**Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned**

***Relevance - Satisfactory***

The project is relevant to the current Seychelles context and has a satisfactory rating based on assessment of design and current country context.

The project outlines two evidence-based barriers: 1. inadequate policy, legislative, regulatory and institutional frameworks that inhibit the establishment and management of PAs under different non-government management arrangements and 2. limited capacities of, and cooperation and collaboration between, government institutions and non-government partners constrain the expansion and effective management of PAs. The project also has logical corresponding expected outcomes: 1. strengthening the National PA System and enabling environment and 2. developing baselines for inner island PA expansion and demonstrating a variety of co-management approaches/models.

The logical framework, components, activities, human resource strategy and budgets to achieve the development objective are appropriate, viable and responsive to the contextual institutional, legal and regulatory settings. However, the MTE disclosed a need for stronger linkages between the expected project development outcome, its strategies and the log frame indicators. While the overall project outcome highlights work around strengthening partnership and enhancing cooperation, process-related indicators are absent, particularly those related to knowledge sharing and learning.

Moreover, setting up a project schedule dependent on policy reforms and legislative processes is risky. The project strategy post Mid-Term should include considerations for dealing with risk. The stated risk is “A protracted legislative reform, regulatory amendments and PA proclamation processes delay the expansion of existing, and establishment of new, protected areas’. The risk is valid and the project strategy must be to realign IP targets in log frame so that the inputs are not overall reliant on the GOS processes. Significant assumptions in the design period regarding policy approval in the given project time frame was risky and has brought forth issues. Delays in policy approval have not delayed ENGOs’ or IP partners work per se, which is proceeding. They have affected scheduled project activities. The project log frame draft (refined during the inception workshop) can be responsive to the mitigation of critical risks relating to partnerships and collaboration (Annex 4 – suggested changes in log frame). In addition, NGOs would do better to set their indicator targets as “contributions to” the overall environmental protection targets rather than to link them directly to the policy approval process.

The project log frame is very ambitious with many (19) hard result indicators. Despite the overall trend of GEF project to have more hard results type indicators, process (of change) and indicators around learning are also needed in this case (see section below on KM, collaboration and learning). Interviews with ENGO implementing partners reported that the design process was not inclusive to them, and they did not have a say except in the one or two indicators that were *assigned to them*.

The project design falls short of a mechanism (or even what might have been conceived at design as a third *Outcome Goal - related indicators and activities*) that would help to ensure *linkages, visibility, collaboration and learning* between Outcome 1 (enabling policy-focused, upstream - government-heavy implementation work) and Outcome 2 (science-based evidence and information sharing, i.e. mapping, demarcation of boundaries, monitoring, downstream-NGO implementation heavy work). A knowledge management strategy and focus on capacity strengthening for partnerships will help as a response and mitigate important risks outlined at the design stage. There are ways to achieve this without changing the LF drastically and this is discussed and included in recommendations and new proposed log frame (annex4). During MTE, proposals and options around knowledge management and learning were discussed and justified. Documentation and effective sharing of Outcome 2 results are important for influencing Outcome 1 results.

Cross reference with MTE Recommendations 1-8

***Efficiency - Marginally Satisfactory***

Managed as part of a broader government-led program approach on biodiversity, the project was intended to be efficient and cost-effective by capitalizing on the comparative benefits of several implementing partners and ensuring synergies across the biodiversity portfolio. The design, per ProDoc 2011 was to promote a learning-by-doing approach through co-implementation, involving comparative benefits of government and non-governmental stakeholders involved PA management in Seychelles. The co implementation was expected to be an efficient demonstration of co-implementation as project modality

Issues have arisen in relation to the implementation approach. Working with ENGOs as partners for demonstrating co-implementation in practice, a core focus of the Outcome 2 activities, i.e. developing baselines and undertaking co-management activities on a variety of small islands (ProDoc 2011 and MTE interviews with IPs), is proving challenging. Project design was premised on the assumptions of smooth PCU support services for implementation and democratic monitoring of project results. For the project to demonstrate co-implementation, it should be providing a good platform to facilitate good relations and trust. The assumptions around smooth PCU services for implementation and facilitating and managing a democratic steering committee are linked to these aims. To date the PCU support (as and extension of the MEE) has been adequate but improvements are needed post MTE. NgoS what exactly have not been provided in sufficient quantities to the ENGOs to make their life easier and to achieve this co-management and co-implementation approach does not come out clear.

