholders regarding the proposed reformulation of log frame and approval by Steering Committee (Management Response March 2017).

The project compensated for a **lack of management capacity at ICS** by revising the project management structure. Based on the independent capacity assessment and HACT re-assessment of the Responsible Party the following recommendations were made and adopted: (i) The original MOU, which was terminated in December 2016 ahead of the MTR in anticipation of the need for changes, was replaced; (ii) Given that ICS has good capacity to deliver scientific work on the Outer Islands through its island based staff and scientific oversight of head office, a revised Grant Agreement was put in place which supported the ICS island staff but facilitated separate sub-contracts for specific technical activities, which would be advertised more widely to attract other NGOs or consultants; (iii) All procurement of goods and services, as well as administration of technical consultancies reverted to the PCU as a direct response to the HACT assessment, which noted deficiency in the capacity of ICS in these respects; (v) The Programme Co-ordination Unit (PCU) became much more involved, managing activities on behalf of ICS. The PCU based Project Manager assumed responsibility for delivery of all project outputs, but continued to work closely with ICS in project planning and delivery (Management Response, March 2017).

Other changes following the MTR were: (i) A vegetation management plan was supported in Farquhar in direct response to the damage caused by Cyclone Fantala; (ii) As accommodation and facilities were still not in place on Poivre, the funds for staff on Poivre was used for funding

¹⁵This updated the HACT completed pre-project (August 2014)

'expedition type' visits; (iii) Additional funds were allocated for management and PA business planning for all sites, which were under budgeted in the Project Document; (iv) A new activity aimed at strengthening the **data management capacity at ICS was added**. A framework was prepared for expansion of the database system and capacity for ICS to manage the data being collected in the OI as part of baseline surveys and introduction of systematic monitoring systems. The intention was to link it to the MEECC national database. The project supported a database manager and ICS committed to taking over the financial responsibility for the database and database manager at the end of the project; (v) A communications Strategy for the Outer Islands was budgeted for, based on the need to make Seychellois more aware of the Government agenda for the Outer Islands, expressed by National Assembly and others. This would make it easier to expand the PA system (a lesson learned from the rejection of the proposal to gazette D'Arros as a PA).

Other areas where adaptive management is evident include:

- **Access to island.** Discussions were held with IDC to address access identified as a key problem by the MTR. IDC reaffirmed its commitment to provide flights and the IDC CEO committed to attending the PSC meetings to streamline decisions on access and other aspects of project implementation. The PCU undertook to provide regular briefings on project activities and inform IDC well in advance of the need for flights. The project also chartered vessels where no flights were available, while work on Poivre was made possible through expedition style arrangements (liveaboard).
- Training videos were used to reach staff on the Outer Islands who were unable to travel to Victoria where the trainings were held. This increased participation of key target beneficiaries and has provided a training resource which can benefit new staff.
- **Nomination of Marine Areas.** With the on-going delays to the PA Bill, it was decided at the most recent Steering Committee Meeting (September 2019) to move forward with nominations under MSP Milestone 3, covering shallow areas for the marine areas. The terrestrial areas are to be submitted separately.
- The project was able to adapt to a lot of **staff turnover** and keep continuity.
- The project developed a **gender action plan** (July 2019-June 2020) to take gender equality and the empowerment of women on board for the remaining period of the project. The Outer Islands project (OIP), on recommendations of the OIP Gender Action Plan, updated the recruitment policies for project consultancies to address gender imbalance. Women applicants are being encouraged to respond to advertisements. The ICS Communications officer have been advised to modify contents of media communications and awareness raising programmes to better reflect the contribution of women at various levels, particularly in areas of leadership and those that challenge gender stereotypes. The project is compiling information through mission reports towards a future study about living conditions for women on the Outer Islands.

3.2.2 Partnership Arrangements

The OIP built strong collaborative arrangements with the PSG (in particular MEECC, IDC and ICS) and other projects and initiatives. Table 2 presents an overview of project activities undertaken in collaboration with other projects / partners.

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 projects sit on each others Steering Committees and collaboration has given rise to a range of benefits including: (i) OIP and MSP worked together to develop the nomination files and push for legislation; (ii) MSP helped OIP to get buy in and provided a high level platform and context for the project; (iii) The

MSP has facilitated the gazettelement of OIP marine sites and thus achievement of OIP targets, through the inclusion of OIP marine protected areas under Milestone 3; (iv) The big picture of the MSP was complimented by micro activities of OIP. OIP helped demonstrate within the MSP why a bottom up approach is important, enhanced stakeholder consultations for specific areas, and contributed missing social science data. Meetings, initiated by MSP, have been held between SEYCCAT, SWIOFish3, OIP, PA Finance Project, BioFin and Blue Economy Department to provide an update on key projects that are ongoing and which have strong synergies with the Seychelles Marine Spatial Planning initiative and vice versa.

The OIP has also worked closely with the PAF on Management Plans (MP) and Business Plans (BP), with PAF supporting the training in these areas. The METT scorecards were undertaken by PAF TA, who also provided backstopping for the BPs.

Table 2: OIP and partner collaborations by activity

Outcome/ Outputs	Outputs	Partners	Activities
1.1	Marine Habitat Map	Climate Science & Data Management Section Climate Change Division Ministry of Environment Energy and Climate Change	Developed the Marine Habitat Maps using interpretation of Satellite Images
1.1	Biodiversity & Ecosystem Assessment, Monitoring and Conservation Programs to strengthen PA Management: Coral Reef	University of Seychelles	Coral Collection Facility and Coral workshop
1.4	Protected Areas Legally Established Identified in the Outer Islands and nomination files prepared	The Nature Conservancy (TNC)	Nomination Files (Marine) (Area of Natural Outstanding Beauty/Sustainable Use)
1.7	Increased Education and Awareness levels support Protected Areas management in the Outer Islands	Seychelles National Parks Authority, Ministry of Education, Ecoschool Seychelles, Protected Area Finance Project	National Protected Area Day Celebrations 2017: Celebration of PA day: Demonstration March, Photo exhibition and Radio Quiz Competition
1.7	Increased Education and Awareness levels support Protected Areas management in the Outer Islands	Ministry of Education, Ecoschool Seychelles, Protected Area Finance Project	National Protected Area Day 2019- Project Posters
1.7	Increased Education and Awareness levels support Protected Areas management in the Outer Islands	Seychelles National Parks Authority, Ministry of Education, Ecoschool Seychelles, Protected Area Finance Project	World Biodiversity Day Celebration 2016- School Public Presentation and Art Poster Competition
1.7	Increased Education and Awareness levels support Protected Areas management in the Outer Islands	Biodiversity Conservation and Management Division Ministry of Environment Energy and Climate Change	World Biodiversity Day Celebration 2019- Exhibition, banners and stickers
1.7	Increased Education and Awareness levels support Protected Areas management in the Outer Islands	Plant Conservation Action Group Seychelles	Articles on PCA Newsletter- Vegetation Management Plan and Seagrass protocols

1.7	Increased Education and Awareness levels support Protected Areas management in the Outer Islands	Seychelles Islands Foundation	Articles on SFA Newsletter- Business Plan Training
1.7	Increased Education and Awareness levels support Protected Areas management in the Outer Islands	Marine Conservation Society Seychelles	Facebook Post on attendance of training in database and Coral Collection
1.2	Capacity Building	Seychelles National Parks Authority & GOS-UNDP-GEF Protected Area Finance Project	Enforcement Training
1.2	Capacity Building	GOS-UNDP-GEF Protected Area Finance Project	Management Plan Training
1.2	Capacity Building	GOS-UNDP-GEF Protected Area Finance Project	Business Plan Training
1.5	10 year Business Plans	GOS-UNDP-GEF Protected Area Finance Project	Backstopping from TA for Business Plans for 4 sites
2.2	Land Use Plans completed for targeted Islands	Ministry of Habitat , Infrastructure and Land Transport Islands Development Company	Development and approval of Land Use Plans for Alphonse, Desroches, Farquhar and Poivre
2.3	Ecosystem-wide Zoning & Master Strategy for the Outer Islands in place	The Nature Conservation	Marine Spatial Plan Phase 1 and Phase 2
2.3	Ecosystem-wide Zoning & Master Strategy for the Outer Islands in place	GOS-UNDP-GEF Protected Area Finance Project	Report on Financing options to implement 400,000km2 of new Marine Protection Areas identified under the Seychelles Marine Spatial Plan
2.5	Invasive Species Management	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund	Pest Abatement Plan, Awareness Materials and Capacity Building
2.5	Ecosystem Restoration	GOS-UNDP-AF Ecosystem Based Adaptation Project	Capacity Building in revegetation
Others	METT	GOS-UNDP-GEF Protected Area Finance Project	Final Application of the METTs & Capacity Scorecards

3.2.3 Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management

The project M&E system was well used to monitor risks and assumptions and project performance and to adapt to the challenges it faced as discussed above. The MTR found that the Outer Island project had faced serious implementation and management challenges. Key challenges identified (recorded in PSC minutes) and how they have been addressed are summarized below:

- Delays up to Mid-term were the result of a range of factors including; (i) The appointment of the Island Conservation Society (ICS) as the Responsible Party without going through competitive bidding raised questions (at the GEF Secretariat), delaying project start-up by a year; (ii) ICS lost some of the capacity it had during project inception, causing delays in implementation, since it is responsible for 60% project activities; (iii). Initially, there were delays achieving some project targets due to the delays in approving the Nature Reserves and Conservancy (NRC) Bill and endorsement of Phase 1 of the Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) (PIR, 2019).

- IDC attendance at PSC was irregular up to the MTR, affecting effectiveness of PSC's guidance to project implementation and the ability to access the OI. Since the mid-term the CEO of IDC has regularly attended the PSC.
- It was 'exceptionally difficult' for project partners to access the Outer Islands, causing considerable delays in implementation. This was acutely felt after the April-May 2016 warm period, and Cyclone Fantala, which flattened or destroyed most above ground infrastructure on Farquhar. While IDC organized a field trip for damage assessment in mid-May 2016, only UNDP, the World Bank and ICS participated in the damage assessment¹⁶. PCU staff also experienced difficulties visiting the Islands on project monitoring missions. Since the MTR, the PCU has organized Island transfers directly with IDC, and access to the Islands has not been a problem.
- Project activities on **Poivre** were delayed considerably because there are no facilities for project staff on the Island. It was expected that conservation work could be conducted on Poivre by staff based on neighboring Desroches Island, but the resort on Desroches changed ownership in 2015 and was closed for renovation until 2015 and no inter-island transport was available. ICS recruited conservation staff for Poivre but without facilities on Poivre and without regular tourism boats from Desroches it was impossible for the staff to undertake work, such as ground truthing of maps.
- Loss of facilities on Farquhar (due to Cyclone Fantala).

An **Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE)** for the Seychelles has recently been completed. The findings make specific reference to the GOS-UNDP-GEF Programme Coordination Unit, some of which are related to the Outer Islands Project as highlighted below, along with actions to address the findings (Q3 PR, 2019):

- (i) **Unnecessarily complex project designs;**
- (ii) **Significant weaknesses in results-based management and documenting results.** Since Q2 of 2019, the quarterly progress reporting template has included a section on progress in achieving project indicators as means of strengthening project management towards achieving EOP targets, while ensuring supporting documents are available to project stakeholder and external evaluations. Additionally, co-financing commitments were included as a separate agenda item in the PSC and the progress report Q3 of 2019 was updated to improve tracking co-financing commitments from project partners;
- (iii) **Lack of well-reasoned straightforward M&E frameworks and targets:** in April 2019, staff of the UNDP Regional Service Centre conducted a training in UNDP project management requirements and reporting and M&E for all Project Managers of the PCU. Since this training, the Outer Islands project has implemented a number of M&E protocols - monthly meetings with the Programme Coordinator to review progress, quarterly meeting with other PCU and project's staff to coordinate activities and improve cost effectiveness of implementation;
- (iv) **Significant weaknesses in communicating lessons learnt:** Since the PCU Communications and PR Officer resigned in July 2017, Project Managers have been responsible for producing and disseminating knowledge products. The Outer Islands project has a part time Communications officer for their main implementing partner, Island Conservation Society. Other constraint to communication occurred in 2018, when the PCU website was hacked and all online-publications were lost. The PCU is currently revamping its website and each project will have a dedicated page;

¹⁶ The report of the team was published in the 'Seychelles Post Disaster Needs Assessment-April 2016' a report compiled by the Government of Seychelles.

