



CLME+ Project
Caribbean & North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems



Draft Report

Supporting Knowledge Management (KM) and Communications activities in the GEF/UNDP CLME+ Project

Follow up and action plan (January 2019)

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Rationale of IW/LME:LEARN intervention to support the CLME+ Project

The CLME+ Project was selected by the GEF LME:LEARN PCU to receive dedicated assistance for the development of actionable Knowledge Management/Communications solutions to be implemented in the second half of the Project. In the framework of the IW/LME:LEARN Projects, a consultant (Ms Lucilla Minelli) was hired to support the CLME+ Project for the period October 2018 – February 2019 and provide advice to develop actionable KM/Comms approaches to be implemented in the second half of the CLME+ Project. The Consultant assisted the PCU in diagnosing existing challenges and bottlenecks encountered in the first half of the Project and provided advice on possible ways to address them.

This pilot intervention also contributes to enrich the services of the IW: and LME:LEARN Projects by offering practical examples to improve knowledge management at all stages of a project life and by contributing to the ongoing debate within the GEF Partnership about modalities to improve the effective sharing of tacit and explicit knowledge.

The present report summarizes salient issues, action points and recommendations resulting from the interactions between the consultant and the PCU.

Methodology

Preparatory phase (Sept-Nov 2018):

- Exchange of emails and teleconferences with CLME+ Project Manager, Mr Patrick Debels (Oct-Nov 2018)
- Desk research and review of project material, including Project Document, Mid Term Review, Communications Strategy and revisions, Project website (www.clmeproject.org), CLME+ Hub (www.clmeplus.org), brochures, leaflets, booklets and ppts provided by the RPM, Social Media (Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/clmeplus/>, and Twitter <https://twitter.com/clmeplus>), Communications ToRs, among others.
- Drafting of preliminary proposed interventions (mini intervention logic, timeline)
- Preparation of coaching material (agenda, ppt, exercises, etc.)

Mission to Project HQ (Nov 2018):

- Delivery of face to face coaching in Cartagena, Colombia (14-17 November 2018)
- Bilateral discussions on action points

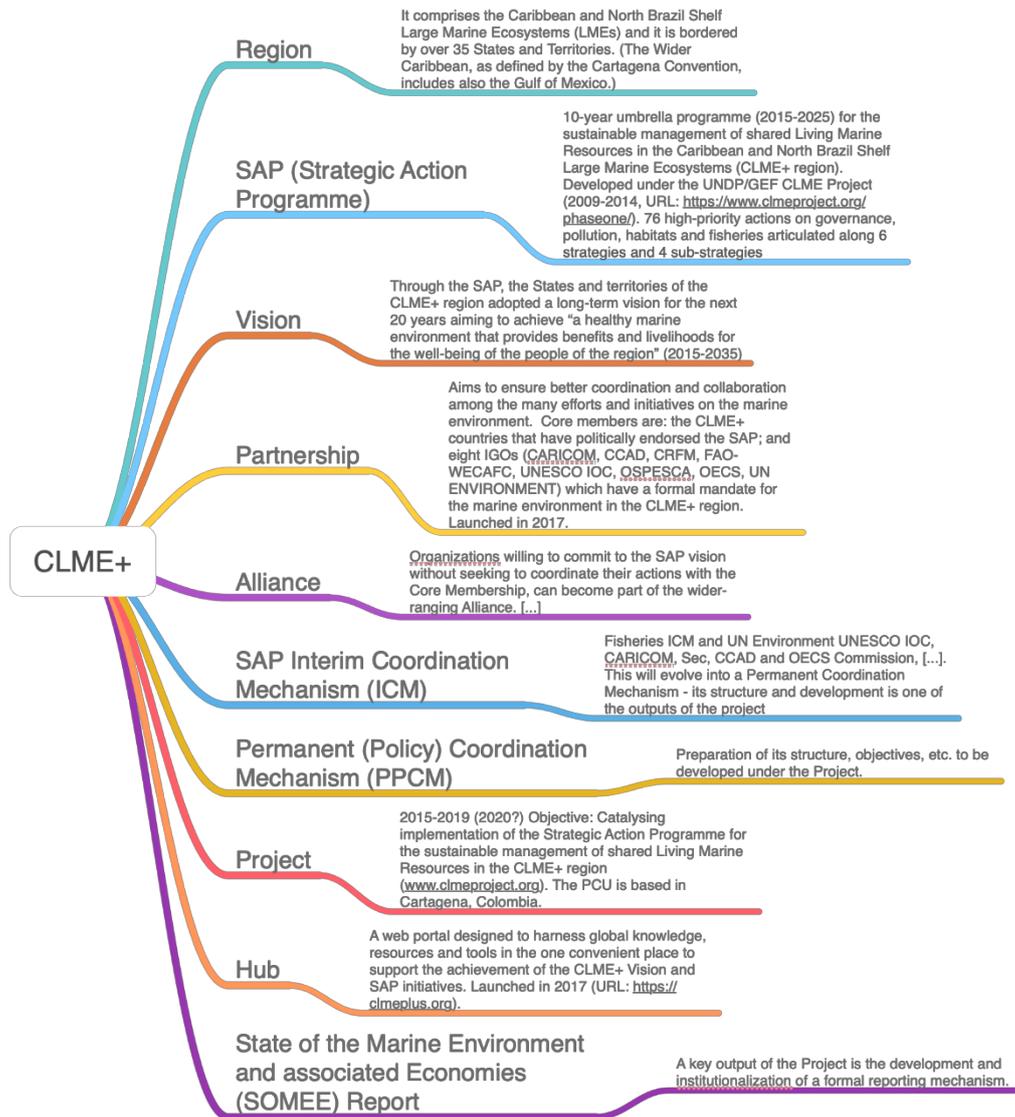
Follow-up and final reporting (Dec 2018 – Feb 2019):

- Preparation of draft report (with recommendations and action points)
- Round of comments with CLME+ PCU and IW/LME:LEARN PCU
- Finalization of report

Timeline					
	October 2018	November 2018	December 2018	January 2019	February 2019
Prep exchanges, desk research, material review					
Draft Action Plan					
Update Action Plan					
Preparation of f2f coaching					
Delivery of f2f training					
Follow up					
Final Report w/actions and recommendations					

Project Information and Status (as of January 2019)

