

MID-TERM REVIEW

PROJECT TITLE: Sulu-Celebes Sea Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SCS)

GEFSEC PROJECT ID: 4063

GEF AGENCY PROJECT ID: 3524

EVALUATION TIMEFRAME: April-May 2013

DATE OF EVALUATION FINAL REPORT:

COUNTRIES: Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines

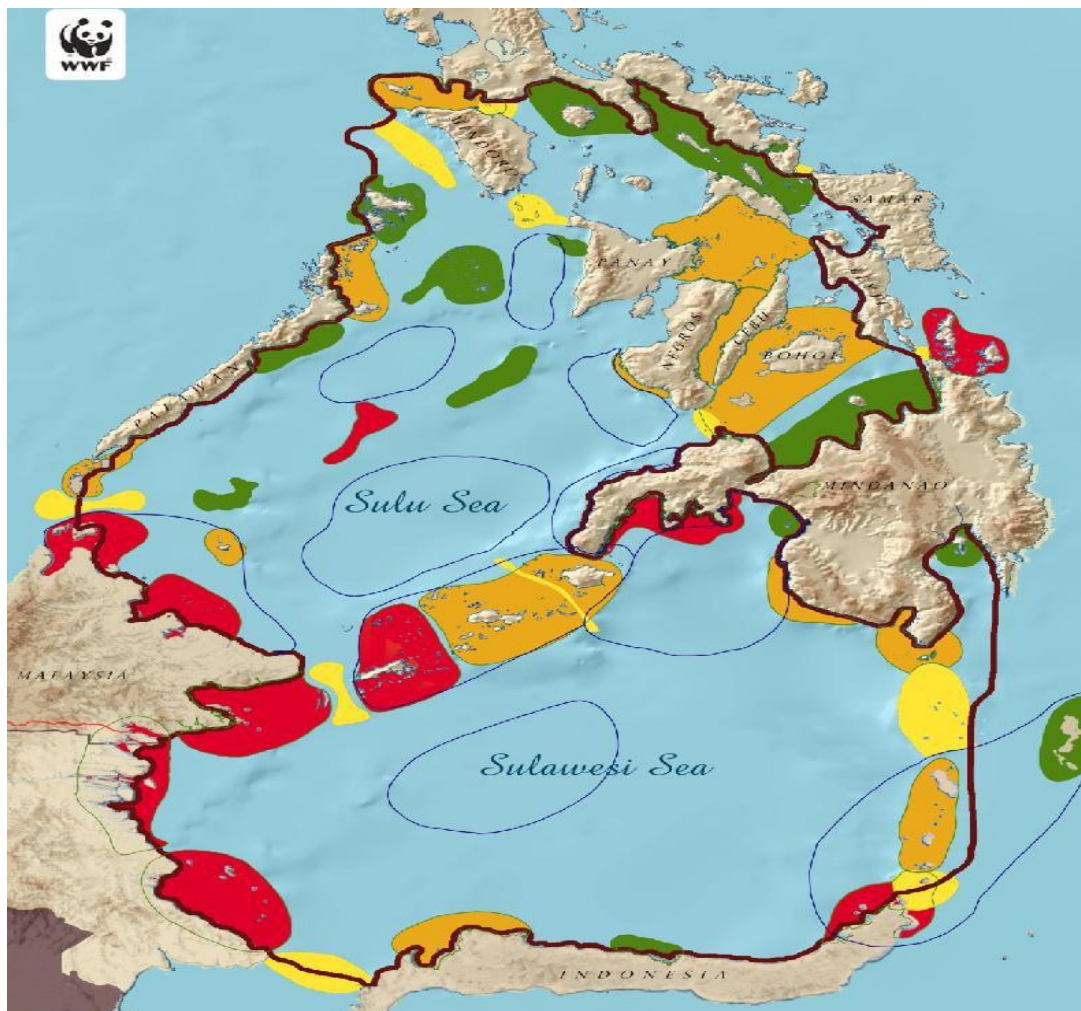
GEF AGENCY: UNDP

GEF FOCAL AREA: International Waters

GEF-4 STRATEGIC PROGRAM: SP-1: Restoring and sustaining coastal and marine fish stocks and associated biological diversity

EXECUTING AGENCY/PARTNER: UNOPS

EVALUATOR: David A. LaRoche



Executive Summary

Introduction

1. The Sulu-Celebes Sea (SCS) is a Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) in the tropical seas of Asia bounded by three countries – Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. The Global Development of the Project is to contribute to the sustainability of fisheries in the SCS by improving the conservation and management of their marine habitat, including its biodiversity and ecological processes to the benefit of the region's coastal communities to restore and sustain the economically and ecologically important small pelagic fisheries in the SCS, primarily for the benefit of communities that are dependent on these resources for livelihood. The immediate objective of the Project is to improve the condition of fisheries and their habitats in the SCS through an integrated, collaborative and participatory management at the local, national and tri-national levels.