- (v) **Constraints in promoting gender quality:** A gender assessment of all PCU projects was conducted and a low-cost **gender action plan developed**. In July 2019, UNDP through the technical and financial support of the Global ABS project, also facilitated training in Gender reporting for all PCU Project Managers.

3.2.4 Finance and co-finance

The project has strong financial controls and financial management in place in line with UNDP and Government of Seychelles guidelines. The project went through an Audit in 2016 and a HACT spot check covering June 2017-2018 which were both passed without qualification.

A number of problems up to the mid term stage of the project were cited, which were then resolved, including: (i) Setting up the financial management systems caused initial delays in disbursement (for the first two quarters of project implementation), which meant that ICS had to self-finance their activities over this period¹⁷; (ii) Delayed implementation of ICS activities (due to frequent staff turnover and associated capacity issues) affected compliance with financial management procedures of UNDP which held back cash disbursement¹⁸; and, (iii) there was over-expenditure on project management (PCU) in first years because these activities were not correctly allocated.

Small changes in budget allocations include: (i) For activity 1.1.5 - Assessment, monitoring and conservation of terrestrial fauna, the invertebrates section of the consultancy was dropped and funds allocated elsewhere due to difficulties tracking down the invertebrate consultant; and, (ii) The project budget was refined to provide a budget for output 1.6 (which had no budget) and to adjust allocation of funds between years to take into account the late start of project (in 2014 instead of the stipulated 2013).

As of September 2019, expenditure was US\$1.595 million out of a total budget of 1.785 million. The remaining US\$190,000 budget, is enough to complete the remaining tasks and all funds are expected to be spent by June 2020 when the project closes.

Co-financing confirmed at endorsement was US\$807,962. Significant co-finance has been delivered by the IDC, the Island Conservation Society who are responsible for 60 % of the project outputs and the Seychelles Islands Foundation who have developed protocols and shared lessons on harmonizing of coral reef monitoring methods. Contributions from the private sector included Desroches Island Developments Ltd and Collins Properties Ltd, who contributed to the project design, inception and as members of the project steering committee. As of December 2019, 92% of co-financing had been actualized. This was despite SAIAB /Pangaea, who were the largest co-financer offering US\$4.5 million (43% of the total co-financing committed), only providing 2 years of support amounting to US\$2,229,000 realized co-financing¹⁹. This loss of co-financing has been largely compensated for by a number of co-

¹⁷The MTR states that implementation by ICS in the first quarter of the project (September – December 2014) was affected by delayed disbursement, which occurred while the project was establishing financial management systems and processing was slow between the MEECC and the Central Bank. Although the ICS used its own resources where possible, this delay reverberated into the second quarter because of missed opportunities to transport equipment to the Outer Islands (they missed two IDC boats). Although UNDP (learning from previous projects) addressed this challenge early on, (holding meetings with the Finance Ministry, PCU, NPD), the challenge of slow disbursements still remains.

¹⁸Notably UNDP's 80% rule of expenditures before replenishment can be made.

¹⁹ The privately financed Pangaea Project, partnered in the assessment and monitoring of marine ecosystems for the project. The third annual Pangaea expedition took place on Farquhar from the 16th to

financing partners surpassing their initial commitments, and the ability of the project to attract a number of additional co-financers such as the University of Seychelles related to their coral facility and Alphonse Island Lodge. It is considered likely that the co-financing committed at endorsement will equal the amount actualized by project completion. Minutes of the PSC Meetings capture discussions on co-finance.

Other contributions have been provided by the Plant Conservation Action Group, who prepared the vegetation restoration/ rehabilitation plans for Desroches, Farquhar and Alphonse and the Wildlife Club of Seychelles who are working on a magazine on Protected Areas in the Outer Islands. Although these are contracted activities (not strictly co-financed), the staff is contracted at concessionary rates and absorbing the excess costs as co-financing. Numerous other Civil Society Organisations contributed towards raising education and awareness levels of PA management through participation in the World Biodiversity Day School competitions. An OIP consultant also participated in Nekton Mission in the Outer Islands of Seychelles, researching seagrass and marine algae. Protocols and Management plans developed under the OI Project were used during the mission.

At the Steering Group Meeting in September 2019 the PM advised that some partners were not providing regular updates on co-financing. Under the forthcoming GEF 6 R2R project there could be scope to provide training, which would be extended to include project partners under other PCU/UNDP project, to improve understanding of co-financing reporting requirements.

Table 3: Co-Financing as of December 2019

Source of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Amount Confirmed at CEO endorsement (US\$)	Total co-financing actualized as of December 2019 (US\$)	% actualized to date
National Government	Islands Development Company	In-kind	807,962	822,000	102%
National Government	Ministry of Environment, Energy & Climate Change	In-kind	190,471	218,214	115%
National Government	Seychelles National Parks Authority	In-kind	25,000	15,732	63%
National Government	Seychelles Fishing Authority	In-kind	8,250	7,290	88%
National Government	Ministry of Habitat, Infrastructure and Land Transport	In-kind	11,000	8,500	77%
NGO	Island Conservation Society	In-kind	631,866	694,800	110%
NGO	Save Our Seas / D'Arros	In-kind	2,000,000	2,252,000	113%
NGO	SAIAB / Pangaea	In-kind	4,500,000	2,229,000	50%
NGO	Seychelles Islands Foundation	In-kind	2,000,000	2,139,005	107%
Private Sector	Desroches Island Lodge	Grant	109,500	291,000	266%
GEF Agency	United Nations Development Program	Grant	150,000	125,000	83%
Total A			10,434,049	8,802,541	84%

22nd November 2014. The fourth expedition took place from the 18-25th of March with Farquhar being one of the sites visited, before the Cyclone event of April 2016.

ADDITIONAL CO-FINANCING SECURED BY PROJECT			
University of the Seychelles (Coral Collection Facility)		25,000	
Alphonse Island Lodge		80,399	
Alphonse Foundation		453,795	
SeyCATT		45,608	
Grand Kaz (Sula Sula and Fregata)		7,142	
University of Massachusetts (Recreational Targeted fish)		73,981	
Carleton (Recreational Targeted fish)		15,231	
Bone Fish and Tarpon Trust (Recreational Targeted fish)		28,928	
Seychelles Fishing Authority (Recreational Targeted fish)		19,092	
University of the Seychelles (Sula Sula and Fregata)		13,862	
nekton		22,336.60	
Total B		785,378	
TOTAL A + B	10,434,049	9,587,919	92%

3.2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation – design at entry and implementation

M&E at entry. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is presented in Section IV of the Project Document and was aligned with UNDP and GEF procedures. Roles and responsibilities were set out and key M&E activities costed (i.e. inception workshop, MTR, TE and Audits). As cited in the MTR the quality at entry for the M&E system is problematic for two reasons: (i) A number of indicators and targets were not SMART as explained in previous sections; and, (ii) The dependence on travel to the Islands for M&E purposes on IDC co-finance due to the high cost. This presented real challenges for the PCU and ICS to fulfil M&E functions prior to the MTR as recorded in the minutes of several PSC meetings. It was also not possible for the PSC to visit the islands and no site visits were possible as part of this TE, such that assessment are based on project documentation and the verbal views of others rather than a first hand assessment of the activities / outputs and operational conditions at site level. However, the MTR did undertake site visits and project related site visits were well supported by IDC following the MTR.

M&E at Implementation. Project reporting is in line with UNDP-GEF requirements; the project produced an inception report, four PIRs, regular quarterly reports and Back to Office Reports (BTOR – after monitoring missions). The PIR 2019 ratings are consistent with this TE. As stated in the 2015-2016 PIR a draft PIR for the period 2014-2015, while not a requirement as the project was slightly short of a full year of implementation, would have brought critical challenges to the attention of the PSC and been beneficial for adaptive management. The project has used the minutes of the PSC to capture policy and implementation discussions and decisions, including suggestions for resolving challenges.

M&E was participatory with the PSC expanded to include many relevant institutions which had not been identified in the project document. This is commendable (Best Practice) as it ensured that project implementation and M&E involved all relevant partners. The project M&E is integrated into the partner institutions and all partners have diligently monitored the risks and assumptions upon which project implementation is premised, and that PCU has regularly updated the risk log in ATLAS.

The MTR is widely credited as having been a crucial mechanism for raising and addressing the difficulties facing the project at mid term. The MTR made 16 recommendations. Key issues raised (discussed in other sections of the report) were:

- The Results Framework and the lack of control the project had over many indicators and targets, which was likely to compromise the project's results.
- Project management arrangements given the concern over the speed of implementation by ICS.
- The difficulties regarding access to the Outer Islands.
- Communication with and engagement of IDC.

The MTR found the use of M&E information for adaptive management ineffective as some key partners were taking decisions on project implementation outside of the PSC process, and also because a number of challenges remained unsolved such as: (i) Poivre still had no facilities for ICS project staff. Although project staff were hired and housed in Desroches, they had no access to the Island and no project supported conservation work was happening; and, (ii) Implementation of the revegetation plans were delayed, despite the approval of plans by the PSC.

Subsequent to the MTR the PSC has used M&E information for adaptive management, putting in place a number of corrective actions and solutions as described in previous sections.

Until 2017, GEF did not have a gender reporting requirement and the project design did not originally include **gender** in its aims and objectives therefore assessing project implementation from a gender perspective can provide results for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) in a limited number of areas which essentially focus on the participation of women in project activities and within the wider project context. The Outer Island project is also focused on the establishment of Protected Areas on Islands that are *not* currently inhabited by communities, and hence gender considerations in terms of direct project beneficiaries or socio-economic impacts does not apply. However, it is evident from project records and PSC minutes that women are adequately represented in the key project committees. Furthermore, the empowerment of women can be seen in key women project staff, this includes the Programme coordinator and the project manager at Programme Coordination Unit, the technician at the Climate Science and Data Management Section, at the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, the part time communications officer and the new database manager based at Island Conservation Society (ICS). The CEO of ICS, is a woman and a significant proportion of technical staff (41% of conservation officers/volunteers) on the five outer islands where the implementing partner operates, are women. In the last Project Steering Committee meeting, attendance was reasonably gender balanced, comprising 14 women and 12 men. Additionally, the project has inadvertently seen the involvement of women in training opportunities, 190 female attendance out of 386 participants since mid-2014, and participation of women in all of the projects' workshops and consultative exercises. This has empowered more women in the environment sector (Government, NGO and private sector) with the knowledge and skills in diverse areas and thus built resilience for continued implementation of the projects outputs after the project.

3.2.6 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement has been strong throughout the project - 60% of the project is implemented by ICS and the resort owners on the target islands have been involved in the project (including the PSC). The PCU made special efforts to expand the PSC to include

relevant institutions in the implementation, including the Fisherman and Boat Owners Association, the closest institution to communities relevant to the Outer Islands (MTR). Civil Society have also been involved in the project.

There is representation on the PSC from:

- Government - Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC), of which the Principal Secretary of the Department of Environment is the current chair as the National Project Director, GOS-UNDP-GEF Programme Coordination Unit (PCU), Tourism Department, Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA), Ministry of Habitat, Infrastructure and Land Transport (MHILT), Seychelles Maritime Safety Administration (SMSA), Seychelles Coast Guard (SCG) and Seychelles Ports Authority (SPA).
- NGOS and Civil Society - the Island Conservation Society (ICS), Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA), Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF), Fisherman and Boat Owners Association (FBOA) and D'Arros Research Centre/ Save our Seas (DRC).
- Private sector - Desroches Island Development Company/ Four Seasons Desroches and Alphonse Island Lodge/Alphonse Fishing Company/Blue Safari
- Other partners - The Nature Conservancy/Seychelles Marine Spatial Plan Project (TNC), Islands Development Company (IDC), University of Seychelles/ Blue Economy Research Institute (UNISEY/BERI) and, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

According to PIR 2019 stakeholder participation has been effective, based on the stakeholder involvement plan. The PSC have met 11 times, to review project progress and approve workplans and budgets. The PSC are also engaged with the project throughout the year via emails for approval of TORs, review of draft documents, validation of reports and for any other guidance, as and when needed. It has been the platform to ensure the on-going participation of Government, NGO and private stakeholders in project and PA activities.