(from the ProDoc) The UNDP/GEF Project “CLME+: Catalysing Implementation of the Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of shared Living Marine Resources in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems” (GEF ID 5542; 2015-2019) is a 5-year project that specifically aims at facilitating the implementation of the 10- year politically endorsed Strategic Action Programme for the Sustainable Management of the Shared Living Marine Resources of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystems (CLME+ SAP). The project seeks to achieve this by facilitating ecosystem based management/an ecosystem approach to fisheries (EBM/EAF) within the CLME+ region, in such a way that a sustainable and climate resilient provision of goods and services from the region’s living marine resources can be secured. Given its regional and comprehensive nature, the UNDP/GEF CLME+ Project is uniquely positioned to address the root causes of environmental degradation, in particular the gaps and weaknesses in transboundary and cross-sectoral governance arrangements. In this same context, the project will assist stakeholders in achieving improved coordination, collaboration and integration among the wide array of ongoing and newly planned projects and initiatives that are of relevance to the wider objectives of the CLME+ SAP.



The project is articulated along five intertwined Components:

1. Consolidating the institutional, policy and legal frameworks for sustainable and climate-resilient shared living marine resources governance in the CLME⁺ region
2. **Enhancing the capacity of key institutions and stakeholders to effectively implement knowledge-based EBM/EAF for sustainable shared living marine resources use in the CLME+**
3. Implementing EBM/EAF in the CLME⁺ region
4. (Pre-)Feasibility assessments to identify major high-priority investment needs and opportunities in the CLME⁺ region
5. **Monitoring & assessing progress of and results from the overall implementation of the CLME+ SAP, and experience sharing with the global LME practitioners' community**

Communications and Knowledge Management activities are explicitly addressed under Component 2 whose outputs aim to increase awareness and enhance overall capacity and participation of key stakeholders in the different stages of policy cycle implementation: (i) analysis & advice; (ii) decision-making; (iii) implementation; (iv) review & evaluation, and (v) data & information collection, provision and management. Output 2.4 foresees the elaboration of an *“Overarching CLME+ Communication Strategy, with central and decentralized components and responsibilities”* (see Annex I).

Knowledge-sharing activities (such as IW Experience Notes) are also referred to in Components 3 and 5 of the Project.

The CLME+ Project just completed the Mid-Term Review (October 2018). A no-cost extension of the project till end of 2020 or early 2021 is pending decision and approval by the Project Steering Committee.

Problem statement and bottlenecks

“If I had one hour to save the world I would spend 55 minutes defining the problem and 5 minutes solving it.” - Albert Einstein

The CLME+ features a high complex structure involving over 35 States and Territories thus operating within a very multifaced geopolitical context. Managing knowledge and information flow seems a key glue-factor to facilitate the achievement of all project objectives.

Currently, the CLME+ Project does not have a KM mechanism in place to systematically and effectively take stock of progress, facilitate coordination and information flow among partners, support project objectives (in primis the SAP implementation and related activities), share tacit knowledge, disseminate findings to intended stakeholders and promote project results. This critical coordination role takes on a pivotal function in facilitating consensus-building in multi-stakeholder dialogues. The *“(iv) Insufficient communication, co-ordination and information exchange among the myriad of sLMR-related projects, activities and initiatives that are underway or planned within the CLME+ region constitutes an important additional barrier to achieving the societal and environmental benefits expected from such substantial investments”* was already identified amongst the potential barrier to success at the beginning of the Project¹. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Project further elaborated on this by acknowledging that after two years of implementation the situation in terms of knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement remains critical and that communication flow “while efficient with and amongst executing partners, has not been apparently as effective in disseminating information to countries’ focal points and

¹ From the CLME+ Project Document 00093351, page 44.

national representatives in IGOs (WECAFC, OSPESCA, CRFM...), and in promoting exchanges within countries among the different sectors involved, both where NICs are present, and in the absence of NICs. This apparent lack of an adequate information flow with and within countries, might hinder the internalization of the legislative, policy and institutional reforms submitted for consideration through the project, and jeopardize the reaching of the desired outcomes”².

The PCU currently lacks a professional figure (be it an in-house officer or an outsourced consultant/company) responsible for the coordination of knowledge management (KM) and strategic communications aimed at supporting the PCU and Project Co-Executing Partners in the execution of project objectives and, more broadly, in the effort to strengthening the science-policy interface (SPI) in the CLME+ region for the protection of marine ecosystems and associated living marine resources. Moreover, the PCU also temporarily acts as the Secretariat for the Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM) thus bearing the responsibility to fulfil a communications/KM role in this regard.

As a result, the team is overloaded with tasks that do not fall under the responsibility of existing human resources, project countries feel that information flow is not working, communications channels are not adequately supported (such as project website, Knowledge Hub, etc.), donors are not provided with necessary inputs and the overall governance of the project suffers from the lack of a specialized support on KM.

After a series of failed attempts to bring onboard a suitable team member and adopt an effective KM/comms strategy, there is some feeling of frustration in the PCU towards new investments of time and resources in communications activities. However, the cost of inaction towards such key project functions is well understood and appreciated by the PCU, and an accurate analysis of root causes and possible solutions supported also by the findings of this LM:LEARN intervention will possibly lead to a revised and more functional approach to KM.

To this end, succeeding in: a) designing a down-to-earth, cost-effective, concrete yet visionary KM strategy tailored to the actual needs of the project, and b) hiring a suitable officer (or specialized company) with the right mix of expertise and skills could contribute to meet the anticipated results in the second half of the project.

These actions would need to take in due account *time limitations* (between now and the end of Project and *new agreed priorities* (the Mid-Term Evaluation suggests a strong prioritization

² CLME+ Mid-Term Review, October 2018, page 40

including de-scoping, outcomes/outputs/targets reformulation and budget re-allocation and the PSCM approved a new focus for a revised communications approach).

A number of **specific bottlenecks** have been identified tracing back the history of communications-related issues in the CLME+ Project.