The concept of a steering committee is useful; but it has not functioned as good as it might have given the nature of the project modality IPs -NGOs and GOS. The primary oversight mechanism for guiding implementation, results and budgetary concerns, the SCM met infrequently (only four times since inception) and might have been the opportunity to address implementation issues and progress on activities (substantive) rather than simply having SC to address operational matters. In this case MTE finds missed opportunities. The review of the SC minutes shows a primary debate focus on the bureaucratic financial disbursements. The SC can be reviewed in terms of the frequency and content of meetings to enable partners, involvement in adaptive management and bottlenecks around implementation and results. The SC post MTE should be prepared to include technical and results-based debates concerning the IP substantive activities.

The financial planning and management issues are serious and must be tackled as a matter of priority. UNDP is commended for its efforts as convenor on the issue and for getting Govt together (PCU, Envi and Finance (one meeting called MFA) to try to resolve bottlenecks around processing disbursements in Govt. The problem is not the result of either GOS or NGOs. NGOs are also part of the problem because they never submitted financial returns and reports on time. Capacity strengthening on GEF/GOS procedures is needed.

These are elaborated in the document but highlighted most important first action point when the project commences post Mid-Term. Options for dealing with problematic disbursement issues dogging the project are linked to the overall grant architecture; thus options for dealing with this are spelled out clearly in the recommendations (See recommendation # 12).

Linked to financial planning issues were the unforeseen rising costs of human resources for IPs project management and administration-related expenses which negatively impact on the quality and timeliness of IP expected results. For instance, many ENGOs are collecting PA baselines. Fundamentally, these activities are resource heavy, essential inputs for informing the enabling environment for PA systems and co-management approach and must be prioritized (augmented if necessary) by end of project scenario. Since many of these project management costs were not anticipated by NGOs during the design stage, there is an urgent need for re-allocation among budget lines and adaptive management approach in this regard. Re-allocations between the lines for each NGO specific allocation are possible as long as mangers do not over allowed thresholds.

The need for adaptive management, democratic and participatory monitoring of substantive results is clear, as is the need for more systematic knowledge sharing in and between projects for results. This has emerged as a key MTE recommendation.

Cross reference with MTE Recommendations 8-15

***Effectiveness – Marginally Satisfactory***

The ENGO sector is highly capacitated, capable and willing of supporting the upstream systems strengthening and conducting their activities downstream, including demonstration of co-management approaches for PA with Government and private sector partners. However, more activities targeted at cooperation and building of trust is needed within this unique project approach. The project modality and implementation is problematic as implementing partners are reporting overly bureaucratic reporting procedures which is in turn dominating the project implementation discourse, preventing their engagement in adaptive management and impacting on results. The report of overly bureaucratic processes is found to be standard procedures for GEF – quarterly technical and financial reports – the issue is compliance and the capacity for compliance within the GEF modality. The project does not have any extra reporting requirements only GEF and so it is determined that capacity building is needed in this regard so IP can respect the reporting requirements in a way conducive of the modality.

The project is beginning to show results within the enabling environment for longer term management and services of an expanded PA system. Outcome 1 focuses on PA systems strengthening, with 2 of 5 of outputs contingent on the policy and legal framework approval process. If the policy and legal debates actually go through, (at Mid-Term, it looks highly likely) this will be ***a*** significant ***result***. However, if the policy document is not approved and the working group on legal review remains stopped as it was at MTE, more work will be needed to ensure a smooth legal process (likely to be held up in the AGs office along with all the other Acts produced by PCU). Outcome 1.5, Environmental Management Information System (EMIS), deals with important enabling work on system strengthening around data management and information sharing protocols. The work is important for sustainability of efforts (systems strengthening) and must move ahead. Output 1.4 is just starting but MTE underscore the importance of *capacity strengthening and effective knowledge management* for ED, SFA and SNPA to constructively support the establishment processes/protocols for the newly designated PAs; implement its oversight role for the entire protected area system; and strengthen its ability to participate in negotiating and implementing co-management agreements with NGOs, resource users and the private sector. This aspect is linked to sustainability must be the second phase focus.

Outcome 2 is rich in activities linked to scientifically established baseline in relation to the new PA (terrestrial and marine) monitoring systems, demarcation of new boundaries and boundaries for endangered species in addition to ascertaining the cost benefits, demonstration and documentation of the shared PA governance or co-management approach. In a study of the actual activities, costs have risen and so some of these activities are being compromised. It will be important to relook at budgets and prioritize the technical work and results linked to establishing baselines. In this area, the MTE find that the project designers and budget formulation process at design did not take into account sufficiently the cost intensive work involved in establishing mapping and baselines about to be undertaken by the project.