However, despite the effort by the project management to engage partners, there have been some issues with participation.

- There has been limited participation of the environment NGOs (ENGOS) on the project. PCU raised the issue at the inception meeting and invited these ENGOS to join but this did not happen²⁰.
- Participation in the PSC was low for key stakeholders at the start of the project such as IDC, however regular attendance was observed by IDC following the MTR²¹, and has also been low for other partners over the second half of the project.
- D'Arros became a 'sleeping partner' to the project²². D'Arros failed in its attempt to create a new PA and the Save Our Seas Foundation (SOSF) D'Arros Research Centre closed in

²⁰The ENGOS opposed an original suggestion to have a joint SC for all PA projects (MTR).

²¹As elaborated on in the MTR the absence of IDC from PSC meetings made it difficult to determine whether PSC decisions had the approval of IDC senior management (e.g. revegetation work on Alphonse Island which started on Alphonse, in line with a project workplan approved by the PSC was stopped by IDC)

²²DRC is on the PSC and part of targets for indicators 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 13, 14 and 16. In some cases (e.g. preparation of nomination files, monitoring terrestrial and marine biodiversity around the Island) D'Arros was quite advanced, and thus could provide lessons to other sites. During project formulation, it was assumed that the OIP would provide an opportunity for partnership and engagement. An application for the gazettment of D'Arros under the old Law was rejected by National Assembly, primarily because of its non-inclusive nature, highlighting that future submissions need to explicitly cover partnerships and stakeholder interests

December 2017 and is yet to re-open. However, prior to this, there was good information exchange on mangroves, seagrasses, pest management protocols and restoration plans.

- The review of the Management Plans was difficult with some stakeholders not participating, e.g. the Mahe Fisherman and Boat Owners Associations and the Sea Cucumber Associations.

Project Communications

The project has served as a good platform for information exchange both through the PSC, trainings and project activities.

The project supported ICS with a part time communications officer to deliver on ICS' communication strategy, with a strong emphasis on information sharing on on-going OIP objectives and activities. This is considered to have been extremely beneficial. The consultant is being paid by the project until the end of March 2020.

The PCU's communication plan was last updated in 2014, however the OI project is delivering on its visibility plan drafted in March 2017. Activities include (PIR, 2018, 2019):

- Jointly organized activities to celebrate theme days (such as the National Protected Area Day and the World Biodiversity Day) with MEECC, Ministry of Education and other UNDP (Access and Benefit Sharing/BIOFIN) and PCU (Protected Area Finance/Ecosystem Based Adaptation) projects.
- Pest Abatement posters shared with schools to commemorate the national protected area day.
- The OIP supported and participated in a public exhibition for the world biodiversity day with MEECC producing adverts, banner and stickers for distribution.
- Use of the PCU Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/GOS.UNDP.GEF.PCU/>) to share information following all capacity building workshops organized and supported by the project.
- There have been 19 articles published, 5 blogs and 15 facebook posts.
- A full list of documents is being compiled to be uploaded onto the PCU website.
- The next ICS newsletter will focus on the project achievements and lessons.

A number of consultees expressed the view that engaging the public in the management of the Outer Islands is challenging as many Seychellois have not visited the Outer Islands and may not feel connected to them, as a result public meetings regarding Outer Islands are generally not well attended²³. Building awareness of the national and global value and significance of these islands is therefore important to boost stakeholder engagement. It was suggested that a new approach is needed to reach the youth, and a mechanism to feedback information / data into schools. The OIP has been supporting efforts to find more successful ways of engaging the public. Of note is OIP's support to finalize documentaries on the OI which will support the consultation on the Land Use Plans (LUPs). The IDC paid for filming on the OIs to be developed into documentaries, but production by the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation faced delays and finalization of the documentaries has been subsequently taken over by the project. The documentaries will be shown on television, with a number to call to register opinions and information on where the LUP can be viewed. The coral facility recently opened at the University of Seychelles (activity 1.1.2) will serve as an education facility on coral for students and is a

²³ An alternative view expressed was that while many Seychellois have not been to the Outer Islands they have a strong nationalistic connection to them.

good communication tool. In addition, the IDC has introduced affordable options for Seychellois to visit the island, in an effort to make them more accessible.

The project is seen as having provided a means of communicating the IOs to the Government. The Nomination for D'Arros triggered interest in National Assembly in the OI and in mid-2016, Parliament expressed the desire to be more informed about the development of the Outer Islands. Consequently, it formed an Outer Islands Select Committee to report on current activities and economic development issues to parliament. The IDC supported trips to all OIs by the National Assembly Select Committee. The report, expected to be tabled early in 2017 but still under-development, will provide a high level policy context / strategic vision. It is hoped that the strategy will be consistent with the work of the OIP.

The project acknowledges that its communication efforts have been focused at the national level, but working with UNDP the aim is to build international awareness of the project's documents, achievements and lessons through wider dissemination. There are many potentially opportunities for the OIP to showcase on the International stage in 2020, for example the UN Ocean Conference Lisbon June. An UNDP Exposure Photo Essay is also under development.

3.2.7 Implementation, coordination & operational issues *

Rated as Satisfactory.

The project has benefitted from a very good management team, which has been largely stable throughout the project period. The NPD has been committed to the project and his close involvement in other key on-going initiatives such as the MSP and CBD, brought significant strategic benefits²⁴.

The **Project Manager** has been instrumental in steering the project beyond its initial difficulties towards notable achievements as of December 2019 (6 months prior to project completion). She has managed the project in a transparent manner, and built strong relationships with all the project partners. It was widely reported that there had been good communications with project partners (including those located on the Outer Islands). Of note is that the Project Manager was also the Acting Programme Coordinator until December 2018²⁵, thus providing guidance to other GEF projects as well as the OIP. Her role as project management is commended in the PIR, 2019 and was widely endorsed through the TE interviews. There has been good support to project partners from the PCU, which has played an important role in financial disbursements.

Project implementation has been guided by the Multi-Year work plan, complemented by **Annual Work plans**. The MTR found work planning to be Moderately Unsatisfactory, however, following the MTR, the project achieved 97% of budgeted expenditure as per its 2018 work plan (\$253,585 out of \$261,367 spent) through careful planning and timely execution of all activities. The Project Manager was diligent throughout the planning process working closely with ICS and the project board to ensure effective execution. Budgets for some activities were too low, for example the development of the Business Plans. All monitoring reporting were on time and a technical review process is in place for project outputs.

²⁴The NPD changed early on in the project implementation process. Both the first and second NPD were engaged with the project and active at the PSC (MTR).

²⁵ The PCU had a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) until April 2018, and then an Acting Programme Coordinator until January 2019.

The project **Steering Committee** held regular biannual meetings, with 11 PSC meetings held to date. SC members stated that they were well informed before meetings and provided with documents to read in advance. The SC reportedly enhanced confidence in the project activities and deliverables given that the group was balanced and different points of views were expressed. The PSC was active in reviewing Terms of Reference and project reports / deliverables. However representation at meetings was low over the past year²⁶, and for a number of organizations there was a high turn over of members, which constrained the ability of new members to have a deep understanding of the project and hence their contribution. The PSC members were generally engaged at the meetings, with some members (TNC MSP Initiative and MEECC) being more active than others particularly in responding to circulated documents.

The UNDP Country Office (CO) provided management and administrative support to the project while the Regional Service Centre (RSC, based in Addis Ababa) provided technical support. High staff turn-over at the RSC is likely to have affected the speed of response and technical support to the project, with three changes on the Regional Technical Advisor responsible for the project in 2 years. However, the current RTA has been in place since 2017. The MTR found that although UNDP applied lessons from previous projects to reduce challenges related to disbursements, it could have been proactive in two areas: (i) engaging IDC more directly to ease challenges of access to islands; (ii) tackling procurement difficulties at ICS; and, (iii) modifying the ecosystem health indicators - the unsuitability of these indicators had been raised during the inception workshop without further action from UNDP.

Implementation was hampered by a range of operational issues. Project specific issues include the delays to disbursements at the beginning of the project, which have been discussed above. There were also some delays in hiring, approvals, arranging meetings, and for some activities the budget was too low relative to the scope of work, e.g. for the Business Plans. High staff turnover at ICS and PSC also hindered efficient delivery especially at the start of the project. In addition, delays to the PA Bill caused project delays and uncertainty.

There are however, a number of operational challenges or factors that are considered to be generic to working in the Outer Islands and so will need to be accounted for in the design of future projects, as discussed below.

Logistical Challenges

- Weather. It is not possible to collect data /monitor on the OIs for 6 months of the year due to SE Monsoon and this needs to be reflected in project planning / work plans. There is also a view that southern areas, while outside of the cyclone belt, may need to be reclassified given the risk of Climate Change and potential increase in cyclone incidence. In early 2019 the Project had to postpone a yacht expedition to Farquhar twice due to Cyclone alerts in the area.
- Access to islands. There are a limited number of flights and seats to the OI and tourists get priority. Given that the Outer Islands are under the management of the Islands Development Company (IDC), which controls transport to and accommodation on the Islands close communication with IDC is central to implementing activities on the OI, as is the ongoing support and commitment of IDC.

²⁶This absence of members, for example, is recorded in the PSC minutes March 2019 and September 2019. As per request from the Chairman letters were forwarded by the PM to the Fisherman and Boat Owners Association (FBOA) and Seychelles Port Authority (SPA) to note their absence and to be reassured of their commitment to the project

- Cost. The costs of working on the OI is very high. As an example, the project hoped to organize an expedition to Farquhar for 10 people in 2018, however they were advised by the Seychelles Maritime Safety Authority, that any vessels sailing beyond Alphonse Island was required to have on board at least 2 security personnel, which the project budget could not cater for. However, the OIP was assisted by the Seychelles Coast Guard at no extra cost.
- Weak internet connectivity restricts communications with the Outer Island. The connection is not typically strong enough for skype calls or to send attachments. This limits work and personal communications and contributes to the isolation of staff, however better connectivity would be expensive. There was no internet connection on Farquhar until April 2017.

Attracting and retaining staff on OIs / generally. Many foreign staff benefited from the OIP's training sessions, many of which are on short term contracts, and therefore knowledge and capacity is typically lost when they leave the country. There is therefore a need to find ways of attracting and retaining national staff on the OI. The METTs were undertaken by the PAF International Technical advisor, and is another area where local capacity needs to be built.

Technical capacity and limited human resource base. While capacity has been developed through the project, there is still a need to build institutional capacity. As with many SIDS, Seychelles is faced with a small resource pool which makes it difficult to hire staff and consultants. While strong consultants were engaged in the project on the whole, the same consultants tend to be involved in PA projects and often have a number of other project commitments leading to delays in deliverables. On the OI a minimum of 3 staff are needed per Island particularly during N-E monsoon when turtles are nesting and there are more guests.

3.3 Project results

The OIP is the first of its kind in the Seychelles to focus on Protected Area management in the OIs, and is therefore a landmark project for the country. It has provided a platform for managing the Outer Islands, which can be built on. The Project engendered stronger dialogue between partners, built institutional capacity at ICS and promoted a move from a top down to bottom up approach. The project has collected a lot of missing data on the OIs and data management has been strengthened (although there is more to do). It has produced a comprehensive range of plans, guidelines and protocols, which have the potential to be adopted to manage other sites in the Outer and Inner Islands.

3.3.1 Overall results (attainment of objectives) *

Annex 3 presents the Progress Towards Results Matrix which indicates progress towards the logframe indicators against end-of-project (EOP) targets. Progress is color coded based on a "traffic light system" where green indicates that the target has been achieved, yellow that the target has been partially achieved at time of the TE and red that target has not been achieved at the time of the TE. The matrix presented in Annex 3 is summarized below in Table 4.

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.