1. After 3 years of implementation, the communications approach (based on a Communications Strategy dated from 2016 and subsequent revisions) seems out of focus and ineffective in supporting project objectives
2. Communications Specialists hired so far focused essentially on outreach, external dissemination and marketing – without providing guidance on and execution of comprehensive knowledge management at different levels thus overlooking the needs of actual key project stakeholders and target groups;
3. Key stakeholders, countries and partners feel that they are not effectively informed, consulted and engaged (lack of clear mapping, analysis, plan and instruments), in part due to the disproportionate weight dedicated in the past to external outreach and dissemination activities at the expense of actionable strategies serving “internal” needs and project priorities;
4. The urgent and important aspects of the project (especially those in second half) are not sufficiently addressed and supported by a clear KM/comms approach: the operativity of the Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM), the development of the Permanent Policy Coordination Mechanism (PPCM), the preparation of the SOME, the update of the CLME+ HUB and project website, among others.

Other concurring factors which may have contributed to slowing comms activities are:

- a. Most of the project institutional memory is concentrated in only two most senior staff members;
- b. National Focal Points (NFPs) have not always fully taken up their role vis-à-vis communications and KM activities
- c. The size of the PCU is rather small compared to the amount and variety of tasks/responsibilities (this is also true for the IGOs which act as co-executing partners)

The preparatory phase served to inform the face-to-face coaching during which the above points were addressed and contextualized.

Highlights of F2F meeting and discussions

During 14-16 November 2018 the consultant visited the CLME+ PCU at its headquarter in Cartagena, Colombia. The PCU in Cartagena is composed by Patrick Debels, Regional Project Manager; Laverne Walker, Senior Project Officer; Ivan Pavletich Meza, Operations and Finances



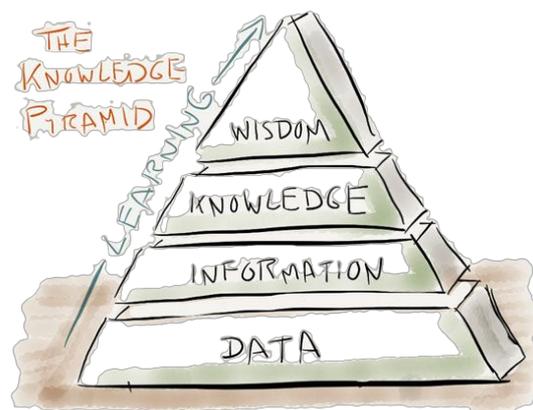
Manager; Silvia Del Castillo Pereira, Operations and Finances Assistant. Experts connecting remotely: Sherry Heileman, SOMEE Coordinator; John English Knowles, Monitoring and Evaluation Expert. The mission was planned ahead with the RPM and the whole team participated in the meeting resulting in a dynamic and constructive dialogue.

The first part of the coaching was dedicated to introducing basic notions of knowledge management,

including communications and outreach plans, and how general definitions and concepts can be of use in the context of the CLME+ Project.

There are many definitions of KM (there is not yet only one to be used by all United Nations system organizations) but it can be commonly described as the *“systematic process to identify, capture, structure, value, leverage, and share an organization’s intellectual assets to enhance its performance and competitiveness through a multidisciplinary approach”*. This definition places an emphasis on *“tacit knowledge”* (intended as intangible assets, human and intellectual capital) which is as important as the *“explicit knowledge”* (technical and codified information). It is more difficult to capture and effectively share this type of *“soft” knowledge* (*“The soft stuff is always harder than the hard stuff”*) but understanding its importance and designing appropriate instruments for its management is crucial for attaining project objectives. Most of project-related functions and objectives depend on actions or information that are difficult to measure or quantify, such as building consensus, promote ownership, negotiate governance arrangements, plan for sustainability and long-term legacy, among others. Neglecting this *“qualitative”* side of knowledge, intrinsic in human interactions and behavior, can be very costly in terms of failures, delays or budgetary losses/waste.

The GEF has been a longstanding champion in advocating for proper KM, and this has been re-emphasised in its 6th and 7th Replenishments, the GEF 2020 Strategy and in several instances by the Strategic Technical Advisory Panel (STAP). As the GEF STAP put it *“Embedding KM more systematically into the project cycle, is an essential part of project design.”*



The whole essence of the IW:LEARN initiative is aimed at: a) Strengthen knowledge management capacity; b) Promote scaled-up learning of disseminated experiences, tools and methodologies; and c) Improve the effectiveness of GEF IW and partner projects. It has to be noted that International Waters (IW) is the only GEF focal area that has put in place such mechanism to manage knowledge systematically across its portfolio and the importance of this effort is reflected with a mandatory budget allocation to IW:LEARN activities for all projects financed by IW.

KM should be seen as a *managerial tool* relevant at all stages of the project lifecycle. It is based on two critical activities: 1) the capture and documentation of explicit and tacit knowledge; and 2) their dissemination amongst the intended audiences and stakeholders. In other words, “*KM is about making the right knowledge available for the right people at the right time*”. This effort obviously includes a sound communications and outreach plan, fully in synergy with other areas related to for example, strengthening the science-policy interface and influencing decision-making, monitoring progress towards impact, supporting efficient project management, facilitating information flow, building capacity, increasing collaborative approaches, etc. It is worth noting that UNOPS has developed 33 project success criteria grouped in six dimensions, one of which is “knowledge management”. According to UNOPS Project Management Manual (Draft December 2018) “*the six dimensions³ should be continuously monitored during the implementation stage, evaluated during each quarterly review at engagement and project level and evaluated once the project is being operationally closed.*”

Communications activities should be “fit-for-purpose” and not an abstract application of various marketing techniques. A typical mistake is trying to apply a generic methodology onto a very complex situation without

fully understanding the necessities and unique features of the project. Tailoring the approach means strategically conceiving tools and activities in support of the project objectives -



consulting with project managers and partners about expectations and specific needs, advising on specific expertise needed, making a reality-check to be sure that envisaged resources (both human and financial) are available for its execution, etc.

³ The six dimensions are: stakeholder satisfaction, delivery performance, procedures, knowledge management, personnel management and core values

The majority of GEF-financed projects deal with multi-country and multi-stakeholder processes, multi-lingual partners, within often politically sensitive contexts. The way information is processed, digested and shared should be carefully and diplomatically conceived. Too often communication is seen as something not too complicated (as compared to the “hard stuff” such as math, geology, engineering, etc), thus requiring less attention or resources.



