

MedWetCoast Final Evaluation

Tunisia

Dennis Fenton, Team Leader
Selim Riveill, National Expert
Philippe Staatsen, Local Development Specialist
Tarek Abulhawa, Protected Area Specialist

INTRODUCTION

I Overview

1. The starting point for the project included degraded sites and a fledgling national agency (APAL) dealing with coastal areas. In particular, APAL's, competence and reputation with regards to coastal wetlands were limited. Nationally, wetlands were not considered important.
2. The project has significantly helped to change this situation. APAL now has greatly increased credibility, particularly in the project intervention area. A basic approach and framework to conservation has been established in this area – quite an achievement within five years. This includes functioning and visible protected sites with management capacity. In the project intervention area, several degraded sites have been improved, and the status of the more pristine sites has been at least maintained. Several key decisions by local decision-makers indicate that the project has impacted attitudes and made progress towards behaviour change. Nationally, there is a growing body of experience related to wetlands and coastal management.
3. However, in some respects the project could have been expected to do more. For example, it should have built more capacity at the national level – individual, institutional and systemic capacity. It should have explored and started developing innovative tools and practices. It could have initiated a more strategic approach to conserving the globally significant sites across Cap Bon. It could also have had more impact at the local level, particularly in terms of ensuring a stronger biodiversity focus.
4. The project shortcomings mostly stem from the implementation approach. First, the approach assumed strong support from the Regional support unit – in practice this was limited. Second, the project sponsors (UNDP/GEF, FFEM, UNDP and APAL) were limited in their ability to provide strategic guidance or to contribute to problem solving within the project. Third, the logical framework was weak at the outset and was never properly corrected – it never became an effective adaptive management tool. Fourth, the project team was established too slowly, was too small and lacked key expertise. Finally, once the project overcame initial delays and the implementation was on a firm footing, the pressure to act and to disburse strongly influenced decisions and quarterly work planning.
5. With regards to sustainability, there are several very positive aspects. This notably includes the allocation of a significant government budget to APAL for MWC activities and wetlands in the coming period. It also includes the strong integration of MWC objectives into APAL, and APAL's strong ownership. However, the significant human pressure at some sites, the fragility of the behavioural changes at the sites, and the limited number of individuals (both APAL and project team) that were fully involved in the project, mean that sustainability is not yet guaranteed.

II Methodology

6. The methodology will be set out in the overall evaluation report for the MWC Regional Project.
7. In order to give ratings, the project first determined what happened during the project lifetime and what was attributable to the project. In order to give ratings, the Evaluation Team then:
 - Cross referred to other projects and stakeholders in Tunisia to determine what is feasible;
 - Cross referred to the hundreds of other projects that the team is familiar with to determine what is feasible for this scale of project, in countries at this level of development;
 - Followed the advice of the national expert on what is feasible.

III Scope

8. The scope of this evaluation is determined by the six GEF evaluation parameters and the Project Logical Framework. The six GEF evaluation parameters are: achievements (in terms of *impact*), sustainability, participation, cost-effectiveness, implementation approach and monitoring & reporting. However, it should be noted that in order to facilitate consistency across the six MWC countries, the project Logical Framework has been adapted: the original Objective 2 has been divided into two sub-outcomes (2.1 and 2.2).

IV National Context

9. The six countries of the MWC project are very diverse. Accordingly, the results that can be achieved in these countries varies significantly, and the achievements of the project have varied across the countries. The evaluation accounts for this diversity, and evaluates according to '*what is reasonably feasible in the Tunisian context, with the given resources*'.

10. Specific elements of the Tunisian context include:

- Although the institutional framework is well developed, there are still many overlaps;
- In general the level of decentralisation is strong, yet the technical capacity of decentralised government agencies and local ministerial departments is weaker;
- The Ministry supervising APAL changed twice during project period;
- In Tunisia, wetland management and coastal management are relatively new issues;
- Although biodiversity is a priority at the national level, this has not yet translated into local and daily priorities.