Table 4: Summary – Progress Towards Result Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against end of project targets)

Project Objective: 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.	Achievement Rating	
1. Capacity development indicator score for protected area system: Systemic, Institutional, Individual	Satisfactory	
2. METT scores: Desroches, Alphonse, Poivre, Farquhar, D'Arros		
3. Proposed coverage (ha) of PAs in the Outer Islands (baseline: Aldabra, African Banks, Etoile, Boudeuse) – Marine and Terrestrial - SURPASSED		
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	Satisfactory	
4. Fine-scale habitat maps of terrestrial ecosystems of the Outer Islands; broad-scale maps of marine ecosystems		
5. Number of NGO PA staff with specialised training and/or skills development in; Enforcement, Marine research and monitoring Communications / Public Outreach. SURPASSED		
6. # of Protected Areas identified for Outer Islands and nomination files prepared. SURPASSED		
7. # of conservation zones (fish protection zones; temporal zones; marine conservation corridors; Important Bird Areas) officially recognized in the Outer Islands		
8. Coral reef monitoring - New baselines in place (post-2016 bleaching event), Monitoring protocol		
9. Mangrove monitoring - New baselines in place, Monitoring protocols		
10. Seagrass bed monitoring - New baselines in place, Monitoring protocols		
11. Selected reef fish monitoring - New baselines in place (post-bleaching), Monitoring protocols		
12. Increase in funding support to 4 Outer Islands Protected Areas managed by ICS (US\$/annum) ²⁷ : Funding generated by ICS / Island Foundations ; Contributions of Outer Island businesses (IDC & Hotels, Corporate Social Responsibility Tax		
Outcome 2: Sustainable Development and CMPA management integrated into broader land/seascape in the Outer Islands Outputs		Satisfactory
13. Land Conversion at <i>target sites</i> – No conversion of land set aside as protected within Land Use Plans		
14. Pressures from competing natural resources uses in the Outer Islands land-and seascape are reduced through an integrated natural resource management framework (Marine Spatial Plan), including: Overall Planning Framework, Land Use Plans		
15. Vegetation management and rehabilitation plans in place for 3 Outer Island sites		
16. # of Outer Islands with functioning biosecurity or pest abatement protocols		
17. Number of Govt. and NGO PA staff with specialised training and/or skills development in: Database management, decision support tools, and systematic conservation planning, Re-vegetation, Coastal Erosion Control, Pest abatement procedures. SURPASSED		

Notes: 1/ Objective and outcome indicators 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)

OBJECTIVE LEVEL: 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.

Rated as Satisfactory²⁸.

²⁷Only Desroches and Alphonse have hotels/resorts and only these two sites generate revenue. But the revenue from these sites alone is expected to reach or exceed the original project target.

²⁸At mid term this was rated as unsatisfactory due to an overall loss of capacity at the systemic and institutional level, largely due to loss of capacity in the Island Conservation Society (ICS); limited increase in METT Scores; and mixed progress in progression towards increasing the hectareage of Protected Areas. At MTR, it was expected that the project would have made progress with preparation of the nomination files. However, progress was only registered for Desroches and Alphonse.

Indicator 1 -capacity development for the protected areas system has been 92% achieved overall, missing its target at the systematic, institutional and individual level. The National PA system Capacity Scores are based on the Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA), Island Conservation Society and the Programme Coordination Unit (PCU). The scores increased at the systematic and institutional level relative to the mid-term attainment level.

Indicator 2 - Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scores has been 89% achieved overall. At site level the targets were reached at Poivre. The METT was not applied to D'Arros as no change from the baseline could be reported. There are a number of reasons why the level attained on this indicator can be viewed as a reasonable result. Most significantly, the METT awards higher scores to sites that are actually gazetted, since the OIP sites are yet to be gazetted this has limited the scores possible for the sites. This is, reliant on the endorsement of the Nature Reserve and Conservancy Bill by the Government for terrestrial sites, and endorsement of Milestone 3 of MSP for marine sites (expected to be achieved early in 2020). It is also argued that the METTs penalize sites where there are no indigenous populations, as is the case for the OI project sites, as this is recorded as a zero (rather than a positive score). The METT is a standard applied globally without any adaption to local situations, the tool does not account for the management of cyclones facing the Seychelles' IOs and other SIDS. Improvement of the METT scores since mid-term are due to implementation of protocols, Land Use Plans and Management Plans, and Business Plans produced under the project.

Table 5: Indicators 1 and 2 were narrowly missed at the Objective Level

Indicator	Baseline	Target	End of project	Comment
1. Capacity development indicator score for protected area system: Systemic, Institutional, Individual	Systematic: 60% Institutional: 67% Individual: 48%	73% 73% 62%	62.3% 69.1% 60.3%	Improvement from Mid Term, except at individual level
2. Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) scores	Desroches: 59% Alphonse: 58 % Poivre: 29% Farquhar: 29% D'Arros: 57%	80% 80% 40% 74% 76%	71% 66% 43% 68% Not applied / no change	Sites not gazetted No indigenous population on sites (zero score) Subjective, completed by different people Need customized score cards for small islands – which take into account earthquakes and cyclones

Indicator 3: Proposed coverage (ha) of PAs in the Outer Islands (baseline: Aldabra, African Banks, Etoile, Boudeuse) – Marine and Terrestrial. In 2018 the Government endorsed the **MSP Phase 1** under which 5% of the total EEZ area was defined as zone 1, and 10% was defined as zone 2, increasing the total area protected to 195,000 km². Under Phase 2 a total of 26%, (approximately 350,915 km²) of the Seychelles EEZ - 13% defined as zone 1, and 12.8% defined as zone 2 was declared protected in April 2019. With the approval of milestone 2 of the Marine Spatial Plan (MSP), the target for indicator 3 (the coverage (ha) of official PAs in Outer Islands) at macro scale has been surpassed. At the micro-scale, all Land Use Plans have been approved for all four project sites by the IDC Board with provision for 573.4 ha of new terrestrial protected area and associated MPAs.

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.

Rated as Satisfactory²⁹.

Indicator 4: The target for the terrestrial sites was surpassed with habitats maps for **Farquhar** pre- and post-cyclone, Poivre, Desroches and Alphonse, including St. Francois and Bijoutier completed in November 2018. Maps have also been submitted for D'Arros by SOS. Broad scale marine maps for Alphonse Group, Desroches, Poivre and South Island were completed by Climate Science and Data Management Section officers at the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change in June 2019 and validated by ICS, and for Farquhar group in November 2019.

Indicator 5: The target for **Capacity building** was achieved in 2018 and subsequently surpassed as the project went on to support further training in 2019 related to the development of the marine habitat maps, monitoring of seagrass, water quality protocol, identification of coral taxonomy and obtaining skipper license. The project also supported a UNDP led project management training in April 2019 attended by project managers from PCU and UNDP.

According to the PIR 2019, 36 training sessions with a total of 386 participants (196 males & 190 females) have been organized by the project (PIR, 2019)³⁰. The capacity building initiatives of the OIP were extensive and integrated across a number of the project's activities as illustrated in Table 6, which lists the activities incorporating a capacity building / training component and elaborated on Annex 8. The trainings covered terrestrial and marine biodiversity, ecosystem assessment, monitoring and conservation programs, habitat maps, sea grass, mangroves, coral reef, reef fish, seabirds, sea turtles, tortoise enforcement, business plans, management plans, bio-security, vegetation restoration, database and coastal erosion.

The capacity building initiatives were open to all organizations³¹ and built skills, knowledge, partnerships and in most cases were described as excellent by interviewees (the GIS, fishing, and skipper license training were noted). The project also supported in house capacity building held at MEECC in preparation of broad scale marine habitat maps for the PA sites and at ICS offices for tortoises, sea grass, mangrove and sea turtles protocols and monitoring of coastal erosion.

Issues related to capacity building include: (i) a lot of foreigners working on the OI benefited from the training, which means that this capacity is invariable lost when they leave and does not build national capacity. This is related to the difficulties of attracting nationals to work on the OIs; (ii) while the OIP made efforts to make its training courses as accessible as possible, for

²⁹Rated as Moderately Unsatisfactory by MTR

³⁰For example: (i) **Enforcement training:** Total 26 (17 females & 9 males) staff trained since 2016; (ii) **Marine Research and Monitoring training-** Total 127 (56 females and 71 males) staff participated in various training throughout the years such as in protocols for monitoring of seagrass, coral reef, mangroves, seabirds, reef fish, sea turtles, biodiversity database, water quality, and certified advanced open water diving, skipper license, development of marine habitat maps and management plan for marine sustainable us; (iii) **Communications and Public Outreach:** Total 37 (25 females and 12 males) staff trained since 2016.

³¹ For example, the project supported staff from: (i) ICS and SNPA to obtain their skipper licence; (ii) SFA, SNPA, IDC, ICS participated in training on the protocols to monitor water quality; (iii) SNPA, Nature Seychelles, Marine Conservation Society of Seychelles (MCSS), ICS, SIF, Green Island Foundation (GIF), Wise Oceans, MEECC, UniSey and Global Vision International (GVI) participated in a coral taxonomic identification and collection workshop; (iv) ICS, SNPA, MCSS and Terrestrial Restoration Action Society Seychelles (TRASS) benefited from training on Biodiversity Geo Database.

example through the use of videos, it was still felt that the logistical constraints facing the inclusion of staff based on the OIs in training needs to be further addressed. It is also important that all staff are aware of the training videos – given the high turnover of staff, the videos could for example become a formal part of the induction training for new staff; and, (iii) the project’s first training course on statistics is the only training that was not well received as the trainer was not an environmental statistician and did not clearly link the statistical training to biological issues. However, this was a lesson for the project who then ensured that future trainers were clear that course content needed to be closely tailored to the environment and the Outer Islands.

Table 6: Overview of OIP output / activities which included a capacity building / training component

Output / Activity
1.1.1 Preparation of terrestrial and marine habitat maps
1.1.2 Assessment, monitoring and conservation of coral reefs
1.1.3 Assessment, monitoring and conservation of sea grass beds
1.1.4 Assessment, monitoring and conservation of mangroves
1.1.5 Assessment, monitoring and conservation of terrestrial fauna – Giant Tortoises
1.1.6 Assessment, monitoring and conservation of sea turtles
1.1.7 Assessment, monitoring and conservation of fish
1.1.8 Assessment, monitoring and conservation of seabirds
1.1.13 Produce protocols for monitoring Water quality
1.2.2 Capacity Building of PA Management Staff
1.5.1 Capacity Building workshop to enhance capacity of PA Managers in Sustainable Financing/ Business Planning in Protected Areas
1.6: Protected Area Management Plans Developed and Implemented
2.4.1 Capacity building of MEECC and ICS staff in GIS, database management, decision support tools, mapping, systematic conservation planning
2.4.2 Capacity building for ICS information Management system
2.5.2 Invasive Species Management - bio security measures
2.6.1 Coastal Erosion Control , Beach Profiling, Rain Water Harvesting Systems and Energy and Carbon Footprint
2.6.2 Capacity Building: Island Based Staff to Implement Sustainable Land Management at PA sites

Indicator 6: The number of Protected Areas legally established and demarcated in the Outer Islands is surpassed at the macro level with the approval of milestone 2 of the MSP (as is the case for Indicator 3). At the project (micro) level, the nomination files for new terrestrial and marine protected areas at Alphonse, Desroches, Farquhar and Poivre have also been submitted to the Government for approval.

Indicator 7: Creation of **conservation zones** were finalized in 2018 with the approval of phase 1 of the MSP, with the Aldabra group high marine biodiversity category covering **Important Bird Areas (IBA)**, **marine conservation corridors** for cetacean species, and **shallow features** as fish protection zones.

Indicators 8, 9, 10, 11: All baseline data and monitoring protocols for coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass and reef fish have been completed and are being implemented by ICS, supporting assessment, monitoring and conservation.