This “lower status/priority” contribute to reinforce wide-spread perceptions and negative stereotypes which in turn affect projects design and execution in a number of ways:

- Semantic differences are often overlooked. Terms like KM, communications, advocacy, capacity building, data management, knowledge exchange, information sharing, outreach, awareness raising, marketing, valorization, governance, web development, graphic design, journalism, etc. are sometimes used interchangeably to the detriment of their actual meaning and implications. Failing to identify at the beginning what type of specific intervention and activities are needed in a project result in subsequent frustrations and waste of time and resources. Adopting the right terminology from the start and making sure that everybody has the same understanding help minimizing “free interpretation” and ad hoc solutions during project execution.
- The right sets of expertise needed to carry out specific sets of tasks is not properly addressed and fulfilled by hired experts. In complex project architectures there is probably need for different types of technical expertise to support project objectives and execute a KM/communications strategy, in addition to diplomacy and sensitivity to political contexts. The focus largely depends on the outcome of a project, but a good design should be able to match agreed activities with appropriate professional profiles. For example: an IT engineer may build a sophisticated database system but may not be able to prepare a speech for a high-level meeting; a media expert could build strong relationship with journalists and media outlets, but may not have the necessary skills to facilitate a multi-country

negotiation on governance agreements; and so on. Appreciating the differences does not mean creating a crowded KM/comms team, but can help in sketching different scenarios, prioritize issues and needs, and justify decisions at different levels. And most importantly it can minimize mismatches between expectations and delivery, thus reducing potential conflicts and frustrations.

- The numerous accrued benefits deriving from the right approach to KM are underestimated. Unlike other activities that can be justified in terms of explicit and measurable monetary savings, the added value of KM is more difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, its benefits are far reaching and should be seen in the broader context of project activities.
- Insufficient resources (human and financial) are allocated to KM/communications. If there is no recognition of the fundamental role played by effective communications and the prerequisites to make it happen, this can be negatively reflected in a minimum budget which risks to drastically limit the range of possibilities to implement an adequate plan to reach the desired outcomes. On the other hand, praising and promising ambitious comms activities in the project narrative without making a commensurate allocation of resources is useless and may likely determine confusion among project partners and low performance evaluations.
- KM/comms activities are not reflected in the project logframe with SMART outcomes, objectives, outputs and targets. The same logic described for insufficient budget allocation applies in the case of silent logframes re: comms and KM. There is a general absence of clear guidelines on how to assess the performance of KM activities, but there are upcoming improvements and updates from the GEF with official guidelines about to be published. The STAP is quite vocal in this domain recommending that “KM progress indicators should be included in the GEF Results-Based Management system”.
- KM is not seen as “everybody’s business”. KM/comms seems to be an activity delegated only to specialists in the field. But knowledge-sharing should be seen “at the crossroads of core and support functions” and therefore as much as possible integrated in the jobs’ descriptions and terms of reference of all projects’ executing teams.

Another part of the introductory presentation focused on terminology related to “Stakeholders, Beneficiaries, Target groups, Partners”. Especially when distributing responsibilities among all project actors, it is important to agree on a common terminology. In the slide below there is a list of compiled definitions to help navigating the glossary.

Glossary: Stakeholders, Beneficiaries, Target groups, Partners

Stakeholders - groups that have a role and interest in the objectives and implementation of a programme or project; they include **target groups**, **direct beneficiaries**, those **responsible for ensuring that the results are produced** as planned, and **those that are accountable** for the resources that they provide to that programme or project.

Target groups - the main stakeholders of a programme or project that are **expected to gain from the results** of that programme or project; sectors of the population that a programme or project aims to reach in order to address their needs based on gender considerations and their socio- economic characteristics. When the target group is not sufficiently differentiated, the problem analysis tends to be superficial or too broad and does not allow the effect of the core problem within the various subgroups to be captured. For example, focusing on the unemployed without differentiating age groups may lead to a wrong strategy for youth unemployment. Focusing on the poor without disaggregating the data by gender, may lead to strategies that overlook gender equality issues, etc.

Direct beneficiaries - usually institutions and/or individuals who are the **direct recipients of technical cooperation** aimed at strengthening their capacity to undertake development tasks that are directed at specific target groups. In micro-level interventions, the direct beneficiaries and the target groups are the same.

Ultimate (or indirect) Beneficiaries - This is the target group that is expected to be better off as result of the project. The **project may provide services directly to this group or more commonly target this group through the strengthening of institutions and organizations** (i.e., the direct recipients), which support, increase awareness, or advocate on behalf of the ultimate beneficiaries. The distinction between direct recipients and ultimate beneficiaries is particularly **important for donor-funded technical cooperation projects**, where donors are primarily concerned with the impact of the project on the latter group. As a result, the project proposal should spell out the intended results of the project beyond just the direct recipients.

Partners - The individuals and/or organizations that **collaborate to achieve mutually agreed upon objectives**. Note: The concept of partnership connotes shared goals, common responsibility for outcomes, distinct accountabilities and reciprocal obligations. Partners may include governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations, universities, professional and business associations, multi- lateral organizations, private companies, etc.

Source: adapted from UNDP and ILO

Linked to the definition of stakeholders and audiences is the approach to **storytelling**. The presentation of project results, news, achievements, etc. should always be adapted to the intended audiences and properly conceived and digested to make it meaningful and relevant. Not everybody is interested in the same information and calls for action should differ according to the receivers taking into account various factors such as level of education, positions and roles, languages spoken, cultural aspects, geographical context, etc. Storytelling is not a simple or trivial matter: it requires deep understanding of issues at stake, knowledge of context and sensitivities, diplomacy and experience of institutions involved, but also creativity, innovation, adaptation. Sometimes even the design of a simple brochure or a poster is a diplomatic effort in itself (making sure that logos are properly displayed in the right order without omissions, writing concise but poignant and accurate texts, choosing images that are meaningful but also respect basic criteria of gender equality, geographic representation, etc; selecting eco-friendly material, ensuring quality of final results, etc...).

Storytelling is about sharing stories and narratives. What is really crucial is to coherently pursue a defined objective (agreed by everyone). Without such vision, storytelling can be counter-productive and a disconnected end on itself (examples on social media later on).

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Strategic communications in the context of GEF projects helps supporting policy-making by making visible and accessible success stories and lessons learned. The “knowledge pyramid” could be used to visually exemplify how strategic communications is supposed to work in support of policy and decision-making. See example below⁴.