EVALUATION

I Impact (Achievements)

A National Capacity Building

11. Legislative, institutional and policy framework Overall, the project supported a good piloting of the APAL approach to conservation, and many positive aspects have been observed. The project objectives are well anchored within APAL, and this helped strengthen APAL institutional capacity regarding biodiversity conservation/wetlands. This helped establish APAL as *the* agency responsible for these sites (which are classed as sensitive sites by Tunisian Law) and helped increase APAL's credibility for wetlands management at the local level.

12. An important achievement has been the institutionalisation of the project objectives through their incorporation into the 11th Five Year national Plan for Economic and Social Development. In this Plan, 6.6 million Dinar have been budgeted, through APAL, for MWC follow-up actions. Another achievement is the initiation of the process to prepare the National Wetlands Strategy (NWS). The Biodiversity Sub-Committee of the National Committee for Sustainable Development has entrusted development of the NWS to APAL, with support from project, and the NWS should be submitted to the Commission for approval before the end of 2006.

13. However, there are some weaknesses, notably with regards to several important actions that were identified in the Project Document. First, the work to prepare the NWS started very late, and is far from finalised. Moreover, there is no sign that the project made efforts to start the key processes of integrating sustainable wetlands management into key sectors (e.g. agriculture, tourism or transport). With regards to the legislative framework, during the project, APAL undertook a study that clarified the need to create a Law for Marine Protected Areas – and a proposal will soon be submitted to Parliament for approval. Apart from this, there is little sign that MWC Tunisia helped to strengthen the legislative framework. For example, it has not been possible to finalise the demarcation of the coastal zones (i.e., the zone where APAL has responsibilities). However, the contribution the project made to shifting international shipping lanes away from the coast is well appreciated.

14. Hence, although the Project Document set out some ambitious objectives for the legal, institutional and strategic frameworks, progress has been limited during the project. It is possible that the project management decided to focus on other issues, but the project records have no record of this decision. Moreover, the draft NWS (September 2006) states the need for strengthening these frameworks – hence it seems that the strengthening is now required.

15. Tools and model approaches The project has done little to experiment with or develop innovative tools or alternative approaches to conservation or sustainable conservation financing: Market-based instruments (MBIs), payments for ecological services (PES), valuation, taxes, private sector/NGO management, entrance fees – with the possible exception of site-based compensation schemes (bee-hives, drip irrigation).

16. All the project sites are on Cap Bon, within a single administrative Region. The Evaluation Team believes that it could be possible to resolve some conflicts, and exploit some opportunities, by adopting a Cap Bon-wide approach. For example, the project developed an Atlas which could be the basis for a ‘regional vision’. The project did not attempt to explore this, and it is a missed opportunity.

17. Recommendations APAL should start testing innovative tools and should initiate a regional management approach (for example, tourism development and water management taking into consideration biodiversity conservation across the Cap Bon region).

18. Finally, individual capacity development at national level was limited to small number of individuals - the project could have trained a broader group of stakeholders.

B Site Protection

19. The Project created good foundation for effective Site Management within APAL for Cap Bon. Overall, the approach was good – i.e. first establish a presence, and set aside ‘pristine areas’, and stake out the important landscapes and biodiversity areas.

Planning

20. The planning was undertaken professionally, but the two sub-contractors produced products of different quality (at least one was good quality). However, the planning process was not adequately used to build capacity within APAL or with other stakeholders (it is noted that the objective in Tunisia is mostly to use private sector and build their capacity).

21. Good institutional linkages were established with other agencies (e.g; ONAS), with localised ministerial departments (e.g. with CRDA) or with some NGOs (eg. AAO). This is innovative for biodiversity conservation in Tunisia, even though the participation of local agencies and local NGOs in the project was not necessarily fully representative of local people.

22. The site team does, however, fully own the Plans, and participated in their preparation. This helped to build their capacities and give them control over the process. This, however, was limited to the small number of people in the project team.

23. The process - from site diagnosis to plan endorsement – was quite lengthy.

The Management Plans (MP)

24. All the Plans were endorsed by the National Steering Committee, which is a strong basis for their future legal status. They are comprehensive, realistic, clear on what should be done and overall they address all major threats. They are well scoped and realistically address socio-economic issues and the linkages to biodiversity. They include an innovative use of scenarios – but this was not well exploited.

25. Some weaknesses include:

- They did not clarify the needs for decision-support maps at the scale of the sites (e.g. socio-economic maps, maps of population or of habitats);
- The zoning plans are not sufficiently detailed and regulations in the different zone uses are not specified;
- The MPs are perhaps too elaborate to be used by field staff. A user friendly summarised version should have been prepared, including an Arabic translation.

MP Implementation

26. The site team is strong, motivated, committed and informed. The team was assembled too late, is too small and is missing some key technical expertise. Moreover, its internal structure should be strengthened. Recommendation: APAL should recruit the team, further build their capacity and hire some additional experts. The level of delegation to the site teams was too low – site staff should be empowered to directly enforce laws.

27. MP implementation focussed on site preparation and infrastructure development. This is essential and established (for the project and for APAL) a presence, a visibility, and boundaries and gave value to the sites, and reportedly helped to change local attitudes to wetlands and natural resources. This was accompanied by awareness raising (directly by rangers, TV programmes, signs). This could have been more systematic, and the site team is committed to expanding these awareness raising activities to other communes.

28. The project did not invest sufficiently in site management capacity development and other, non-‘infrastructure’ approaches (e.g. staff training, resources, equipment, business development and financing). Moreover, only a few of the MP actions targeting conservation and restoration were implemented. Finally, most implemented works were through sub-contracts to outside companies and there is no evidence that the local people benefited.

29. The prioritisation process (i.e. choosing which actions to implement) was unclear, and appeared more ‘activity-driven’ than strategic. For example, although it scored highly in the prioritisation matrix, no action was taken at seemingly important biodiversity hotspot of Tafekhsit.

30. Overall, the clear biodiversity focus (as opposed to general environment improvement) is not always adequately clear. The links between biodiversity and actions are not always explicit.

31. Recommendation Develop visitor management plans and sustainable financing plans, and strengthen capacity to implement these plans.

Monitoring

32. The approach to monitoring (through NGOs and research institutes) is good. However, is it sustainable? Several monitoring programmes started recently (2005/2006) and this should lead to capacity building for local team.

33. ‘Systematic monitoring’, as far as it exists, started late and cannot yet be used for decision-making. The MWC Tunisia team has not yet had enough time to produce information regarding biodiversity trends.

34. Some technical aspects of monitoring could be stronger, even in local context. For example, there is no monitoring of ‘attitudes’ – although it is generally claimed that the project changed attitudes. Generally, socio-economic monitoring is not strong.

35. Recommendation: The team should learn the lesson and establish an effective monitoring framework immediately, as in the past this was a missed opportunity.

C *Root cause removal, behaviour change, socio-economic aspects*

Planning

36. A long list of relevant activities were identified during (and as part of) the management planning process. This was very positive, especially as the links with biodiversity were clear.

Implementation

37. This consisted almost entirely of building infrastructure to increase visibility and raise awareness.

38. In addition to the fences and signs, major achievements, include:

- Cleaning up the sites, particularly the lagoons, which were previously considered as rubbish dumps;
- Treating waste water and channelling treated water into lake Korba, to help maintain its levels;
- Increasing the circulation within lake Korba;
- Replacing the proposed construction of a road with a path and bridge across the lake;
- Transforming the abattoir (a source of pollution) into an eco-centre;
- Stabilising a 1km stretch of sand dunes.

39. Also, at Korba, the Urban management plan was modified in order to account for lake protection.

40. The following actions, aimed at improving the behaviour of tourists, were also undertaken:

- Awareness raising through special events and one-to-one discussion with the eco-guards. Building fences and signs - these changed local attitudes to biodiversity/natural resources and so influenced behaviour;
- Close monitoring of Oued el ABid forest, by CRDA, which helped stop illegal wood-cutting for charcoal production.