Indicator 12: The project was designed to gradually decrease the PA management financing gap. The overall target for the level of financing being generated in support of PA management for four Outer Islands - Desroches, Alphonse, Farquhar and Poivre, is 89% achieved based on

the original total target of US\$512,729. However, there was an error in the baseline set at project design, probably due to conflating different categories of financing. The correct baseline relating to sales and donations from ICS / Foundations for the financial year April 2015 – March 2015 is US\$9,866, far lower than that cited in the Results Framework (US\$106,661). This would translate into an end of project target of around US\$25,550 (using the same proportionate increase as the original target). This would give a total financing target of US\$263,500, which has been comfortably surpassed, with total financing reaching US\$434,999 in April 2018-March 2019. The increase in financing is largely due to the significant increase in hotel and IDC funding, which is over three times higher than the baseline, with an 164% increase on the target. This is also based on the contributions of only 3 islands, as Poivre’s foundation, while established is not yet active. Therefore, while this target has strictly speaking been narrowly missed, based on the correct baseline data it has been surpassed overall. The project will review the data for the financial year April 2019 – March 2020 to determine the annual increase in the last year of the project. It is possible that this may result in the original target being achieved with increases in CSR and hotel contributions possible.

Table 7: Indicator 12: Increase in funding support to 4 Outer Islands Protected Areas managed by ICS (US\$/ annum)

Baseline (April 2015-March 2015)	Target	April 2018 - March 2019	Comment
[Total funded by ICS / Foundations: US\$106,661 as specified in project document (sales and donations)]	274,729 (as specified in original Results Framework but not applicable due to error in baseline)	21,595	Misspecification at project design
Total funded by ICS / Foundations: US\$9,866 (revised, correcting error in project document) (sales and donations)	25,500 (estimated at Terminal Evaluation)	21,595	All 4 islands have established foundations, but Poivre’s foundation is not yet active
Total Funded by Hotel & IDC: US\$103,406 (Hotel level, IDC Landing fees)	138,000	364,511	Target for CSR tax 70% achieved
CSR Contributions: US\$17,886 (Based on Alponse and Desroches)	100,000	70,363	Data for April 2019-March 2020 should also be reviewed to see if targets are met

Outcome 1 had seven Outputs and 23 activities as summarized below. Additional information is provided in Annex 7.

Output 1.1: Biodiversity & Ecosystem Assessment, Monitoring and Conservation Programs to strengthen PA Management (output 1.1). The project supports 13 activities under this output designed to: prepare terrestrial and marine habitat maps for Farquhar, Poivre; Desroches and Alphonse; undertaken assessments, monitoring and conservation of coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves, terrestrial fauna, sea turtles, fish and seabirds; undertaken assessments to understand the current and potential climate change impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem functioning; the establishment of ‘citizen science’, a recreational diver and fishing observation monitoring programme; the develop of Training and Reference for the marine habitat mapping & monitoring programs on Aldabra; and, the production of protocols for monitoring water quality. The Monitoring **Protocols (Activities 1.1.2-1.1.9 and 1.1.13)** support consistent / standardized data collection across a range of key habitats and fauna which will enhance monitoring and international reporting requirements. Step-wise use manuals have also been developed. They also serve as a basis for discussing issues with stakeholders. The

protocols are being implemented, for example the erosion protocol informed expansion of a beach bar on Alphonse.

Output 1.2: Institutional capacity to plan and implement protected area expansion is strengthened. The original aim was to hire conservation and ecosystems management staff for Farquhar and Poivre Protected Areas, but this was revised to only cover Farquhar due to the lack of facilities on Poivre. The project has also supported Capacity Building of PA Management Staff.

Output 1.3: Infrastructure and resources enhanced to enable Protected Areas management. The project aimed to establish PA infrastructure on Farquhar and Poivre, strengthen PA infrastructure on Desroches and Alphonse, and, establish/strengthen transport and equipment resources for PA management on 4 Islands. Equipment provided under activity 1.1.1 provided direct benefits. For example, on Alphonse: (i) a boat increased the capacity to monitor and ICS's presence; (ii) Dive equipment increased the ability to monitor marine areas; and, (iii) Buoys have been used to clearly demarcate a channel of protected coral reef in a lagoon, which has reportedly led to tangible results in coral health. For the **Citizens science** activities (1.1.10 / 11) there was a problem with equipment in Alphonse, the Cyber tracker field tool provided is not compatible with windows 10, and it has not been possible to upload data collected.

Output 1.4: Protected Areas identified in the Outer Islands and nomination files prepared. (discussed above)

Output 1.5 Protected Area management structures in place and sufficiently finance. This was supported by the formulation of 10-year Business Plan for the Island Conservation Society (ICS) to increase financial sustainability of PA management systems (**Activity 1.5.2**). The Business Plans present an analysis of the level of finance that needs to be generated to manage the sites, which is core information if the management plans are to be implemented. Given that BP for Protected Areas is new in the Seychelles it is important that the OP examples are shared to support replication. Stakeholders found the Alphonse Business Plan useful, it presented a SWOT analysis, suggested rotating rangers between different islands to develop the capacity of rangers, breaks down the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundation and brought out reliance on tourism for financing.

Output 1.6 Protected Area Management Plans developed and implemented. Under the PA Bill, Management plans will be mandatory and will require the inclusion of a financial sub-section, which can be informed by the BP developed by the OIP.

Output 1.7: Increased Education and Awareness levels support Protected Areas management in the Outer Islands. The project raised awareness levels regarding Outer Islands Conservation via a range of public awareness and education campaigns.

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

All indicators (13, 14, 15, 16 and 17) under this outcome were achieved by 2018 (PIR, 2018), with the project then continuing to work with the MSP on the additional 26% of the EEZ under protection. Some of the key activities and achievements under this outcome have been the production of Land Use Plans (LUP), restoration of 15 hectares of native vegetation on

Desroches, creation of a new tortoise sanctuary, rehabilitation efforts on Farquhar, and development of biosecurity and pest abatement protocols for the outer islands (PIR, 2019).

Indicator 13. Land Conversion at target sites – no conversion of land set aside as protected within Land Use Plans. The Vegetation Management Plans for Alphonse, Desroches and Farquhar were presented to the IDC Board and endorsed by the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change in 2017, while the **Land Use Plans** for Alphonse, Desroches, Farquhar and Poivre were approved by 2018, by the IDC board and submitted to the National Planning Authority. The LUPs have also been incorporated in the IDC Outer Islands Development Plan 2018-2023.

The **Land Use Plans** were developed from scratch on the project's demonstration islands and will be used to guide potential future developments on the Island. They serve as a tool for the Ministry of Habitat, Infrastructure and Land Transport (MHILT) to engage various stakeholders – DOE, SFI, ICS, IDC, and support **integrated planning**. In theory the LUP allows stakeholders to have a direct input into what happens in the OI and will become legally binding once consultations on LUPs are finalized.

IDC supported access to the island to undertake the LUP. The team started with Desroches /Alphonse and were then able to refine their approach before moving on to Poivre/Farquhar³². The approach to developing the LUP can be replicated for other islands. The presence of ICS was a key factor facilitating the land use planning process, enabling the land use planners to gain an understanding of environmental situation / issues and reflect them into the land use plans. The process was also enhanced through the ability to interact with other consultants on site – for example those working on seagrasses in Poivre. The process was difficult on **Poivre** as there were no ICS staff on site and the team flew back and forth from Desroches, and the terrain was difficult to cover. Access to all areas was also difficult on Farquhar because of the cyclone. The field work took 4 days (by 2 people) on each island. The LUP are based on site observations, but also draw on the knowledge of IDC's CEO of the islands, formally capturing this information was therefore an important part of the process. A challenge was the missing tourism data. For example, there are no public data available on **visitor numbers** (national and international) and trends for Alphonse. These data are fundamental for conservation planning and land use planning and could be potentially held by IDC. The Ministry of Tourism / NBS are planning to develop a Tourism Satellite Account in 2020, which is likely to collect visitor arrivals and expenditures in the OI, and could potentially fill this gap.

The pressures from competing natural resources uses on the Outer Islands land and seascape are yet to be reduced because although the land use plans have been formulated, they need to be approved along with the gazettelement of the PAs. Formal approval of the LUPs rest with the Ministry of Habitat, Infrastructure and Land Transport (MHILT) as per Government procedures. However, the project is supporting the public review of the plans through production of documentaries as discussed above. The LUP's urgently need to become legally binding so that they can be formally used in development decisions.

Indicator 14: Pressures from competing natural resources uses in the Outer Islands land- and seascape are reduced through an integrated natural resource management

³²Work on the LUP for Farquhar was delayed by the need to base the plans on a vegetation rehabilitation plan, which was held back by the extensive damage caused by Cyclone Fantala. Work on LUP for Poivre was also delayed by the lack of facilities on the Island, which meant staff could not be located there, and access issues.

framework (Marine Spatial Plan), including: Overall Planning Framework, Land Use Plans.

Prior to the project, a planning process for the sustainable management and conservation of the landscape/seascape of the Outer Islands, or information systems or mechanisms for prioritizing and analyzing trade-offs between competing interests were lacking. The fragility of the ecosystems of the Outer Islands, the interconnectedness of different terrestrial and marine habitats, and their susceptibility to degradation at the wider landscape level were not understood or integrated into any information or planning systems. IDC's development plans for the Outer Islands focused primarily on economic development. The project design recognized that biodiversity conservation at the selected project demonstration sites would not in itself achieve the country's goal of integrating conservation and sustainable economic development throughout the Outer Islands. Therefore, the project was also designed to support broad-scale ecosystem planning, which integrated Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land Management (SLM) approaches into development processes and plans.

Integrated planning is needed at different scales through a variety of mechanisms. With the advent of the MSP, work on the ecosystem-wide zoning and master strategy was led by the Government with technical support from the TNC. This indicator was therefore adapted to be compatible with the national Marine Spatial Plan initiative, which is providing the strategic zoning (macro-level) context for the entire EEZ. The project hence worked to complement the MSP by providing detailed planning around the Islands (micro-level), while supporting the MSP in extensive consultations to address competing natural resources use in the marine areas of the Outer Islands. At the macro level the target was achieved (along with indicators 3 and 6), with the approval the MSP Phase 1 and Milestone 2 approved. At the micro level, as per indicators 3 and 13, the targets were achieved with four Land Use Plans submitted to the National Planning Authority, Ministry of Habitat, Infrastructure and Land Transport (MHILT), as discussed above.

The project successfully complemented the high level Government MSP process, with its work at the micro level (pilot sites). Many of the initiatives at the micro level have strengthened integrated thinking and planning, notably the Land Use Plans and the Management Plans, which have integrated the views of partners and addressed tradeoffs at site level. The cross-sectoral dialogue to develop these plans has helped with communications between different partners – highlighting synergies and tradeoffs

Indicators 13 & 15: The three **Vegetation Management Plans** for Alphonse, Desroches and Farquhar were submitted to the IDC board and endorsed by the Department of Environment Energy and Climate Change in 2017. 15 ha of native forest have been restored on Desroches and a tortoise sanctuary was designed and built within the restored area. IDC concentrated rehabilitation efforts on North Island of Farquhar following the Fantala cyclone, with rehabilitation on hold on the other islands due to a lack of manpower (PIRs, 2018 / 2019).

Indicator 16: Pest Abatement protocols for the four Islands (Alphonse, Poivre, Farquhar and Desroches) were approved by the IDC Board in 2017. Aldabra and D'Arros/ Save our Seas have rigorous **biosecurity protocols** defined and implemented. Awareness leaflets, banners, posters and sign boards were also developed by the project and handed over to IDC.

Indicator 17: This indicator related to specialized training of Government and NGO staff in coastal erosion control, biosecurity procedures, re-vegetation and database management has been surpassed. In 2018-2019 the project supported further training on vegetation management, on site coastal erosion, database management and information systems.

Outcome 2 had 6 outputs and 9 activities as summarized below. Additional information is provided in Annex 7.

Output 2.1 – Spatially based decision support system in place to enable integrated natural resource management in the Outer Islands. MEECC's GIS platform serves as the data repository for MSP, and this initiative / activity was taken over by MSP. A Decision Support System was said to be too grand a term for the MEECC's data system – it is essentially a database. In 2014/ 15 the MSP requested data to run the MARXAN model and a lot of people / organizations provided data solely for MSP process, with different agreements made on data use. The OIP has supported the MEECC's Climate Science and Data Management Section by: (i) paying the salary of a GIS technician, who will join the Ministry when the OIP ends (and is referred to as an example of gender transformation by the project); (ii) provision of equipment such a plotters and laptops; and, (iii) Capacity building. The GIS Unit consists of 4 people. There is a lot of demand for the unit's services and it requires more capacity, training and support, especially given that the support from TNC's GIS consultant will end when TNC's support ends.