From data to wisdom in a picture: strategic communications to support policy-making



Data

DATA are pieces of reality that we measure, in a raw form and have no meaning in isolation.

This picture is like raw data. If not contextualized or organized, it does not speak for itself (it says nothing anything about where it was taken, who are the people in it, what they are doing, what is the story behind, what the lesson learned or message is, etc...). Sharing it like this is practically useless.

⁴ The consultant prepared the following example in the context of another project using a real picture from a pilot study in Sudan.

From data to wisdom in a picture: strategic communications to support policy-making

Women Empowerment: ownership of livelihood subprojects in MPA Pilot Sites



INFORMATION is what we get by adding context and structure to raw data.

The picture was enriched with basic information: a title contextualizing, the project logo, place and date (the basic who, when, where, what and why). The picture was also improved graphically to better capture the details.

From data to wisdom in a picture: strategic communications to support policy-making

Women Empowerment: ownership of livelihood subprojects in MPA Pilot Sites

Seventy member women have income benefits from the bakery production centre and dairy goats rearing business.



KNOWLEDGE is a synthesis of information over time with added interpretation, experience, intuition.

From basic information the picture was further elaborated to inform on the concrete intervention operated by the project in the community (legend on the right) which had remarkable results (legend on the left). These short texts encapsulate both outputs + impact giving “knowledge”.

From data to wisdom in a picture: strategic communications to support policy-making

**Women Empowerment:
ownership of livelihood subprojects in MPA Pilot Sites**

Seventy member women have income benefits from the bakery production centre and dairy goats rearing business.

(2017-2018) Project beneficiaries received training on cookery and pastry production, food safety hygiene, safety procedures, first aid, waste management and veterinary/health aspects of goats rearing, financial management and marketing of family and small business projects.



Dunqonab Bay, Sudan 2017

Women economic empowerment generate shared benefits for the individuals and the community. The high returns on investment calls for successful broader adoption (mainstreaming, replication, scaling-up and market change) of pilot efforts



WISDOM is what drives effective decision-making and that’s the ultimate objective of the pyramid. Knowledge enables actionable intelligence and a good KM/comms strategy should always aim to the top of the pyramid as ultimate goal. It should communicate project results, their impact, what this means in terms of effective policy-making and to drive investments. The last text added below the picture is what policy-makers, donors, development communities need and want to know in a nut shell. It has analysed the intervention and results, providing a clear message to the intended audiences or stakeholders.

In the effort to positively influencing policy-making, the role of KM/comms is to make life easier for policy- and decision-makers. They should not waste time in reading lengthy and jargony reports (they won’t do it anyway), they don’t have time to interpret a poorly crafted message, they are often not in the position to know well enough the issues at stake to navigate the details, etc. so it is crucial to “**mastering the art of squeezing the relevant out of the important**”.

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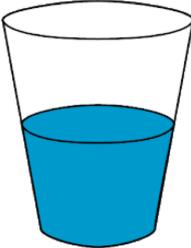
The second part of the coaching was dedicated to looking at the problems encountered so far by the CLME+ project in relation to communication and digging into the specificities to turn lessons learned in successful approaches.

Through a facilitated discussion using the “pre-mortem exercise”, the team surfaced the issue of *prioritization* as an urgent need to be addressed in the second half of the project execution.

Premortem exercise

Imagine all the reasons your project could turn into a miserable failure. Then figure out how you can prevent those problems now, while there's still time.

1. List all possible negative outcomes and actions that hamper the project
2. Diagnose reasons for this failures, such as threats, weaknesses, bias, planning fallacy, etc
3. Now look at the glass half full and think (from a KM/comms point of view) about preventative actions to protect the project from suffering an untimely «death»



As regards to point 1 of the exercise, the PCU mentioned the following possible negative actions that could hamper the project:

- Failure to reach a consensus on the PCCM by the countries
- Sub-projects under component 3 not fully implemented
- Natural disasters
- Key partners withdraw support
- UNDP not satisfied with the performance of the project
- Staff leave the PCU
- Sustainability is not ensured
- SOMEE does not get produced
- Implementation of SAP does not advance
- The project fails in supporting the countries in meeting their priorities
- Partners do not deliver their outputs
- UNOPS does not achieve full cost-recovery

Among the reasons for such possible outcomes (point 2 of the exercise), the PCU mentioned the following:

- Financial mismanagement
- Lack of prioritization and wasted time in minor outcomes
- Responsibility rely largely on co-executing agencies

- Conflicting priorities of partners
- Countries lose interest in the project due to lack in communication
- Partners have not realized the importance of the project
- Inefficient management

KM/communications can play a key role in helping to avoid negative outcomes to happen. In the effort to prioritize, the criteria to select urgencies can be largely influenced by resource distribution (financial and human) and availability. Counting on a solid plan to undertake comms-related activities (or better in a larger KM effort) and additional human resources to execute it would reassure the team that certain objectives can still be achieved, as opposed to considering a daunting task the burden of constantly engaging partners and motivate them to remain supportive of the project.

The brainstorming also confirmed the uncertainties nurtured by the PCU with regards to future communications activities. This generalized skepticism stems from the negative experiences endured by the team in the past 2 and ½ years.

The first Communications Strategy developed for the project, by placing a disproportionate weight on external communication it possibly drained away focus and (limited) resources to better boost stakeholder engagement, strengthen the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) in the region, smooth information flow among key partners and promote the implementation of the SAP. How the communications strategy was conceived at the beginning of the project and how it was subsequently revisited and partially executed, played a key role in fragmenting actions and resulting in a stalled situation.

Some of the problems encountered in the first half of the project were caused by unfortunate human resources choices, which have negatively impacted the smooth and effective support to project activities. As illustrated earlier, feelings of frustration and distrust arise when there is a mismatch between expectations and results delivered, especially when unsatisfactory exchanges are recidivated. In the case of the CLME+ Project, two different streams of problems converged: 1) a “human factor”, which consisted in having hired people that were not a good fit for the project due to the lack of necessary expertise and prioritization/time management skills, and/or understanding and acceptance of project priorities and needs (*casual factor*); 2) and a “terminology/expectations factor”, which refers to a rather multi-faced and generalized problem as explained earlier (*root cause*), i.e. labelling as “communications activities” actions and responsibilities that relate more to broader knowledge management systems, or project governance, advocacy, etc. thus creating a vicious cycle of misalignment between what is expected to support effectively the project (in terms of activities and suitable expertise) and actual delivery.