2. The Sulu-Celebes Sea Sustainable Fisheries Management project (SCS SFM) is intended to result in:

1. The achievement of a regional consensus on trans-boundary priorities and their immediate and root causes by updating an earlier Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) with a focus on unsustainable exploitation of fisheries;
2. Agreement on regional measures for improved fisheries management through coordination and formulation of a Strategic Action Program (SAP), which will build on an existing Ecoregion Conservation Plan (ECP);
3. Strengthening of institutions and introduction of reforms to catalyze implementation of policies on reducing overfishing and improving fisheries management, targeting the Sulu-Sulawesi Marine Ecoregion (SSME) Tri-National Committee (TnNC) and its Sub-Committees, in particular the Sub-Committee on Sustainable Fisheries (SSF);
4. Increased fish stocks of small pelagics through the implementation of best fisheries management practices in demonstration sites; and
5. The capture, application and dissemination of knowledge, lessons and best practices within the SCS and other LMEs.

Principal Conclusions

3. The project has experienced a significant amount of difficulty at managerial level. There have been three Regional Project Managers over less than three years; there have been difficult, sometimes acrimonious (termed as “tempestuous” by one interviewee) levels of disagreement among project partners, i.e. the Implementing Agency (IA), Executing Agency (EA), Project Management Unit (PMU), and representatives of the participating countries; and for several months there was no PMU. A continuation of this managerial dysfunction will make difficult the achievement of remaining project objectives.

4. The overall project rating, as below, is Marginally Satisfactory. This rating was given based on an assessment of progress concerning the two principal objectives of GEF IW foundational projects, namely production and participating country endorsement of a high quality transboundary diagnostic analysis, and formal country adoption of a Strategic Action Program. At this time, a comprehensive TDA, developed with strong stakeholder support, has been developed, and approved by the principal sub-committee of the TnNC, a requirement listed in the project document. The Strategic Action Program is under development, but successful completion and adoption is uncertain, under circumstances of managerial dysfunction and limited and rapidly dwindling resources (financial, human and time). The project partners – the IA, the EA, the PMU, the participating countries, and Conservation International -

are thus confronted with a monumental challenge. It is clear, as demonstrated through interviews and document review, that project partners remain committed to a positive outcome. However, the evaluator concludes that should the project partners fail to deliver a SAP - formally adopted by the participating countries and requiring a level of coordination and cooperation that has so far not been demonstrated - the eventual project outcome must be seen as having been unsatisfactory.

Other Major Conclusions

5. The project as designed was too extensive and too ambitious for the amount of funding sought in the GEF grant. Consequences included, among others, budgets and workplans being re-aligned twice during implementation; elements of Component 4 having to be reduced in scope in recognition of their overly ambitious nature; the original budgeted amount for the Regional Project manager having been insufficient; and several originally budgeted positions or consultancies not funded. The latter includes funding for an M&E specialist, knowledge management specialist, and editor.

6. Several key personnel from the participating countries have expressed a lack confidence and even trust in the Executing and Implementing Agencies. This stems from, among other things, lack of participating country involvement in the selection processes for the three Regional Project Managers the project has had to date; slowness on the part of the Executing Agency in issuance of contracts, payments to vendors and reimbursements; and misunderstandings on the part of some officials from the participating countries as to the roles of the Implementing and Executing Agencies. It should be noted that many of the problems related to project the UNDP Regional Technical Advisor and the UNDP Country Office have raised administration and management but were not addressed at higher levels.

7. Given the absence of a PMU for approximately 10 months of project implementation, participating country personnel have looked to UNDP and UNOPS to perform what otherwise would have been tasks routinely performed by the Regional Project Manager and the PMU. Neither the IA nor the EA are capable of assuming such a role, notwithstanding that they are ultimately responsible: UNDP for overall project performance and UNOPS for assurance of efficient project execution.