Output 2.2 land use plans completed for targeted islands. The project supported land use plans for Desroches, Alphonse, Poivre, and Farquhar and is in addition supporting the production of documentaries on the OI so that the public can meaningfully engage in the consultation on the LUP, as discussed above.

Output 2.3 Ecosystem-wide Zoning and development of a Master Strategy for the Outer Islands in place. This output was designed to be the mechanism for deciding where and how the project's demonstration sites could be replicated at other sites in the future. Execution of this output was revised at implementation to align with and complement the work of the MSP. The MSP set out the macro context for marine spatial planning, while the OIP focused on the micro level. The OIP has closely collaborated with the MSP throughout who have led on the macro level strategy for the OI. The project intends to support TNC in 2020 as the MSP moves forward with the development of Management Plans and site specific allowable activities.

Output 2.4 institutional capacity for the implementation of the Integrated Natural Resource Management Framework. The project has built the capacity of the Ministry of Environment Energy and Climate Change and the Island Conservation Society (ICS) staff on information Management systems, Geographic Information System (GIS), database management, decision support tools, mapping, and systematic conservation planning.

Under activity 2.4.2, which was added following the MTR, the OIP is providing support to develop ICS' information management systems. Compiling biodiversity information into a central database is challenging. Biodiversity is complex and interrelated, but data sets typically focus on specialized areas e.g. corals, turtles, beaches, or on climatic data in a given geographic area, while are kept in single files, restricting how the data can be analyzed and linked to other subsets of data (e.g., single files in different locations make it difficult to correlate the health of a particular coral reef to the sea surface temperature at that locality during a particular time period).

The Outer Islands Project, has tried to address this data challenge at ICS by designing a single system that can integrate all types of biodiversity data. It provides a standardized data entry platform that has the ability to integrate data from any institution, is accessible to multiple users online, can incorporate shared properties and can synchronize with open source QGIS mapping

software. The data base is flexible enough to accommodate visual sightings as well as complex data and records location, species type and numbers. The system developed is a big step forward in biodiversity data management in Seychelles – it will harmonize data and when up and running has the potential to be ‘revolutionary’ for Seychelles.

The database has been designed from scratch to initially store and manage the data collected by the OIP at its four project target sites, but it is intended that it will handle all incoming data from all island sites. It will cover both terrestrial and marine ecosystems, although it is initially being set up for priority species groups. ICS have 25 different types of ecological data to store and analyse, but the budget available only allows work on 4 types of data – turtles, mangroves, tortoise, coral and reef fish. Therefore, there is a need for more funding and / or a second phase of support.

The ICS database is to be linked to the DOE database system and would come under the rules currently applied at DOE database unit. Sensitive data would *not* be freely available. The details of how this would work are still to be discussed and a data sharing agreement between MEECC and ICS will be needed. The MEECC Geodatabase, DSS, under the Climate, Science Data Management Section works with GIS data, and is complementary to ICS’ ecological data, which have a geo-location. It would be beneficial if there was greater awareness between MEECC and ICS over the structure and capabilities of the two databases, so that inputs can be tailored.

Seychelles recognizes the need to move towards a centralized data management system. Currently data remains fragmented across numerous data holders and in silos, there is no centralized database even within organizations. Different databases could be joined together (not necessarily in same location) once data sharing policies and agreements are in place. The National Institute Science Technology and Innovation (NISTI), under the Ministry of Business Investment and Entrepreneurship, is trying to set up centralized database. It was also suggested that once the Ocean Authority is up and running it could be responsible for managing the data. Another issue highlighted is that data sharing on the Outer Islands remains poor, and many foreign researchers have not made their data available to the Government of Seychelles or any local partners.

The database management work at ICS is a good example of how to bring data into one centralized system at the organization level, and has the potential to inform other institutions on data management / systems. Since the system developed can be adopted by other nature-based institutions, the Outer Islands Project supported a capacity building training workshop in April 2019. Participants (8 males and 7 females) were from ICS, Seychelles National Parks Authority, Marine Conservation Society of Seychelles, Green Islands Foundation, Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, Terrestrial Restoration Action Society Seychelles and two students. The training highlighted how data can have even more value when synergies and partnerships can be derived from the information.

Output 2.5 - Ecosystem Restoration and Invasive Species Management supported Protected Area management objectives. Vegetation management plans have been completed and 15 hectares restored on Desroches, and biosecurity measures are being implemented on the four Outer Islands, supported by training and awareness raising.

Output 2.6 Monitoring & Management of Ecosystem Functions reduce land and resource degradation at Protected Area sites. This included the development and implementation of programs for Coastal Erosion Control, Beach Profiling, Rain Water Harvesting Systems and Energy and Carbon Footprint on the four Outer Islands. This was supported by capacity building

activities to ensure that Island based staff implement Sustainable Land Management at PA sites.

Box 2: The Outer Island Project and the Marine Spatial Planning Initiative

The project was designed to support various **integrated natural resources management activities** at both the systemic and site level. The project was to support the development of a **spatially-based DSS (Decision Support System)** that could be used in cross-sectoral land/seascape planning, management and policy development, across different sectors and different scales. Based on the DSS, the project was to facilitate the creation of an **ecosystem-wide zoning and master strategy for the Outer Islands**, which would provide the first coherent strategic level strategy for the whole of the Outer Islands of the Seychelles, including both terrestrial and marine realms, balancing development and conservation needs. The Strategy would become the basis for identifying additional protected areas complementing those included in the GEF-funded project and other conservation zones³³, as well as the template for the development of sustainable economic activities in the Outer Islands. The role of the OIP in these activities were revised following the start of the MSP process, with the MSP taking the lead on both.

A number of the OIP's indicators were also linked to the progress of the MSP initiative:

- Indicator 3*: Proposed coverage (ha) of PAs in the Outer Island (marine and terrestrial)
 - **Marine target** surpassed through Milestones 1 & 2 of MSP
- Indicator 6*: Number of Protected Areas Identified for Outer Islands and nomination files prepared
 - Macro target: 15% of the Marine area identified for protection under MSP
 - Micro target: Nominations files prepared for PAs at 5 pilot sites
- Indicator 14*: Pressure from competing natural resources use of OIs land and seascape are reduced through an **integrated Natural Resource Management Framework** (Marine Spatial Plan), including Overall Planning Framework and Land Use Plans). Given that the MSP exercise involves the entire Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), it was agreed that the project would provide detailed planning at the micro-level for the target sites, while the MSP tackles the larger scale planning for the whole EEZ. The OIP target was changed to cover Land Use Plans only.

Annex 7 provides a summary table of project achievements to date at the *activity* level based on a review of the quarterly progress reports, the PIRs, work-plans and interviews with stakeholders.

Of the 32 project activities, 7 are on-going as of the end of January 2020 as follows:

- Activity 1.1.6 - Assessment, monitoring and conservation of sea turtles is on track for completion February 2020;
- Activity 1.1.13 water quality work is being finalized. Water quality materials have been purchased and handed over to ICS.
- Activity 1.4.2: Preparation of nomination files for both terrestrial and marine areas were submitted to GOS in December 2019. A limited amount of money has also been allocated to support development of regulations once the PA Bill is approved.

³³Other Conservation Zones included: i) new high priority marine and terrestrial conservation zones (refugia, biodiversity hotspots, resilient coral reefs, temporal protected zones for spawning aggregations, nesting sites, etc.); ii) conservation corridors (for migratory species and seabirds to maintain connectivity between islands); iii) hotspots potentially threatened by alien invasive species (including those associated with increased maritime traffic); iv) areas of high potential climate change impacts (e.g. coastal erosion and flooding); v) priority 'blue carbon' sequestration areas (seagrass beds and mangroves); vi) priority terrestrial areas to prevent / mitigate erosion impacts; and vii) priority terrestrial areas for rehabilitation of native vegetation and /or reintroduction of native species.

- 1.7.1: Increased education and awareness level regarding Outer Island Conservation is ongoing, with emphasis on disseminating project outputs / findings over remaining months of the project.
- 2.1.3: Maintenance and application of DDS at MEECC Data Management Section – ongoing support.
- 2.2.1: Land Use Plans – working on documentaries to support the public review of the LUPs (indicators met). In August 2019, given that the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) will not be producing the documentaries as planned, and the importance of this activity of the project (linked to Output 2.2, indicators 13 and 14), the project is supporting the production of mini documentaries and TV spots for the public review of LUPs the documentaries. This is planned for completion March 2020.
- 2.3.2: Preparing and approving spatial management strategy and public consultations – ongoing support to TNC, for example on the development of Management Plans which MSP will be working on in 2002.
- 2.4.2: Capacity building for ICS Information Management System – it is hoped that this database will be operational by June 2020.

Table 8 provides a breakdown of activities per Island and serves as a snapshot of the extensive support provided by the project both in terms of geographic reach and the range / breath of technical and practical support provided. The project provides an example of how different analytic and planning tools build on each other and are ultimately all integrated into a management plan for a site. For example, habitat plans informed the vegetation maps which were incorporated into the Land Use Plans. The MP pulls together all the marine and terrestrial plans and protocols.

Table 8: Breakdown of OIP activities per island (14 individual sites)

Outcome/ Outputs	Activities/Outputs	Desroches	Poivre		Alphonse Group			Farquhar Group							
			North Island	South Island	Alphonse	St Francois	Bijoutier	North Island	South Island	Goëlettes	Bancs de Sable	Dépose	Ille du Millieu	Lapins	Aldabra
1.1	Terrestrial Habitat Map														
1.1	Marine Habitat Map														
1.1 Monitoring protocol & management plans	Coral reef														
	Reef Fish														
	Seagrass														
	Mangroves														
	Terrestrial Fauna														
	Sea turtles														
	Seabirds														
1.1	Establishment of Citizen Science- Recreational Diver														
1.1	Establishment of Citizen Science - recreational fisheries														
1.1	Monitoring of water quality protocol														
1.1	Marine Habitat Mapping and Monitoring programs														
1.2	Set up Conservation Centre (including staff salaries)														
1.3	Equipment for Conservation Centre														
1.4	Nomination Files (Marine) (Area of Natural Outstanding Beauty/Sustainable Use)														
1.4	Nomination Files (Terrestrial)														
1.5	10 year Business Plans														
1.6	Protected Area Conservation Management Plans														
2.2	Development of Land Use Plans														
2.4	Development of Geo Biodiversity Database														
2.5	Ecosystem Restoration (Restoration and Vegetation Management Plan)														
2.5	Invasive Species Management (Pest Abatement Plan)														
2.6	Coastal Erosion Control, Beach Profiling														
2.6	Rain Water Harvesting Systems														

3.3.2 Relevance *

Relevance is rated as Highly Satisfactory.

As discussed above, the project addresses 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 initiative, the overarching strategic framework for marine conservation in the Seychelles. The project is also recognized as a key means for the country to progress towards the CBD and Aichi targets on biodiversity conservation, PA coverage and PA finance. 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. The project is also aligned with UNDP's strategic priority to unlock the potential of protected areas and to conserve biodiversity while contributing to sustainable development and to the delivery of SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 13 (Climate Action), 14 (life below water) and 15 (Live on land). Furthermore, the project is consistent with the goals of GEF Biodiversity Strategic Objective One (BD1), which is to improve sustainability of Protected Area systems and GEF Land Degradation Strategic Objective Three (LD3), which is to reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape.

As discussed above the project design took into account the views and needs of all key stakeholder, and stakeholder engaged was high throughout the project among the key project partners (e.g. MEECC was consistently supportive, ICS was responsible for 60% of the implemented activities and IDC support was fundamental to the project's operation).

3.3.3 Effectiveness*

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 manage tradeoffs (conflicts) in the operationalization of the MSP and site level management plans.

At the objective level the project narrowly missed 2 out of 3 targets. Objective 1 relating to the capacity score cards was not met despite significant capacity building efforts by the project, and objective 2 based on the METT, for which the sites were penalized for not being official protected areas.