[A more detailed analysis on the Communications Strategy and tips to fill the gaps in the PCU follows below.]

Out of the many outputs foreseen by the project which would largely benefit from a KM/comms support, three expected deliverables seem most in need of particular support (they also appeared to be among the possible causes for project failure during exercise):

- the facilitation of the Interim Coordination Mechanism and the parallel development of a future Permanent Policy Coordination Mechanism in the region
- the preparation of the SOMEE Report and associated Regional Action & Investment Plans
- the development of the CLME+ Hub

Consensus building and production/sharing of timely and appropriate content amongst relevant stakeholders (i.e. civil society and private sector in the case of the SOMEE) seem a common denominator for these different and interlinked activities. A revised strategy should consider modalities to specifically support these activities following discussions with their respective coordinators (Laverne, Sherry, John) and the RPM and make realistic and down-to-earth proposals taking into account the limited remaining time of the project.

In-focus: Re-thinking the (KM) Communications Strategy

In the framework of component 2, the project document describes the rationale for the project Communications Strategy (page 83): “to enhance awareness, empower stakeholders and provide a pathway for better coordination and collaboration, an over-arching CLME+ Communication and Dissemination Strategy will be developed (Output 2.4). The Strategy will contain central and decentralized components, targeting different relevant stakeholder groups.” (The full description of Output 2.4 is in Annex I).

Between 2016 and 2018 four different people have attempted to design and/or execute the envisaged Communications Strategy (Output 2.4) in liaison with the PCU and at present there are at least three separate documents indicating communications objectives

- The first Comms Strategy was prepared in 2016 by a consultant.
- The first in-house Communication Specialist (2016-2017) undertook the execution of the Strategy, focusing on lower priorities of the project and missing the fundamental aspects of the role.
- An external consultant (2017-2018?) attempted a revision of the strategy, without bringing about real change in the previous approach.

- The last in-house Communications Specialist (2018) focused his activities essentially on external outreach and contributed to add confusion and unnecessary convolution to the strategy implementation.

With the PCU acknowledging that the original approach was not successful, it sees a high stake in looking at “why” it did not work in order to avoid repetition of known pitfalls.

- The first strategy was developed in 2016 by an external consultant in consultation with CLME+ PCU and Co-Executing Partners. It was very lengthy (242 pages), academic and generic in style, only partly in line with project objectives and somewhat artificial.
- Communication objectives fixated on external outreach and dissemination missing out the support function in achieving the key outputs of the project
- Not only the communications objectives were wrongly formulated from an RBM point of view (placing achievement responsibility on parties outside of the PCU/project is generally wrong because it relies on actions beyond the control of the project, i.e. if the success of the communications actions is measured against the achievement of the 2016 strategy goal - highlighted in the slide below – it means placing the entire responsibility on the general public being able to answer trivial questions, without this even being the primary/priority target public of the project), they were also difficult to measure and, most importantly, they were irrelevant to the project and completely detached from the core function of the strategy as described in the prodoc (see slide below comparing the SAP Vision, the CLME+ Project Objective and the Overall Communications Goal from the 2016 Strategy).

SAP VISION FOR CLME+

Healthy marine ecosystems that are adequately valued and protected through robust, integrative and inclusive governance arrangements at regional, sub-regional, national and local levels, which in turn effectively enable adaptive management that maximizes, in a sustainable manner, the provision of goods and services in support of enhanced livelihoods and human well-being. (6 strategies and 4 sub-strategies)

CLME+ Project Objective

It is the aim of the CLME+ Project to help catalysing the implementation of the SAP during a 5- year period. Efforts under the project will therefore primarily contribute to creating the enabling conditions for improved and sustainable sLMR governance and management in the CLME+ region, with an initial focus on integrating the management of fisheries approaches with those for the protection of the marine environment. As such, the project objective will be to facilitate the implementation of the EBM/EAF approach for the 3 key CLME+ ecosystems and associated key fisheries, in line with the Strategies and Sub-Strategies of the endorsed SAP.

Overall Communication Goal (CLME+ Project Comms Strategy)

By the end of 2019, at least 10% of the general public in the 26 CLME+ countries will have heard of the CLME+ Alliance and can readily name 2 ways that the CLME+ is working to benefit their livelihoods and name at least 2 core actions that are being undertaken to promote eco-system based management and good governance of CLME+ marine resources.



- As a result, the strategy focused disproportionately on tools, products, merchandising, etc. and not enough on overarching principles, objectives and frameworks and modalities for consensus-building
- The decentralized activities did not appear as negotiated and agreed outputs with the partners eventually responsible for their execution.
- The language used at times also seems inappropriate to refer to the project aims (Ex. *“promotion of the CLME+ is not in itself a “sexy” idea”*) and/or partners (top-down tone). A few examples of awkward sentences are listed in the slide below.

Laughing or crying

The following **broad communication objectives** are proposed as steps to achieve the above goal through centralised communication activities:
By the end of 2019, at least half of the 26 national governments in the CLME+ will be **actively implementing activities and promoting CLME+ messages**.

By the end of 2019, at least **10%** of the audiences outlined in Table 9 will be able to **name a specific CLME+ activity or message for their sector**.

It is very important that the CLME+ Alliance be launched with the right creative treatment and tone. Truth be told, **promotion of the CLME+ is not in itself a “sticky” or “sexy” idea**. It is a very hard sell as has been noted above under the discussion of limitations and constraints.

Audiences have to see the **“me”** in the “CLME+”.

The PCU and PEG partners **already know how to communicate with their government counterparts**. Technical meetings usually follow standard procedures. For these audiences, these traditional communication procedures may still be ok.

Make organisations and individual people so attracted to join and make them want to get more information that **they really can’t resist**.