8. Notwithstanding IA and EA difficulties in maintaining a functioning PMU, and associated difficulties, progress with demonstration activities and development of a TDA by Conservation International has been effective enough to ensure successful delivery of the projected, major outputs of a GEF foundational/capacity building project: A stakeholder driven, comprehensive TDA; an initial draft of a SAP; and overall successful implementation of pilot demonstration activities in each of the participating countries.

9. As there are only twelve months left for project implementation, there is danger that absent close, constant and effective communication and coordination between and among the RPM, the participating countries, the EA, and the IA, the most important element of this foundational project, development and country endorsement of the SAP, will not be realized.

10. Ensuring effective M&E over the remainder of project implementation will be a difficult challenge for the RPM and the PMU, particularly in light of budget and human resource constraints that exist. For example, the current PSC approved budget and workplan contains no financial resources for future M&E work.

Key Recommendations

Principal Recommendations

11. All Project Partners must act quickly to take advantage of the window of opportunity that now exists with country personnel, who are eager to maximize progress over the remaining time. This level of close

and constant communication and coordination among the partners of this project, underlain by trust, has not to date been a hallmark of the project.

12. The PMU should make its principal focus in the time remaining to develop, receive country endorsement of, and publish a high quality Strategic Action Program (Component/Outcome 2, Output 2.1).

13. The Implementing Agency, the Executing Agency, and the participating countries should work closely with, and fully support the efforts of the PMU to meet this target, through increased collaboration and provision the necessary and remaining project financial resources and through making available the necessary human resources. More specifically:

- The Implementing Agency should immediately begin assisting the PMU in securing high-level support for the Strategic Action Program, and also assisting the PMU to secure participating country endorsement of the SAP prior to project closure. The Implementing Agency should also use the full power of its IA status to ensure heightened EA efficiency and responsiveness to the administrative needs of the PMU.
- The Executing Agency should work closely with the PMU to assure that unnecessary delays in procurement, reimbursements, and other project administrative issues are processed expeditiously, consistent with existing procedures, as a means of maximizing the extent to which the Regional project manager can focus on SAP development and acceptance and endorsement on the part of the participating countries.
- The Executing Agency should work closely with the Regional Project Manager to ensure that the latter has the requisite administrative and technical support necessary for successful project implementation, consistent with remaining project budget.
- The participating countries, through their designated Project Steering Committee members, should assist the PMU and the UNDP in identifying, and then securing the support of key, high-level country officials whose support for the SAP will be necessary to its endorsement prior to project closure.
- Conservation International, as the contractual entity responsible for delivering a high quality TDA and SAP, should work as expeditiously as possible to undertake the final edit of the TDA and work closely with the RPM to refine and deliver a high quality SAP.

Other Prioritized Recommendations

1. The PMU and the participating countries should prioritize successful completion of the country specific demonstration sites (Component/Outcome 4, Output 4.1). It is recognized that the Indonesia – and perhaps Malaysia - pilot demonstration activities will not be completed by close of project and that no-cost extensions may be necessary.
2. The PMU should, further to and in addition to the analysis contained in this Review, immediately undertake, in consultation with the participating countries and the Implementing Agency, an in-depth analysis of all targets contained in the most recent PSC endorsed logical framework analysis with the objective of determining targets that can realistically be met, and, as importantly those that cannot be met, given remaining project resources (financial, personnel, and time).
3. The Regional Project Manager should, consistent with achievement of the above recommendations and as a priority matter, visit each of the participating countries, including field visits to each of the country demonstration sites, as a means of demonstrating a commitment to close collaboration and cooperation between the re-structured PMU and key personnel and activities within each of the participating countries, and, more specifically, seek out views and encourage the cooperation of each of the National Coordinators.

4. The Executing Agency should, with the strong encouragement, support, and, as necessary and appropriate, direction of the Implementing Agency to, among other things, ensure timely issuance of contracts, payments to participating countries, payment of vendors, processing of travel authorizations for the PMU and country personnel, and reimbursements of those personnel.
5. A representative of the Implementing Agency should, if possible, accompany the Regional Project Manager on early missions to the participating countries as a means of re-establishing a belief on the part of the countries that the UNDP remains committed to the success of the project, that it remains strongly committed to cementing a strong working relationship with the countries in relation to this project, and welcomes and encourages hearing first-hand the views and concerns of country representatives of the project.
6. At a minimum, the Regional Project Manager should ensure that the GEF IW tracking tool is satisfactorily updated and completed by the end of project implementation, notwithstanding the absence of any earmarked financial resources for the task. It appears that responsibility for updating will have to be assumed by the RPM, due to lack of remaining budget. A version of the tracking tool as contained in the 2011 PIR has been taken into account in this evaluation. What is now needed is a 2012 update that could serve the needs of the Terminal Evaluation.