The project constructively worked with partners to resolve the difficulties holding the project back up to the MTR towards delivering on its targets in the context of the challenging operating environment of the Outer Islands. The project worked closely with the MSP facilitating the achievement of a number of the OIP's indicators and also contributing to the effectiveness of the MSP initiative.

While a gender mainstreaming strategy and/or human rights-based approach were not incorporated in the design, a gender strategy was developed and the project has latterly reported key results on gender equality.

3.3.4 Efficiency *

Efficiency is rated as **Satisfactory**.

The project was awarded a one-year no cost extension due to delays in delivery at mid term (delivery on activities at mid term was around 40%). The factors contributing to these delays were addressed following the mid term review to ensure efficient project execution in the second half of the project. These factors included capacity issues at ICS, access to the islands, initial disbursements issues. The project ultimately has surpassed 4 of its targets and gone beyond its planned activities in a number of cases (e.g. support to LUP documentaries). The M&E systems ensured effective and efficient project management – the MTR resulted in a needed restructuring of the project management arrangements (divesting ICS of many of the management responsibilities). The project made efficient use of existing partnerships. For example, the close working relationship with MSP brought mutual benefits, and the co-financing arrangements highlight the complementarity of the project aspirations with those of national (and international) partners.

3.3.5 Country ownership

Country ownership is high. The project is in line with development priorities and plans for the country - it is grounded in the government's stated objective of expanding PA to the Outer Islands (Presidential Memo of 2011), management options for non-Government and Private sector (the previous GEF PA project) and the MSP process.

The ICS was responsible for 60% of project activities, and all key stakeholders participated in the PSC. The PSC is chaired by the MEECC and included representatives from a number of Ministries, promoting integrated working. There is also reportedly a high level Government support from the President and National Assembly. However, the delays in the enactment of the PA Bill have delayed the project and meant that adaptations in the project's approach were needed in order for it to meet some of its key objectives.

Partners continue to contribute co-finance identified during the project formulation, demonstrating ownership of the issues the project tackles.

3.3.6 Mainstreaming

The project has links to a number of UNDP priorities including improved governance, climate change mitigation and capacity development. For example, the project's work on Farquhar provides insights on the challenges of protected area management in the OI in the face of climate change and on improved preparations to enhance resilience to climate change.

The project aligned with priorities set out in UNDP's Strategic Plan (2014-2017) Primary Outputs:(2.5) - Legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions enabled to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, in line with international conventions and national legislation; and Secondary Output (1.3) Solutions developed at national and sub-national levels for sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste. It also linked to *UNDP's Biodiversity and Ecosystems Global Framework 2012-2020 Signature Programme #2: Unlocking the potential of protected areas (PAs), including indigenous and community conserved areas, to conserve biodiversity while contributing to sustainable development.* The

project at design supported expected Country Program Document (CPD) Outcome - by 2016, the governance systems, use of technologies and practices and financing mechanisms that promote environmental, energy and climate-change adaptation have been mainstreamed into national development plans, specifically through then indicator - area of terrestrial and marine ecosystems under improved management or heightened conservation status increased by 50 per cent by end of 2016.

3.3.7 Sustainability

3.3.7.1 Replication

The 4 sites managed by ICS through this GEF project are intended to serve as **demonstration** sites to show the viability of establishing tourism-funded PA units at other sites in the Outer Islands. It was envisaged that ICS and possibly other NGOs would operate a network of Protected Areas throughout the Outer Islands, with each island employing full time conservation staff engaged in the protection and rehabilitation of the marine and terrestrial biodiversity using plans and monitoring tools developed by the project.

The demonstration sites include proposed marine and terrestrial PA units that range from those corresponding to IUCN Categories I and II, in which conservation will be the primary guiding objective, to those under Category VI, in which a balance between conservation and sustainable use will be sought. The pilot sites reflect a range of features in terms of ICS presence, tourism activity, ease of access and vulnerability to natural disasters, as summarized in Table 9. There are therefore many lessons that can be drawn and applied to other islands facing similar characteristics.

Farquhar provides insights and lessons in climate change adaptation. A new ICS office, completed two months before cyclone Fantala hit (April 2016), and was destroyed. IDC played an important role in getting ICS back on the island, and supported the construction of a new cyclone resilient conservation center. As a result of the work on Farquhar both before and after the cyclone, ICS now have a better idea of the effect of climate change on islands / wildlife. It is argued that projects should not avoid cyclone prone areas, as learning is important. In the case of Poivre – the assessments and planning were undertaken ahead of a resort becoming active, which puts the island in a strong pro-active management position.

Table 9: Key features of Demonstration Islands

DESROCHES	POIVRE	ALPHONSE	FARQUHAR
Island Foundation Four Season Hotel Blue Safari ICS on site Relatively good access Using protocols	Island Foundation but awaiting for new investor No ICS Presence Opportunistic access by boat from Desroches Business Plans set out cost of conservation initiatives Conservation tools ready to be applied	Island Foundation Alphonse Lodge Blue Safari ICS on site Three islands and two atolls Boats very important to cover area Trialing being open for tourism all year Using protocols	Island Foundation (contributing since Sept 2018) Blue Safari One small site for tourism [proposal for larger site] Twelve islands Hit by Cyclone Large area, need to be practical Remote (flights once a week) Using protocols

Notes:

1/Tourism developments will be situated on the North Island of Farquhar and the North Island of Poivre, neither of which are included within the boundaries of the proposed PAs

2/ On **Desroches** and **Alphonse**, which will be marine Sustainable Use Areas, the hotels and villas are likely to expand in the next few years, which will increase the contributions made by hotel and villa owners (which are based on visitation rates) to the Island Foundations.

3/As reported in PIR 2018, ICS was endeavoring to secure funds to continue the activities on Farquhar. IDC have committed a conservation levy as from October 2018 but this will cover only 1/3 of the budget for Farquhar, once the funds from the Grant Agreement is spent.

4/ Island Foundations for Desroches, Alphonse, Farquhar and Poivre have been formed and consist of representatives from ICS, MEECC, IDC, Private Sectors. The Island Foundations meet twice per year to oversee all conservation programs and activities for each new Outer Island Protected Area, with technical inputs and guidance from the ICS staff on each island and the overall ICS Science Committee. Foundations for Alphonse, Desroches and Farquhar met in April 2019. Poivre Foundation have not met as activities on Poivre had been put on hold since the MTR.

It could be argued that the 'easiest' islands were selected in the sense that they had an airstrip and on-going activities, but these sites were also seen as a priority as they are at front line of development and need protection. Other areas which are much smaller in land area and where it is not possible to establish a base and / or are of high biological value but not suitable for economic activities are likely to need a different approach to conservation. Roaming research vessels could be used to access smaller islands where a base is not feasible, but the financing of such endeavors remains a challenge. While there is an appreciation of the benefits of a **PA systems approach** for both the Inner and Outer Islands, there is still a fair amount of opposition to the introduction of a cross-financing mechanism, where (some) money from the Island Foundations would be allocated to supporting the PA system rather than solely being allocated to finance conservation on the island generating the funding.

The Protected Area Management tools developed by the project – protocols, plans, data and approach for developing nomination files can be replicated on other islands. Protected Area Management Plans will be required under the Protected Areas Bill, and it is hoped that the templates and approaches employed by the OI will be endorsed by the Government. The MSP will also be developing MPs in 2020, and can learn from and build on the lessons and methodology of the OIP, although the use of the OIP's MP framework has yet to be agreed. It is not clear at this stage to what extent the project's management tools are likely to be used on the Inner Islands, or if they will be used at all by other organizations with different levels of capacity and their own existing processes.

3.3.7.2 Financial Risks to Sustainability

Financial sustainability is rated as Likely.

Financial risks to sustainability are considered to be low at the project sites for a range of reasons:

- The Seychelles has a policy of pursuing high end tourism on the OIs and requires each Outer Island to set up a Trust Fund, whereby the island's resort, through a tourism levy, pays for conservation / PA management activities. Continued financial support from the private sector once the GEF investment ends is therefore institutionalized on Outer Islands suitable for tourism activities.
- There has been a high level of co-finance – for example the new owners of Desroches Island inherited and agreed to honor the commitment of the previous owners to conservation and participation in the project.
- Ongoing support from SeyCATT for conservation efforts / research within MPA is anticipated targeting activities such as: expanding and improving management of marine

protected areas and replenishment no- take zones; developing and/or improving coastal zone management, fisheries, and marine policy and regulatory protection regimes; and coral and mangrove restoration projects.

- The project has also put in place several measures to support financial sustainability: (i) the anticipated gazettement of the project sites as Protected Areas, strengthens the enabling environment for mobilizing additional PA finance through island Trust Funds and other sources; (ii) Formulation of ten-year business plans to strategize on, and ensure financial sustainability of the PAs.
- The total finances available to the system have more than doubled from 2013 to 2018/19 – from US\$189,000 to US\$434,999.

However, there are also reasons to be cautious and to continue to seek out new and innovative funding for the area. Island Foundations are a good basis to work from in terms of sustainable financing for protection and sustainable use, but 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. For some sites additional funding will be needed. Most of the existing mechanisms of PA financing are dependent on tourism development, which 1) may limit the establishment of new PAs to areas where tourism development is viable unless cross subsidization mechanisms are established, and 2) creates additional impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem functioning.

3.3.7.3 Socio-Economic Risks to Sustainability

Socio-economic sustainability is rated as Likely.

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. All commercial interests considered as permissible activities within the new PAs (Sustainable Use Zones) are being discussed and agreed on by stakeholders. These waters contain some of the most productive and diverse habitats - coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds that need protecting, but are also providing livelihoods and ecosystem services that sustain Seychelles. The project has worked closely with MSP on Milestone 3 which extend to the shallow waters surrounding the atolls and archipelagos of the Outer Islands such as Amirantes and Farquhar (Outer Islands Project sites). Regulations on Sustainable Use categories are being further supported by The Seychelles - Third South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Governance and Shared Growth Project (SWIOFish3). The last 4% of the MSP marine protection goal is expected to be approved in early 2020.

3.3.8 Institutional Framework and Governance Risks to Sustainability

Institutional sustainability is rated as Likely.

In general, Seychelles' legal framework, policies and governance structures support conservation. The PA Policy (2015) allows participation of the private sector and NGOs in PA management in partnership with government, and Island Foundations are established on all of the project's 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 ongoing use of the project's outputs. The project has developed planning and management tools which are expected to be used by the project partners and developed after project closure. 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.

Institutional and Governance Risks to sustainability include:

- Lack of government recognition of the islands as official protected areas, with approved management and land use plans, hinders sustainable development. Approval of the new PA law is urgently needed to support enhanced protection, monitoring and financing. As expressed in the Project Document the absence of official PA status for specific sites and delegated management authority greatly restricts the ability of partners to implement protection measures, develop or implement any long-term planning processes, or to develop collaborations and raise funds from national and international partners. Organizations currently do not have the authority to restrict or control any activities in the marine environment around each island. The lack of official PA status also acts as a disincentive to tourism development at some sites due to the uncertainty over the control, scope and operations of the planned developments, and thus to new tourism-based revenues for conservation. As noted in PSG (September 2019) normally, management plans are developed after nomination files are approved, but were done in advance by the OIP due to the delays in getting the NRC bill gazetted. It is therefore possible that the Management Plans will need to be revised e.g. Farquhar Goëlettes was proposed as a strict reserve but is now being considered as a Special Reserve. While MEECC is optimistic that the Bill will be endorsed by early March 2020 at the latest when the Government reconvene after the break there are concerns over further delays in finalizing the bill and its regulations and gazetting the new Protected Areas due to the upcoming Presidential Elections planned for 2020.
- It is important that the land use plans become legally binding to ensure that they are fully considered when planning future activities on the islands in support of integrated and sustainable development. This is dependent on the public consultation process being completed.
- IDC manages the OI and conservation and sustainable use of the OI is dependent on IDC support in general and in the provision of access to the Islands.

3.3.8.1 Environmental Risks to Sustainability

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. However, the project seeks to improve the resilience of the terrestrial and marine ecosystems of the Outer Islands, which mitigates against the impacts of these climate risks (MTR).