An over-arching communication strategy was developed to ensure that all partners speak with **“one clear voice”**

The SMART Social Marketing Goal campaign should be to have:
“By 2019, **X% of different audiences explaining** why the CLME+ is important to them and how they would be impacted if they didn’t have these resources to live on”

Another key centralised communication activity should include the **production and distribution of CLME+ promotional products that help make the CLME+ brand highly visible**. There are a wide variety of products that can be considered, depending on budget. Some particular promotional items that might have **relevance to the “water and marine resource”** emphasis of the CLME+ Alliance are things like:

Waterproof **phone cases** - Waterproof computer or **tablet sleeves** - Scuba Diving bags - **Bumper stickers** for CLME+ member boats and vehicles - Water bottles - Waterproof flashlights - Among other items beyond the traditional T-shirts and coffee mugs - Beach ashtrays

The subsequent revisions of the initial Communications Strategy did not fundamentally change this approach. The revision in February 2018 proposed the following objectives:

- *By end of 2019, the relevant agencies in all 26 participating national governments will be:*
 - *actively implementing CLME+ communications activities and;*
 - *promoting agreed messages about the CLME+*
- *By the end of 2019, key decision-makers/leaders from at least 50% of all 26 participating countries will be quoted in public media, explaining how the CLME+ project is helping to benefit the national economy and local livelihoods*

For a project as complex as the CLME+ it is highly limitative to foresee these two objectives to cover the breadth of issues anticipated in the Prodoc.

Misplaced objectives and priorities result in poor or, worse, contra-productive actions. Social media is a typical example. It is not enough to open a Facebook account and regularly post “something”. This “something” needs to be very well thought and prepared. It is very easy to give a negative message or waste time and resources without reaching the desired outcome. For example, the following post was used on the CLME+ Facebook account:



Without a call for action, information or update about the project, a short slogan (and the image may not even be from the region) ... one wonders “what does this have to do with the CLME+ project?”. Two people bathing and a yacht parked on a beautiful beach. Is this a good message to celebrate World Ocean Day? Do people will want to share this post on other accounts? Does this stimulate a constructive debate about ocean governance and responsible management of LMRs? Probably creating this post did not consume much in-house resources, but the implications could range from people becoming uninterested in this page, to some actually commenting negatively about the picture, to having donors and partners complaining about the miscommunication and improper use of resources... The difference between “doing something” and “doing something well” is extremely important when applied to communications.

Again, this is just an example to make the point that communication is not a trivial undertaking, especially when dealing with complex and strategic issues.

Having considered all of the above, the consultant believes that a fresh start is needed to re-think the whole approach to communications in the project.

A few recommendations:

- Eliminate the “noise”: take two reference points to re-focus and move on. These “polar stars” should be: the prodoc and the revisions agreed after the mid-term evaluation.

- Agree on priorities: what is essential to achieve? (remember point 1 and 2 of the pre-mortem exercise) What outputs need most support in the next year and a half? What type of support is missing to achieve the key project objective and outcome? Where are the gaps? (example of questions to steer the new approach)
- Think freely (include in the brainstorming issues and doubts that are *not to be said out loud* but are nevertheless important to consider) and then formulate the plan. “Write drunk, Edit sober” translates in this context with “write down the real issues, then make them in a politically correct and clear language”.
- Undertake an internal reflection and decide what’s really needed with regards to the areas that need to be covered. And then NAME it rightly (communication? advocacy? policy? capacity? ...). This will also help identifying what expertise is required to take it forward.
- Mind the time-gap: at this point the project cannot afford long processes and lengthy documents. A vision is needed to make sure that everybody understands what’s on the table and agree to take it forward. It should be simple and concise, associated with a sound and concrete plan of action and responsibilities.
- Ensure consensus. Make a renewed effort to validate that the partners feel comfortable with new action plans and pledge commitment.
- Prepare for adaptive management. Formulate scenarios and make provisions taking into account risks and delays beyond the control of the PCU.
- Extract and recycle some parts of the old strategy for new purposes. For example, some text could be used to create a Communications Toolkit for the partners, to build a Media Corner on the project website, to package a capacity building/training on communications, etc.
- Remember that KM/comms is not a technology-based concept. ICT is an enabler. Vision is key.

The re-thinking of the Strategy should be undertaken by the new officer in the PCU or by the current PCU members in order to afterwards outsource identified tasks.

In-focus: Filling the (KM) Comms gap in the PCU

Based on the analysis of the last advertised vacancy for a Communications Specialist in 2017 as well as oral exchanges with the PCU, the following points are submitted for consideration if a new position in the PCU is advertised to fill the current gap(s):

- Change the job title from “Communications Specialist” to “Technical/KM/Policy Officer”
This could serve a two-fold objective: attracting people with a multidisciplinary background (not only on communications or marketing or media); and presenting the new figure in the

PCU with a broader mandate (sometimes the title “communications” can be interpreted in a very narrow way, and usually people tend to delegate interactions with these professionals to their peer counterparts. I.e. a project manager being addressed by a communications officer is likely to transfer the request to his/her specialized team, or attribute to it a lower importance. Not nice but very often true...).

- Previous ToRs were detailed but too long (6 pages). Make them shorter and focused.
- Carefully evaluate the expertise and skills needed. These should derive from the previous analysis on what needs to be done for the project from now on. Possibly marketing or media is not a priority, while a multidisciplinary background in knowledge management, policy, governance, natural resource management, environmental management, sustainable development, capacity building, marine conservation, project management, conflict resolution, data management, advocacy, etc. could be more suitable.
- Instead of presenting duties and responsibilities all together, consider drafting 4 or 5 core functions and then list specific tasks under each grouping. For example: “Facilitate project engagement in terms of policy dialogue, research, partnership, and advocacy”. Example of concrete duties could be “Support the RPM and senior staff in the development of the PPCM” or “Advise technical staff and lead representatives of the CLME+ partnership for meaningful engagement with key actors and institutions”. Another core function could read: “Lead the design and implementation of a KM/Comms Strategy” Example of concrete duties could be “Translate technical findings and policy engagement works into communications products, in the print and social media”; or “Critically assess the progress and achievements, identifying gaps and pitfalls towards recommending remedial actions”, etc.
- Make proficiency in BOTH, English and Spanish a must. Both languages are indispensable to fulfill such role.
- Do not mix up “Specific duties, Key values, Skills and Competencies”. Make separate and clear groupings.
- Among the skills, “people’s skills” are quite important to stress work ethics, team spirit, sense of hierarchy and responsibility, etc. This section was quite comprehensive in the previous advertisement and should be kept (though it is not a 100% safe filter to avoid unfriendly and unprofessional people..).
- Reduce the project background to a minimum (deferring to the website for more information) and make the narrative relevant for the advertised position.
- Knowledge of UN policies and procedures and experience implementing GEF projects, including quality assurance processes and social and environmental standards screening is very important.
- (tbc)

The above considerations are valid in the case of the recruitment of an in-house officer. However, some recommendations may still apply if the PCU decides to outsource some of the tasks to an external company.