General Recommendations

1. The Implementing Agency should structure projects consistent with available financial resources. In the case of this project, while components, outcomes, and outputs are similar to those found in GEF IW projects in GEF 1-3, this project, under GEF-4, had a much smaller GEF grant that has proved insufficient to deliver all projected outputs, as demonstrated in the revised logical framework analysis and failure to execute many of the targets in the logical framework analysis.
2. The Implementing Agency, given its on-the-ground presence in each of the participating countries, should make every effort to secure high-level membership (Deputy Minister level) on the Project Steering Committee. High-level PSC membership is especially important in GEF IW foundational projects, as is the SCM, as high-level political commitment is seen as necessary for approval and eventual successful implementation of the SAP. The current membership of the SCM PSC is heavily oriented to operational rather than policy level officials. It is recognized by the evaluator that a Deputy Minister may sometimes, or even often delegate attendance at Project Steering Committee meetings. Nonetheless, the formal membership of higher level PSC members from the participating would likely assist in leveraging political support for the work of the project, a crucial ingredient when it comes time to leverage country financial resources to achieve sustainability of project result.

Rating Tables

Goal and Component Ratings

Goal/Components		Evaluation					
		HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
Goal	To contribute to the sustainability of the fisheries of the SCS by improving the conservation and management of their marine habitat including its biodiversity and ecological processes to the benefit of coastal communities						
Component 1	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis for the SSLME						

Component 2	Regional and national legal, policy and institutional reforms for improved fisheries management						
Component 3	Introduction of institutional reforms to catalyze regional cooperation in reducing over-fishing and improving fisheries management in the SCS (Greater emphasis on regional cooperation than in the original logframe)						
Component 4	Demonstration of best fisheries management practices in critical sites of the SCS (Emphasis on “critical sites” absent in original logframe)						

Project Outcome Ratings

Outcomes		Evaluation					
		HS	S	MS	MU	U	HU
Component 1 Outcome 1	Regional consensus on transboundary priorities and their immediate and root causes						
Component 2 Outcome 2	Recommend actions on regional and national legal, policy and institutional reforms for improved fisheries management						
Component 3 Outcome 3	Strengthening of existing institutions to catalyze regional cooperation in reducing over-fishing and improving fisheries management in the SCS						
Component 4 Outcome 4	Increased capacity of SSME national level institutions to implement site-specific EAFM with local partners to rebuild fish stocks and improve fishing incomes						
Component 5 Outcome 5	Facilitated uptake of knowledge and lessons learned						

Project Monitoring and Evaluation Ratings

Criteria	Rating	Comment
Scale for Monitoring and Evaluation: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S) Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)		
Overall quality of M&E	MU	Limited past M&E effort, likely the result of RPM turnover, periods of no RPM at the PMU, and a period of no functioning PMU; no financial resources committed to M&E over the remainder of project implementation
M&E design at project start up	S	M&E design at start-up consistent with UNDP-GEF IW standards, included the GEF IW Tracking Tool and timing and cost estimates

M&E Plan Implementation	MU	PIRs undertaken annually and generally good quality; 2 QPRs produced; QPRs cursory; No ongoing M&E at PMU scale; no TPRs conducted; no results template reporting or IW tracking tool reporting undertaken by PMU
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IA and EA Execution Ratings

Scale for IA & EA Execution: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S) Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)		
Overall Quality of Project Implementation/Execution	MU	Responsibility for delays in project implementation start-up and disorganized and sometimes dysfunctional PMU must ultimately rest with the IA and EA
Implementing Agency Execution	MU	Country assessments of IA performance range from negative to neutral; UNDP at corporate level is ultimately responsible for overall project performance, including establishment and effective and efficient functioning of a PMU, which ash not been the case
Implementing Agency Oversight Functions	MS	UNDP at regional and country level have made repeated attempts to address administrative and managerial problems of the project
Executing Agency Execution	MU	Country assessments, and to some extent IA assessments of EA performance consistently and highly negative

Overall Project Rating

Rating	Description
Marginally Satisfactory (MS)	Project is expected to achieve most of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve some of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits.