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Implementation Challenges and Lessons Learnt: Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem and Adjacent Regions



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Implementation Challenges and Lessons Learnt: Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project

Experience of the GEF - sponsored

GEF/UNDP: Sustainable Management of the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) and Adjacent Regions

GEFID: XX, GEF Agency Project ID: 3706

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The “Sustainable Management of the Shared Living Marine Resources of the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem and Adjacent Project” (shortly referred to as the CLME Project) was a five year project (2009-2013) which sought to contribute to the “sustainable management of the shared living marine resources of the Caribbean LME and adjacent areas through an ecosystem-based management approach that will meet the WSSD target for sustainable fisheries.” A total of 26 countries participated in the project along with a number of regional and sub-regional organizations. Participating countries included: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela, United States of America.

The project area is considered as one of the most geopolitically diverse and complex sets of LMEs in the world. Twenty-six independent States and more than 15 dependent territories border or are located within the marine area covered by the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf LMEs. These culturally diverse countries and territories range from among the largest (e.g. Brazil, United States of America) to among the smallest (e.g. Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis), and from the most developed to the least developed in the world.

The CLME Project worked towards: increasing trust, partnerships, coordination and cooperation among all participating countries; enabling robust resources governance and management arrangements at the regional, sub-regional, national and local levels; whilst at the same time laying the foundations for an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. The specific project objectives included: 1) To identify, analyze and agree upon major transboundary issues, root causes and actions required to achieve sustainable management of the shared living marine resources in the Caribbean LME; 2) To improve the shared knowledge base so that sustainable use and management of transboundary living marine resources could be possible; 3) To implement legal, policy and institutional reforms regionally and nationally to achieve sustainable transboundary living marine resource management; 4) To develop an institutional and procedural approach to LME level monitoring, evaluation and reporting for management decision-making.

The total project budget was US \$52 million of which US \$7million was GEF grant and the remaining US \$45million was co-financing contributions from countries and regional organisations. The project implementing agency was the United Nations Development Programme and the project was executed jointly by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO).

THE EXPERIENCE

Issue

The CLME Project was plagued with operational challenges particularly during the first half of project execution (2009-2011), which impacted on the execution of the project activities and could have greatly

impacted the project's outputs. One of these challenges included the high staff turnover within the CLME PCU, particularly the position of Regional Project Coordinator. The first Regional Project Coordinator (RPC) vacated the post during the first year of the project. Although a second RPC was hired shortly after, this person did not remain with the project for very long, leaving the Senior Project Officer (SPO) to assume some of the duties of the RPC for a number of months, additional to his existing duties. However, the loss of two RPCs in such a short space of time resulted in a loss of coherence in management direction and impacted a number of the project components including the start of some of the pilot projects and case studies that were supposed to have been implemented in parallel with the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis.

In August 2011, the project's third RPC was hired, with the challenge at hand of taking the project from one at risk of failure to one that would be able to deliver the project outputs articulated in the Project Document. However, shortly after the new RPC commenced his duty, the SPO who had been with the project for the last two years resigned, and a new SPO had to be recruited. Such changes could have added an additional challenge to an already complicated situation as both the RPC and the SPO were new to the project and did not have the institutional memory of the previous SPO.

Notwithstanding the challenges alluded to above, the new CLME PCU, needed to ensure the following outputs were achieved in the remaining eighteen months of the project: four Transboundary Diagnostic Assessments finalized and approved by the countries; pilot projects and case studies successfully implemented; the Strategic Action Programme developed and endorsed by the countries at the political level; and lastly and maybe most importantly that project activities were implemented within the remaining project budget. However, it was clear that the following outputs could only be achieved through adaptive management.

Provide a short paragraph describing the transboundary waters management issue[s] this project addressed. *For example, the X stress is affecting X ecosystem in the following way, with the following consequence. The project proposed to mitigate the problem by...X.*

Addressing the Issue

Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis

A decision was taken by the Steering Committee to establish two groups, which would provide technical advice on a number of technical matters pertaining to the project and its activities, and included: the Technical Task Team (TTT); and the Stakeholder Advisory Group (STAG). Very early during project implementation the TTT advised the region to adopt a somewhat innovative approach regarding the development of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis. This included the development of TDAs on a fisheries related ecosystem (continental shelf, pelagic, and reef ecosystem) basis. Casual Chain Analyses were also undertaken for the three fisheries specific ecosystems. A separate Regional Governance Analysis was also commissioned due to the prominence allocated to governance in the Project Document. A Regional TDA which summaries regional information on the socio-economic features and activities of the project area and which also described the key findings from the fisheries ecosystem reports, as well as the governance analysis was also developed.

The RPC upon the commencement of his duties sought to ensure that all pending TDAs for the project were completed, delivered and accepted by the countries. Whilst all the TDAs were shared with the countries for their endorsement, it should be noted that with over seven hundred pages of information from the TDAs available, it proved difficult to have the TDAs circulated both in English and Spanish (the other official language of the CLME Project) due to high cost of translation services.

Pilot Project and Case Studies

Due to the challenges faced with the late start of some of the pilot projects and case studies it was apparent that the results from these initiatives would not be available in time to inform the development of

the SAP as was originally perceived in the Project Document. In light of this, consideration was given to how results and best practices emanating from the pilot projects and case studies could contribute to the development of the CLME SAP. One possible solution was the establishment of a SAP Core Development Team (CDT) which comprised of representatives from the regional agencies responsible for the implementation of pilot projects and case studies.

It was further noted that the monitoring and reporting framework in place for the pilot projects and case studies appeared somewhat *ad hoc* and did not allow the new PCU to get a clear understanding of the implementation status of the projects and any implementation challenges that they might be facing. In light of this and in discussion with the regional agencies responsible for implementing these pilot projects and case studies the RPC implemented a bi-monthly reporting template that all pilot projects and case studies were required to submit to the PCU on the progress of the projects, including major milestones, challenges and financial implementation.

Strategic Action Programme

The development and endorsement of a Strategic Action Programme by participating countries usually takes two years. However due to the time and cost constraints faced by the CLME Project, the CLME Strategic Action Programme needed to be developed and endorsed by the participating countries in just over 12 months. It was originally envisaged that a SAP Formulation Team, consisting of 10 regional experts, nominated by their peers, would be responsible for drafting certain sections of the CLME SAP. Although Terms of Reference were developed for the SAP Formulation Team and the nominees had already been nominated, a decision was taken to change the role, function and name of the team. The name of the team was changed from SAP Formulation Team to SAP Formulation Endorsement and Support Team (FEST). The role of the SAP FEST was primarily to review and provide insight on the iterative drafts of the CLME SAP before being sent out to the National Focal Point for their review.

The reason for changing the SAP FT to a SAP FEST was related to a decision taken during the third Steering Committee Meeting to establish the SAP Core Development Team (CDT). The SAP CDT encompassed key representatives from the regional organizations implementing the pilot projects and case studies. The SAP CDT was responsible for preparing, along with the CLME PCU, content for specific (sub) chapters or sections of the CLME SAP particularly as they related to outputs and/or recommendations emanating from the case studies and pilot projects under their respective responsibility. Three face-to-face meetings of the SAP CDT and the CLME PCU took place in an eight month time-frame to advance work on the CLME SAP.

Recognizing that SAP development needed to be consultative in nature and that this could prove to be somewhat complicated to undertake in a complex project like the CLME, which consisted of twenty-six participating countries and a number of regional partner organizations, the CLME PCU developed "*Terms of Reference for the development and endorsement of the CLME Strategic Action Programme (CLME SAP)*". The TORs outlined the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders involved in the SAP development and endorsement process. The roles and responsibilities of the following stakeholders were elaborated in the TORs:

- CLME Project Coordinating Unit
- SAP Core Development Team
- Case Study and Pilot Project Implementing Agencies/Organisations and their Partners
- SAP Formulation Endorsement and Support Team
- CLME National Focal Points
- National Inter-Sectoral Committees (NIC) or equivalents
- CLME Project Advisory Group
- CLME Steering Committee
- National GEF Operational Focal Point
- Ministers
- Senior International SAP Expert

Efforts were taken to engage the National Focal Points during all stages of the CLME SAP development process- from the development of the CLME SAP Table of Contents to the specific actions defined in the CLME SAP - in order to ensure full ownership of the document at the country level. National Focal Points were also encouraged to undertake inter-sectoral consultations on the content of the CLME SAP in order to ensure that there was broad awareness of the document and its content at the country level.

Adaptive Management

Due to the constraints faced early in project execution, it was necessary that the Project Coordinating Unit explore approaches that would allow for successful completion and closure of the project activities. The project faced a cost constraint and the PCU needed to ensure that mechanisms were put in place to allow the project to fulfill its major outputs. It was also clear that due to the delays experienced in the execution of some project activities, during the instances when the project was without a RPC, that the case studies and pilot projects would have to be extended. This also meant that overall project duration would have to be extended and that such an extension needed to be a no-cost extension.

One of the first adaptive measures to be introduced by the Regional Project Coordinator was the development of a financial monitoring tool. This “tool” was developed in Microsoft Excel to track and monitor the use of project resources against project activities. This monitoring tool was deemed to be important and necessary as it was not very apparent to the new PCU, the extent of the resources available to implement the remaining activities of the project. The “tool” also allowed the PCU to undertake “projection scenarios” as to what activities could be implemented with the remaining resources. It was as a result of this that there was a decision to realign the use of some resources from one budget line to another in order to support the activities of the PCU. In other instances the scale of some activities were downscaled.

A slightly adapted version of this “tool” was also shared with project partners implementing the case studies and pilot projects so that they too could financially track their projects. This was also supplemented by a bi-monthly progress Microsoft Word template. This progress report allowed both the project partners and the PCU to have a better sense of the implementation rate of the pilots.

It should further be noted that a few of the pilot projects and case studies were able to return unspent resources to the PCU to support Strategic Action Programme development and endorsement and CLME PCU operation.

Provide multiple paragraphs on the specific actions undertaken by the project to address the issue. These might be sequential or simultaneous interventions.

RESULTS AND LEARNING

Whilst the CLME Project faced a number of challenges during its implementation, it was also able to overcome many of these constraints through the ability to effectively adapt to changing conditions and circumstances. In the end this project was able to successfully complete its activities and meet most, if not all, of the outputs outlined in the Project Document. It is thus felt that many of the experiences as well as the lessons outlined below from this project could prove insightful to other GEF IW foundational projects.

- It is important that projects such as these have sound but realistic monitoring and evaluation procedures agreed upon and established at the start of the project. Although the monitoring and evaluation framework was established during the middle of the project, it proved critical to monitoring project activities, particularly the many pilot projects and case studies. The monitoring tool also proved very useful in monitoring and tracking overall project financial implementation.

- For projects as complex as the CLME, which included 26 participating countries along with a number of regional and sub-regional project partners, as well as a large number of pilot projects and case studies, a stable and strong Project Coordination Unit throughout project duration is essential to successful implementation of project activities. It was evident that the staff turnover experienced within the PCU during the first half of the project could have had an overall negative impact on overall project implementation. However the PCU sought to raise the profile of the project by working very closely with the project partners in the region, as there were many stakeholders who were under the impression that the project was closed. Such efforts proved to be instrumental particularly during the SAP development and endorsement phase. At the time of writing this experience note over 20 countries had endorsed the CLME SAP at the political level, making it the first time that such a large quorum of countries had expressed their support of a SAP under a GEF IW project.
- The close collaboration with and involvement of project partners during implementation proved critical to the success of the CLME Project. A study undertaken as part of the CLME Project indicates that the region has over 30 regional organizations with some kind of mandate and/or responsibility for marine governance and management. Whilst increased coordination and integration amongst all these agencies could not have been possible under this current phase of the project, increased coordination between regional fisheries and environmental did take place. Two examples of this stand out as noteworthy: The Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation between Organizations for Fishing and Aquaculture in Central America (OSPESCA) and the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD); and the Joint Action Plan between OSPESCA and Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM). Further, the SAP CDT comprising of the regional and sub-regional organisations involved in implementation of a number of project activities was useful in advancing SAP development and in ensuring greater coordination of the proposed actions. It also served as an informal forum where the regional organizations could coordinate their work programmes with other agencies.
- The existence of on-the-ground activities proved to be strategically important to the CLME Project and was important in allowing the countries and stakeholders to feel ownership of the CLME Project, and by extension the CLME SAP which has been endorsed by a large quorum of countries.