Conclusions and recommendations

The CLME+ Project pursues a very ambitious and critical vision touching upon many different aspects related to the protection of marine ecosystems and associated living marine resources. Its mandate is fundamental to influence effective policy-making and shape new collaborative frameworks in the region. Such exciting endeavor should be supported by a consistent effort to capitalize on the knowledge generated, stimulate real ownership of the process among countries and partners, and promote the steady implementation of the CLME SAP and related activities.

A fresh look to the KM/communications strategy and the identification of specific tasks that could support the achievement of project objectives are important steps to resolve a somewhat stalled situation.

The hiccups and issues faced by the CLME+ Project on KM/communications seems to be quite wide-spread among technical projects in the GEF partnership and it would be actually worth exploring more the root causes and stimulate a deeper reflection. Most projects do recognize the need to digest and share with intended audiences and stakeholders (internal and external) the results produced and ensure long-lasting impact and legacy. However, the ways adopted to achieve these objectives are not always optimal. If accepted by the CLME+ Project, the consultant believes this subject could make for a thought-provoking IW:LEARN Experience Note.

Considering the importance placed by the GEF and its IAs and EAs on KM, it is worth mentioning that the GEF Secretariat is preparing dedicated KM Guidelines to inform future project design. Perhaps IW:LEARN could foresee to create a KM toolkit or specific training for its IW portfolio (perfect also for twinning exchanges).

Annex I – Full text of Output 2.4 from the Pro Doc

Output 2.4. (O2.4.) Overarching CLME⁺ Communication Strategy, with central and decentralized components and responsibilities (Target O2.4.T.PI1)

Successful SAP implementation will demand that awareness is raised among the broader CLME⁺ stakeholder community, on the importance of the regionally endorsed SAP, and on the urgent need to adopt the EAF/EBM approach at the level of the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf LMEs. In this same context, enhanced communication and information exchange among key actors involved in the different programmes, projects and initiatives that can contribute to the SAP objectives will be of crucial importance.

It is therefore anticipated that a CLME⁺ Communication Strategy will help securing a sufficiently broad support base and buy-in from the different societal sectors, for collective and well-coordinated action. Further, such strategy will generate awareness among relevant stakeholder groups on the opportunities created to contribute to the objectives of the SAP, through the many existing and forthcoming projects and initiatives in the region (incl. small grants, training, etc.).

It is further recognized that, in full alignment with their formal mandate and/or recognized role within the CLME⁺, the responsibilities for the implementation of SAP Strategies and Actions, and of activities under the different Components of the CLME⁺ Project, will be shared by a number of international and regional CLME⁺ partners. In light of this, it is important that an **overarching, comprehensive CLME⁺ Communications Strategy** is **collaboratively developed** and in place by the end of Project Year 1.

The strategy will outline the methods and suggested approaches for communicating information about the CLME⁺ SAP process and the CLME⁺ Project, tailored to the different practitioners and target stakeholder groups⁹⁴.

Following its development and adoption, the Strategy –whose implementation will be largely decentralized- will be centrally coordinated/monitored (as applicable). Each one of the 5 CLME⁺ Project Components is expected to contribute to the implementation of distinct elements of this over-arching Communication Strategy. For this purpose, consideration will be given to the formal institutional mandates, and roles in CLME⁺ Project & SAP implementation, of the different members of the interim SAP coordination mechanism (Output 1.1) and CLME⁺ partnership (Output 5.1).

The following activities are considered under Output 2.4:

- Inventory of major existing communication & awareness building initiatives and mechanisms within the CLME⁺ Region
- Collaborative development, involving the main project partners, of an overarching strategy that outlines the communications approach of the CLME⁺ Project (incl. the identification of stakeholders, and of stakeholder-tailored communication methods, vehicles and materials, the

definition of targets in terms of kind & and quantity of stakeholders to be reached, and identification and implementation of tracking/M&E mechanisms)

- Review, and if necessary periodic revision/expansion, of the stakeholder mapping exercise conducted during the PPG Phase
- Identify the central and de-centralized components of the strategy, and distribute responsibilities among the different CLME⁺ partners, in alignment with their role/mandate for sLMR governance and management in the region
- Development of the “awareness building/stakeholder empowerment” sub- strategy/component, targeting the broader stakeholder community and broader public
- Further development of the sub-strategy targeting the CLME⁺ Partnership (to be implemented under COMPONENT 5)
- Further development of the sub-strategy targeting the global LME Community of Practice (to be implemented under COMPONENT 5)
- Oversight of, and support for the collaborative implementation of the strategy by the CLME⁺ PCU and/or interim SAP coordination mechanism, to ensure continued consistency
- M&E of strategy implementation, incl. the review and evaluation, and if necessary, revision of the Strategy by Project Mid-Term
- Sustainability plan

Annex II – Resources

A non-exhaustive list of possible useful resources and links

For KM:

- Stocking, M. et al. 2018. Managing knowledge for a sustainable global future. Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel to the Global Environment Facility. Washington, DC.
- Steffen Soulejman Janus. 2016. Becoming a Knowledge-Sharing Organization: A Handbook for Scaling Up Solutions through Knowledge Capturing and Sharing. Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/306761478498267644/pdf/109809-PUB-Box396311B-PUBLIC-DOCDATE-11-2-16.pdf>
- GEF Knowledge Management Approach Paper 2015, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.48.07.Rev_.01_KM_Approach_Paper.pdf
- “The Art of Knowledge Exchange. A Results-Focused Planning Guide for the GEF Partnership” 2015 (https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF_WB_AoKE_English.pdf)
- «Knowledge Management in the United Nations System», Petru Dumitriu, Joint Inspection Unit, United Nations, Geneva 2016

For SOMEE:

- UN World Water Development Report www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr
- Barcelona Convention - Mediterranean 2017 Quality Status Report <https://www.medqsr.org>

For Private Sector Engagement:

- Groundwater Governance Project <http://www.groundwatergovernance.org>