3.3.9 Impacts

In terms of verifiable improvement in ecological / environmental status changes in the health / population of coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves and reef fish are longer term impacts and cannot be easily or directly attributed to project activities. However, the project can be said to have set some of the conditions for realizing these improvements. The project has worked towards reducing the stresses on the OI through a range of management tools and capacity

building, which will have more weight once the areas are legally protected. The project has supported changes in the legal framework³⁴ and built capacity, knowledge, skills and monitoring systems (baseline data and protocols) and governance architect (informational sharing systems). On the ground measures to address land degradation related issues have included native re-vegetation, erosion monitoring and control, and the establishment of biosecurity systems to prevent the entry of new invasive alien species, including those that impede re-vegetation efforts.

The project has laid the groundwork for other donor and partner initiatives. For example:

- The OIP mapping of seagrasses / mangroves and the development of monitoring protocols is feeding into the MEECC, SeyCATT and PEW blue carbon valuation study, which is intended to feed into Seychelles' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).
- The Nekton expedition looked at plants and algae in deep seas (30 metres depth) and shallow waters, expanding on OIP's work on seagrass monitoring protocols, through its investigation of seagrasses at different depths.
- In 2018 the OIP shared its monitoring programme protocol with SIF who were interested in doing a research project to study grouper spawning aggregations around Aldabra.
- In 2017, the OIP purchased GPS loggers to track the movements of Sooty terns that nest on Goëlettes. Further financial support has been secured from NHK in Japan to increase the number of GPS deployments and continue this tracking programme.
- In 2020 MSP will be developing MP and can build on the work of the OIP.

4 Conclusions. Lessons and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

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 also 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.

The OIP benefitted from strong and stable project management. The ability of the project to confront the difficulties it was facing at mid term 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 resolve problems and change modes of working to the project's benefit.

The OIP has generated baseline data and is developing a database system at ICS, but more needs to be done to coordinate and centralize data. At the start of the project, due to the remoteness of the Outer Islands, scientific knowledge of them was quite limited (Project

³⁴The OIP supported a consultancy to draft regulations for the Nature Reserves and Conservancy Bill in 2016 and in June 2017 OIP supported MEECC in a stakeholder workshop for the bill.

Document)³⁵. The project has helped address this by generating important baseline data for coral, seagrass, mangroves, terrestrial fauna, fish and seabirds and designing a database system at ICS to store and manage data. However, the project is only able to support the partial entry of the OIP's data into ICS' database, and arrangements still need to be made to link the ICS' database to MEECC's. Furthermore, a national central depository for environmental and other data and information is still to be realized and is needed to support data sharing and integrated analysis.

Increased protection is required. While monitoring protocols are now in place and management plans developed for the areas there has been no increased protection, except for turtles, and action is urgently needed to protect the atolls. This is contingent on the PA Bill being passed. While it is anticipated that the marine areas will soon be gazetted under the MSP Milestone 3, the terrestrial sites are contingent on the PA Bill. Additional monitoring resources will also be needed to be able to carry out sufficient patrols of the areas and make arrests.

Integrated planning and conflict resolution. The project has supported integrated planning at the site level (e.g. through the integrated management of marine and terrestrial areas on the islands, land use plans) and macro level through collaboration with the MSP and generally through stakeholder dialogue. This provides a basis for moving forward as integrated working and planning, where tradeoffs and synergies across multiple sectors are taken into consideration, will be key to the success of the MSP and protection and sustainable use of the individual islands. Tourism is only viable in the OI if the area is protected but also has the potential to both increase pressures on the island and provide funds for conservation. Thus it is a difficult balance. Tourism activities also need to be balanced with other economic activities such as commercial fishing and integrated analysis and thinking will be critical going forward to present the arguments over sustainable use that will inform the regulations.

Sustainable finance and a system approach to Protected Areas management: The Island Foundations is a good basis to work from in terms of sustainable financing for protection and sustainable use in the Outer Islands but is dependent on tourism revenues. Furthermore, the costs of operating in the Outer Islands are high and innovative and diversified financing and cost saving approaches will be needed to adequately protect and manage the area. There are also other Outer Islands which are critically important for biodiversity and ecosystem functions such as Cosmoledo, Astove and Assumption but are extremely remote, lack infrastructure, and have no / limited potential for tourism development, and are therefore extremely challenging as sites for Protected Areas unless there is some kind of cross financial subsidization in place.

Many of the barriers identified in the PD remain, despite the progress made by the project. The barriers cited in the PD are: (i) Inadequate technical and human capacities and resources; (ii) Lack of financial resources; (iii) Absence of official PA status; (iv) Enforcement authority in the marine environment is entirely dependent on official PA designation and PA regulations; (v) Lack of ecological and economic data and inadequate systems to ensure that the data that does exist is available for key stakeholders; (vi) Limited resources and presence of government and other personnel in the Outer Islands; (vii) Lack of an overarching framework and systemic capacities to develop and implement conservation and sustainable development

³⁵According to the Project Document 'While certain species (seabirds, sea turtles, some fish) have been well studied in the Outer Islands, many others have not, and most ecosystems and ecosystem functions are poorly studied and understood. For example, there are no reliable estimates of the area of coral reefs, mangroves or seagrass beds for most of the Outer Islands; similarly, fish biodiversity, habitat areas, etc. is poorly understood'.

in the Outer Islands. While this has been addressed through the MSP Initiative it remains to be seen how successful implementation of the MSP will be; (viii) Inadequate systems, rules and capacities for planning and decision-making are also evident at the individual island level. This has been addressed through the Management Plan, Business Plans and Land Use Plans developed for the project sites, but the LUP are not yet legally binding. On-going support and work is therefore needed to embed and operationalize many of the projects outputs and realize increased resilience and improvements in the environment.

Overall the project is rate as **Satisfactory**. Table 10 summarizes the evaluation ratings for the project.

Table 10: Evaluation ratings

Evaluation Ratings:			
1. Monitoring and Evaluation	<i>rating</i>	2. IA& EA Execution	<i>rating</i>
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	<i>rating</i>	4. Sustainability	<i>rating</i>
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)

4.2 Lessons

Key lessons are presented below, categorized under lesson pertaining to (a) project design, and (b) implementation.

4.2.1 Lessons related to project design

- 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 Monsoon 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. GEF project design issues are a recurring problem in the Seychelles. There is a tendency to over design projects and make them too ambitious in an effort to meet GEF strategic priorities and design criteria. However, this leads to problems at implementation with project Results Frameworks having to be significantly revised through the MTR. This is not efficient.
- A comprehensive capacity assessment of the responsible partners should be done at project design to avoid implementation issues. For example, it was not known at project design that ICS officers did not have the capacity to prepare the marine habitat maps.

4.2.2 Lessons related to project implementation

- **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 the 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. It was suggested that the MP would have benefitted from the inputs of a fisheries expert. 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.

4.3 Recommendations

The recommendations are summarized in Table 11, highlighting the responsible party and timeframe for implementation. The recommendations are elaborated on below 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 MEECC, IDC, ICS and UNDP.

4.3.1 Actions to reinforce initial benefits from the project

1. **Collating of lessons and their dissemination nationally and internationally.** Ahead of project closure the project should ensure that all lessons are fully captured and shared

both within the Seychelles and internationally. The recent IPCE of UNDP Seychelles found significant weaknesses in communicating lessons learnt. The OIP can help address this through the collation of lessons learnt relating to technical and operational aspects (beyond the information reported in the Quarterly Review Reports), as best practice example.

2. **Set out replicability of plans and tools that have been developed.** Given that the replicability of the project's initiatives at its demonstration sites is a key design feature of the project, it is recommended that the project makes explicit how each of the tools and plans developed can be applied within the Outer and Inner Islands, conditions under which they are applicable or not, challenges / barriers, lessons in applications (both technical and operational).
3. **Dissemination of project outputs and lessons learnt on international stage in 2020.** This can include a photo essay to showcase the project's achievements, dissemination of key documents and talks at international conferences.

4.3.2 [Proposals for future programming and direction](#)

1. **Incorporate OIP lessons in project design, as outlined above, 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.
2. **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. For example, the Management Plans were finalized in July 2018 with some outstanding issues where full consensus was not reached or further discussion was required. Some elements of the MPs are high level and are expected to require further refinement, for example on community fisheries enforcement.
3. **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
4. **Develop data management capacity and processes.** Data is critical for PA management and as articulated in the PIR, 2019, the collection of data is a continuous and important task for many environmental organizations in Seychelles. The various monitoring activities undertaken by rangers, volunteers and scientists is critical to understanding patterns and changes in the natural habitats which are fragile and dynamic. Management of this data is key to facilitate integrated and timely management decisions at the local, national and international level. 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.
5. **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 ecosystem knowledge.
6. **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. ICS does not have enough capacity, and given the high cost of enforcement on the OI cost effective / cost saving solutions need to be identified around the use of technology and collaborations with other institutions.

- 7. 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. While this need was identified in the project document, concrete solutions have not been presented by the project and more thought is needed on viable costs sharing approaches. Possible avenues include: (i) Sharing resources and expertise between sites / Islands, especially given the shortage of skilled staff e.g. sharing marine assessment and monitoring teams and vessels / missions. This could potentially include sharing expertise and skills with Inner Islands staff / consultants; (ii) adopting best practices and cost effective strategies practiced on other islands (which first need to be clearly articulated); (iii) sharing data to reduce the risk of duplicated work and synchronization of data collection and analysis; (iv) collaborating with the coastguard to bring down enforcement costs; (v) establishing a pool of trained national personnel for activities such as coral reef monitoring / mapping, fish and turtle surveys³⁶; (vi) testing the feasibility of using more international volunteers / graduate students for work in the Outer Islands; and, (vii) implementing energy efficiency technologies.
- 8. 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. Most Outer Islands depended almost entirely on tourism based revenues to fund conservation activities, but this is not an appropriate model for all islands. Furthermore, tourism-based revenues have had to be supplemented by operational / logistical support from IDC and hotel operators just to employ minimal staff and establish basic infrastructure; this revenue model alone does not appear sufficient to support well-managed PAs, nor to carry out conservation activities beyond basic PA management, such as ecological research or the rehabilitation of degraded landscapes and seascape.
- 9. Capacity / Institutional Capacity needs further developing.**
- a. Explore and develop options for attracting and retaining expert staff on the OI.** Many of the staff on the OI are foreign which does not build national capacity, and staff turnover is high. Actions are needed to reduce the dependence on international technical support by attracting and retaining nationals to conservation postings on the Outer Islands. Possible approaches include: (i) Improving the internet connection for ICS officers for work and personal purposes, so that staff feel less isolated; (ii) increasing opportunities for personal advancement and more targeting of / incentives for graduates along with a clear career development path; (iii) working with the Ministry of Education to ensure course options on biodiversity / protected areas / marine conservation are embedded at secondary and tertiary level; (iv) Use of Oasis Skills Hive operated by NISTI by the PCU to potentially reach a broader range of consultants with transferable skills.
 - b. Explore and develop increasing staff numbers on OI:** There are only two ICS staff per island on Farquhar and a minimum of three are needed to be able to function on a basic level. Possible approaches to increase the number and effectiveness of staff on the islands need to be further explored and developed such as: (i) rotating rangers between islands *if* they have different needs at different times; (ii) promoting collaboration between organizations / NGOs operating in the Outer Islands at a more strategic level; and, (iii) use of volunteers by ICS building on Boot camps used on the Inner Islands.

³⁶ This was expected to be achieved through the various activities under Output 1.1.

Table 11: Recommendations

No	Recommendation	Responsible party	Completion 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

5 Annexes

Provided as separate document

- 5.1 TE ToR (excluding ToR annexes)
- 5.2 TE mission itinerary, list of persons interviewed, workshop agenda and attendees
- 5.3 List of documents reviewed
- 5.4 TE Evaluation Matrix
- 5.5 Indicators, baseline & targets at design & as revised at Inception & MTR
- 5.6 Results Matrix (detailed)
- 5.7 Project achievement at activity level, challenges and lessons
- 5.8 Overview of Training by activity
- 5.9 Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form Signed TE final report clearance form
- 5.10 TE Audit Trail (provided in separate file)