In addition MTE considered the t*echnical requirements and learning linkages and find that although the E-* NGOs have various levels of scientific histories, capacities and engagements and there is a need to understand the technical support needs including the oversight link to ED and /or SNPA technical capacities (for quality assurance and for engaging support services for a PA network. This aspect is capacity, cost and labor intensive and will require an understanding and including links to knowledge based institutions including universities and or regional PA learning and monitoring activities for ongoing PA management. More capacity support is needed in this regard.

In addition, the budget and planning for documentation and sharing results in relation to the important calculation of the cost benefits/cost effectiveness of co-management approaches at implementation level are still not forthcoming.

Cross reference with MTE Recommendations 12-20

***Sustainability – Marginally Likely***

*Financial sustainability and resources - Satisfactory*

One of the project indicators is the financial scorecard, and to date that indicator has been surpassed. There are several synergistic activities ongoing that will also contribute to the expansion of the project’s lesson and learning including the new GEF GOS Outer Islands Project that will serve to strength the co-management approach and strengthen the systems foundation by this project

*Socio-political – Satisfactory*

The socio-political context for PA management is unique in Seychelles and the NGO sector is highly capacitated, vocal and providing important services and management of small islands. From a socio-political perspective, the discourse between NGO and Government is open. The innovations tested in the project around co-management are setting up the institutional framework and systems for co-management that reduce the risks associated with individual and egos and include the laws, policies and financial capability for the PA system to function effectively and draw upon the knowledge and capabilities of other NGOs in the sectors for co-management and services. MTE finds the country situation and the socio-political sustainability as Satisfactory.

*Institutional framework and governance - Marginally Satisfactory*

The institutional framework is marginally satisfactory. A project focus is on improving the institutional and governance framework for PA co-management. The project intends to bring partners together to work collaboratively on upstream and downstream initiatives, including garnering the evidence based protected area expansion and for mapping new PA boundaries. There is an informal functioning PA government and non-government network that exists and this is being built upon. In the second half implementation, funds might be rescheduled for knowledge management collaborative learning activities and targeted capacity strengthening. This can be emphasized, for instance, as an implementation strategy, in particular in relation to Output 1.4.

*Environmental – Marginally Likely*

The environmental sustainability is marginally satisfactory because the project in fact aims at environmental sustainability as a core outcome - the approach that is being tested to achieve long-term biodiversity conservation and small island sustainable development and management.

***Lesson Learned***

This project is unique and commendable as a showcase of co-management of PA in Seychelles and could be a global good practice. Its ultimate success will generate great benefits for the country in terms of its biodiversity and sustainable development goals in the future. Some important lessons at Mid-Term include the following:

1. *Strict project financial disbursement architecture is a barrier to co-implementation attention is not given to accommodate and to mitigate implementation risks around smooth project operational processes. There may be need for initial capacity building in advance of implementation around the modality which might provide costly and risky.*
2. *PA co-implementation is about establishing the enabling environment for adaptive management, environmental governance and a democratic process enables a diverse set of governmental and non-governmental organization including private sector partners to become equal players at the decision-making table.*
3. *Transparency in budgetary and decision making processes is very important for establishing PA co-implementation.*
4. *The setting up of new PA eco-system management regimes requires attention to trust, respect and equality for implementing partners.*
5. *Establishing monitoring regimes for managing PAs marine and terrestrial requires cost-intensive scientific and human resources inputs with a sound management structure and sustainable flow of resources.*
6. *Identifying neutral platforms for equality in multi-stakeholder co-implementation is important.*
7. *Rigorous monitoring and clear enforcement procedures and protocols provide the basis of a good PA implementation approach.*
8. *Effective knowledge management and targeted capacity strengthening (KS platforms, services and tools) is important for supporting co-implementation and new ecosystem management regimes.*
9. *Knowledge management and learning aspects of the project approach must be budgeted or it is downplayed.*
10. *Adaptive management involving NGO and Government in co implementation requires much trust and respect for working well together especially around administrative issues which might require innovations and collaboration during implementation.*

*Modeling co-implementation in the context of GEF funding modality is very risky and requires special accommodation and flexibility in the budgetary procedures; lesson is to question whether or not it is practical to engage NGOs as management partners at all, rather than as sub-contractors (working on the basis of fixed disbursements against deliverables without the quarterly reporting and 80% barriers).Payment on delivery might work better and avoid some of the major reporting problems.*

1. *Innovative mechanisms and incentive schemes are needed to retain quality human resources and important project institutional memory for smooth implementation.*

***Matrix of evaluation ratings (See GEF Evaluation guidelines for evaluation 2012)***

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