41. However, most socio-economic activities (amongst which many only had a very indirect link to biodiversity) in the management plans were not implemented. Only 7 (i.e. bee-keeping, drip-irrigation, tractors, small-bridge, adapting the PAU, using treated water to fill the lake, and Maamoura parking) out of more than 20 identified in the MP were implemented. Activities not implemented include: improved grazing practices; local ecotourism; and water-use study for the lakes;

Municipalities/officials

42. Some have changed attitudes and so behaviour (eg. Korba, Takelsa, Mamouria, El Haouria and CRDA senior staff). At the project outset, wetlands were seen as a waste and a bad place, and are now seen as a potential asset, to be sustainably managed.

43. Others actors have not changed, or only marginally. These include Kalibia municipality, CRDA technicians, local industrial unit managers, shepherds at El Haouria and producers of charcoal at Dar Chichou.

44. The selection of project actions seems to have originated from a deliberate strategy, and at least partly influenced by time constraints. However, the Evaluation Team feels the choice was too extreme (away from socio-economic actions) and there was too much avoiding difficult situations and problems. More actions with local people, municipalities, and perhaps industries could have led to an increased and more sustainable impact on biodiversity.

Monitoring

45. There was limited monitoring of activities impacting biodiversity (e.g. industrial tourist activities, waste disposal). This is true for most monitoring, which has focussed on birds and water, and insufficiently on biodiversity and environment.

D Regionality (closing the circle)

46. The regional structure (RAC, RSC, RFU/RCU) was not considered very useful. The Role of the RCU was not always clear. Linguistic constraints also meant certain MWC knowledge management products (e.g. MP Peer Review) were not used. Overall, 'regionality' seems to be seen as *competition*, rather than constructive cooperation. Tunisia has always participated actively in the RAC. It is noted that certain RAC recommendations (e.g. to involve countries in the RSC) were not adopted.

47. With regards to the RFU/RCU, the MWC Tunisian team appreciated the technical support provided by RFU, and regret that, due to shortage of funds, this was no longer available after the RCU was established.

48. MWC Tunisia did make efforts to support regionality. For example, MWC Tunisia translated the MTR report into French, provided an expert to the MP Peer review, and is constructing an Ornithological Center, to be managed by a local NGO, with a regional mandate.

49. Specifically, the circle has been somewhat closed between Tunisia and Morocco (and other countries) with support from CDL. This has led to certain benefits. Overall, Tunisia made good use and appreciated the available international expertise.

II Sustainability

Regional

50. The sub-regional linkages being developed with CDL are likely to be sustainable. However, given present circumstances, the closing of the Mediterranean circle is unlikely to be sustainable.

National

51. Institutional: The process, objectives are anchored into APAL. This is good. However, there was a need to involve and influence other agencies to a greater extent. This is a major obstacle to sustainability. The project team and circle of experts is established. This is good, but the size of the team makes this fragile.

52. Technical sustainability and biodiversity focus: The project team is accompanied by a small circle of consultants, and it benefits from parts of APAL (eg. The Observatory). The small project team, and their uncertain contractual arrangements, and the capacity weaknesses of the team (lack of training, lack of knowledge of some management tools, lack of reference documents) is a constraint. Also, overall, APAL does not have strong conservation/biodiversity focus. Recommendation integrate biodiversity conservation into APAL and its procedures, possibly by establishing a Protected Area unit in APAL.

53. Financial: There is a reasonable Government budget assured for follow-up. This will be used for implementing Management Plans, however, the details are not clear. A more detailed budget/action plan with a clear focus on biodiversity should be developed.

Local

54. Site Management The Team and the Management Plans and the budget and legal status contribute to sustainability. Sustainability will be assured if:

- The team is expanded and recruited by APAL;

- The Management Plans are used to guide the use of funds, and biodiversity focus is maintained;
- Legal-enforcement capacity is increased.

55. With regards to local decision-makers, the garbage and waste water threats are being dealt with, most probably sustainably. However, other threats (e.g. encroachment, grazing, industry and disturbance) are not, and their removal relies on 'changed mentalities', which is not fully achieved.

56. One important example is the tree plantations around the lake. The fences around the lake are designed to 'fade away' over the medium term. They are to be replaced by a hedge and planted trees, to ensure the protection and continued visibility of the lakes. These trees were not planted (due to over-grazing fears) and the hedges were almost completely eaten by livestock.

III Implementation Approach

Strategic guidance from national and international partners

57. The project faced serious delays in its early years. The support from RCU/UNDP/GEF was not enough to resolve these. This led, for example, to serious delays in preparing the MP.

58. APAL played an effective role in supporting the project, although restricted by national procedures (which are an essential tool for overseeing the project). The National Steering Committee also seems to have played an effective role in steering the project.

59. CDL provided good, appreciated and continuous support to APAL. This produced overall positive results. However, this possibly limited options and overall vision, which may have been provided by involving other technical partners. The project team expected more from the support of Tour du Valat. The international inputs to the management planning process were considered pertinent and useful.

Project management

60. Generally, the project approach was not sufficiently strategic or logical. This, and the lack of effective strategic oversight, meant the project remained 'activity-driven'. Missed opportunities include a 'Cap Bon wide approach' and developing 'sustainable conservation financing'. The Project sponsors should have helped develop a more strategic approach.

61. The Logical Framework(s) had weaknesses and this was an obstacle to project success. Moreover, it seems that the project was 'delivery driven' in the final 2 years. This probably affected both the type of actions and the overall efficiency/cost-effectiveness of individual actions.

62. The team repeatedly faced new procedures and reporting requirements, which were never accompanied by training or technical support. These include the logical framework, the changing APR/PIR format (at least four times), and the late requirement to implement the METT.

Site Level

63. The project was led by professional practitioners. This was the right approach, but the team was too small, and established too late. They had little power and resources. APAL should have made developed this team more quickly, and decentralisation should have been stronger.

64. The team worked through contracts and agreements (including with NGOs). This seems a good approach, helping to involve lots of partners. However, this only happened at the local level, and should probably have been tested at the national level (e.g. partners in tourism, and strategy development).

65. There is no evidence that the Local Steering Committees were an effective mechanism.

IV Monitoring and Reporting

66. Logical Frameworks were never very useful as a monitoring tool. It is noted that two are being used at project end. The indicators were not very useful, as a project management tool.

67. Reporting to UNDP/GEF and AFD does not seem to have been useful to project team. Was the APR/PIR useful to UNDP?

68. The Mid-Term Review and the June/2005 monitoring mission (joint UNDP/GEF/FFEM) had major impacts on project. This seems to be 'management by shock'.

V Cost-Effectiveness

69. The focus was on infrastructure development and, consequently, a lot of on-the-ground activities took place. This contributed greatly to visibility.

70. It is appreciated that the project invested in partnership and alliance building. This is a necessary step in a long term conservation strategy. However, it could have been more efficient to implement capacity (individual and institutional) development actions. Little project resources were spent on training. Many small actions, some innovative, that could have had a significant impact, were not attempted.

71. The Project helped certain important stakeholder to consider biodiversity in their work programmes. However, over the short-term, the focus on biodiversity is not fully assured.

72. The Evaluation Team is not in a position to assess the cost-effectiveness of individual investments.

VI Participation

73. This is mostly covered in the above sections. However, with regards to local stakeholders, the stakeholder analysis was not sufficiently detailed or thorough. There was an effective involvement of local actors in the very first stages of management plan preparation, especially at Oued Laabid, El Houraria, less so at lagoons. This involvement was less effective in later stages.

74. One consequence of this was the lack of investigation into over-grazing, and its monitoring. It was useful to have involved CRDA in the project, who have the mandate and experience in this domain (APAL does not). But the study of grazing, and the impact on biodiversity, seems to have been neglected.

75. Participation did not adequately feed into selection of actions, for example through the local management committees (CCGL).

76. Also, it could have been possible to try and involve local people through micro-finance and develop a more bottom-up approach.

VII Conclusions - Overall Objective

77. The Overall objective is: *to conserve globally endangered species and their habitat, recognising wildlife conservation as an integral part of sustainable human development, while improving capacity of government and non-government agencies to address biodiversity conservation issues.*

78. It is noted that these cannot be achieved or measured in the time period. However, there are some indicators already, which suggest the positive impact of MWC Tunisia.

Conservation

79. The Evaluation Team feels the sites addressed by the project contain globally significant biodiversity. It is considered that the project:

- Contributed to a significant improvement in the landscape, ecosystem and local environment at several sites on east coast;
- Maintained the ecosystem integrity on the west coast, at Oued el Abid, but less so on El Haouaria and Dar Chichou;
- There are some indicators that biodiversity is improving, though this cannot be verified.

Capacity

80. Main/illustrative points:

- APAL capacity was strengthened – along with its credibility and motivation;
- Important elements of a conservation framework are in place;
- Site management capacity was strengthened;
- The capacity and attitudes of local partners have strengthened.

81. Some notable weakness relate to marketing/communications. Moreover, beyond APAL, there little evidence of strengthened national capacity, and little evidence of the project having developed tools or management mechanisms.

VII Summary of Recommendations

For Future Projects in General

To UNDP/Government Ensure future projects have a clear logical framework and useful indicators (see METT).

The project sponsors Ensure projects of this scale are strategically guided/steered.

APAL whilst continuing the good, close working relationship with CdL, ensure that other international partners with alternative approaches to conservation are invited to Tunisia, and their ideas are considered.

APAL Integrate biodiversity conservation into its procedures, possibly by establishing a Protected Area unit, using the know-how acquired by the Project team.

For the Future MWC Project, Financed by Government of Tunisia

It is agreed that the Evaluation Team did not undertake a thorough problem analysis, and concedes that it is not perfectly placed to make recommendations. However, it is hoped that the MWC Tunisian team considers the following, and uses as them appropriate.

1. Develop training programmes for a broader group of stakeholders (from many agencies) to build more capacity at the national level.
2. Use the METT from the outset, even in project design. This may require training on the METT.
3. Recruit the site team, further build their capacity and hire some additional experts and rangers (for example, part time officers in the following domains: socio-economics, law, tourism and monitoring strategies). Empower site staff to directly enforce laws. Increase delegated authority to the site teams.
4. Initiate a more strategic, area-wide approach to conserving the globally significant sites across Cap Bon.
5. Develop a detailed budget/action plan with a clear focus on biodiversity. Ensure the Management Plans are used to guide the use of funds, and that the biodiversity focus is maintained.
6. Concerning MP's implementation, they should be accurately revised as follows:

- Develop decision-support maps at the scale of the sites (e.g. socio-economic maps, maps of population or of habitats);
 - Develop more detailed zoning plans, with specific zone regulations;
 - Develop a user-friendly summarised version, including an Arabic translation.
7. Invest in developing site management capacity and other non-‘infrastructure’ approaches (e.g. staff training, resources, equipment, business development and financing).
 8. Test the project approach (contracts and agreements) to involving partners at the national level (e.g. partners in tourism, and strategy development).
 9. Investigate over-grazing and its monitoring, and its impact on biodiversity.
 10. Start testing innovative tools or alternative approaches to conservation or sustainable conservation financing. Also, visitor management plans and sustainable financing plans should be developed, and capacity to implement these plans should be strengthened.
 11. Establish an effective monitoring framework immediately (covering biodiversity, socio-economic and behavioural aspects).
 12. Ensure a periodical review of the management plan, its implementation and its impact. This should also ensure that the more technical questions raised by the Evaluation are answered.