Summarize the impacts of this experience on the issues, the project and its partners. What was learned from this experience? Moreover, please attempt to include technical information and references to your project's indicators where possible. For example, *as a result of the X intervention, discharge of X into X was reduced by X%. The outcome of this activity is that the affected-population will realize X benefits. This intervention demonstrates that given an investment of \$X can leverage \$X of cost-savings.*

REPLICATION

For large and somewhat complicated projects like the CLME which encompassed two LMEs covering approximately 4.4 million km² and with some 26 independent states and over 15 dependent territories, project management can at times prove to be a challenge. It was as a result of this that the Project Coordinating Unit developed a bi-monthly reporting template used by the pilot projects and case studies, as well as the Project Coordinating Unit to monitor project and financial implementation. Such a template could be shared with other GEF IW, particularly those with demonstration projects; however such a template could also prove to be useful for a Project Coordinating Unit in tracking implementation of project components.

The development of a Strategic Action Programme under this project could have been a challenge, particularly due to the fact that this project had such a large number of stakeholders. In light of this the

PCU prepared a “*Terms of Reference for the development and endorsement of the CLME Strategic Action Programme (SAP)*” which outlined the roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders involved in the CLME SAP development and endorsement process.

Establishment of National Intersectoral Committees proved challenging at times during project implementation as many countries expressed that they were resource constrained and that they did not have additional resources to establish any new committees. In light of this, the PCU encouraged countries to utilize existing inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms. Such an approach proved useful particularly during national consultation on the CLME SAP as National Focal Points were able to undertake broad consultation of the document.

What implementation challenges should others expect to encounter when replicating this experience? Highlight specific conditions needed for others to replicate or benefit from this experience. *For example, the strategy pursued in this case only works given the following (climatic, socioeconomic, political) conditions...*

SIGNIFICANCE

The endorsement of the CLME+ Strategic Action Programme (SAP) at the political level represents the first time that a GEF IW project has had over 20 countries agree on a short and medium term road-map for improved governance and management of their marine and coastal resources. The CLME Project success is largely attributed to the commitment of the participating countries and project partners to the project objectives. Although the project experienced some challenges during the first half of its implementation, it was able to overcome these due to stakeholder commitment. Such commitment to the project’s objectives can be attributed to the fact that work on the CLME Project began some ten years before the project was officially approved under the GEF IW Portfolio. This resulted in strong ownership and commitment by the region to this project. An example of this could be best observed through the contributions of the SAP Formulation Endorsement and Support Team (FEST). The SAP FEST consisted of a group of regional experts nominated by their peers who reviewed and provided input into the different iterations of the CLME SAP without asking for any remuneration.

It should further be noted that the CLME Project and overarching SAP fully support MDG Goals on sustainable development, WSSD targets on biodiversity, poverty, fish stocks and governance, and contribute to the Aichi Strategic Goals (A-E) from the CBD COP 11.

Why is this experience significant to GEF IW projects and to transboundary water resources management? *For example, this experience represents the first time a GEF IW project has done X.*

REFERENCES

For more information on the CLME Project, please visit www.clmeproject.org.

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How can someone interested in using or adapting this experience get more information? Please provide relevant website(s), documentation and contact information. If you have further materials otherwise unavailable, GEF IW:LEARN is happy to post them to iwlearn.net

KEYWORDS

What 2-5 keywords could be used to help others search and find this experience note? Please provide at least one of each of the following:

- ◆ Project Management
- ◆ Project Coordination Unit
- ◆ Large Marine Ecosystem
- ◆ Adaptive Management

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