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CONSERVING AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AFRICA BLUE ECONOMY STRATEGY (ABES)

POPULAR VERSION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CONTEXT	1
2.	ISSUES OF BIODIVERSITY IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICA BLUE ECONOMY STRATEGY	4
3.	OVERALL OBJECTIVE	6
3.1.	<i>Strategic Objectives</i>	6
4.	PROJECT DETAILS	7
	SO 1: RATIFY AND/OR ALIGN RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL/REGIONAL INSTRUMENTS RELATED TO BLUE ECONOMY THEMES (WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY)	7
	SO 2: OPTIMIZING CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE BIODIVERSITY WHILE MINIMIZING CONFLICTS AMONG USERS OF BLUE ECONOMY RESOURCES.	8
	SO3: STRENGTHENING MEASURES FOR MITIGATING THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF COASTAL AND MARINE TOURISM, OIL, GAS, DEEP SEA MINING AND CLIMATE CHANGE ON AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT.	11
	SO4: STRENGTHENING GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT	12
5.	IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS	13
6.	LOGFRAME	14



1. CONTEXT

The Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) identified environmental sustainability and biodiversity protection as key strategic goal for health ecosystems and sustainable blue economy development. The project is therefore supporting the implementation of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy.

The African Union -Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), with funding support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), is implementing a project on “Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in African Blue Economy’, for a period of three years (October 2021 – October 2024). The total budget is approximately USD 5.5 million.

This project sets out an agenda for action to “Enhance institutional capacity of African Union Member States and Regional Economic Communities on the utilization, conservation and protection of aquatic biodiversity in the context of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy”

The African continent is adjacent to highly productive marine ecosystems including the seven African Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) viz: Agulhas Current LME, Benguela Current LME, Guinea Current LME, Canary current LME, Mediterranean Sea LME, Red Sea LME and Somali Current LME. The continent is also endowed with networks of rivers and lakes. The seas, oceans, lakes and rivers inhabit significant number of biodiversity and the ecosystems provide sources of livelihoods, food security and wealth. These African aquatic ecosystems inhabit living and non-living resources; however the unsustainable exploitation of these resources are threatening the biodiversity, resources and environmental sustainability.

Aquatic biodiversity is the total assemblage of living resources in the aquatic ecosystems, which include fish species, shellfish, plants, micro-organisms etc. Aquatic biodiversity encompasses freshwater systems, marine (sea and oceanic) environment, floodplains, aquaculture ponds and wetlands. Several factors are threatening aquatic biodiversity in Africa aquatic ecosystems. These include overexploitation of living species, pollutions from several sources (land-based municipal, oil, gas and agricultural activities), uncontrolled introduction of exotic

species in aquaculture systems, effluents from mining activities. Consequently, important aquatic resources are becoming increasingly susceptible to both natural and artificial environmental changes. Thus, conservation strategies to protect and conserve aquatic life are necessary to maintain the balance of nature and support the availability of resources for future generations.

The Africa Blue Economy Strategy identified regional cooperation and coordination as well as implementation of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) as key strategic activities to ensure conservation of aquatic biodiversity. MSP is building upon the key approaches of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and solely based on the key principles of Ecosystem Approach or Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM). Of importance is the fact that regulatory measures to conserve aquatic diversity should include awareness enhancing and political buy-in. This can be accomplished through educational programs, enhancing awareness and effective participation in related global fora as well as knowledge on relevant regional and global instruments, incentive programs, developed or strengthened mechanisms or regulatory frameworks for rehabilitation of degraded aquatic habitats, restoration or recovery of depleted species (living) and implementation of environmental monitoring programs.

Partnership collaboration

The project will establish strong partnerships and collaboration with national, regional and continental projects to minimize duplications and generate synergies in interventions. This would partly be achieved by participating in the Project Steering Committees (PSC) and other's events of related projects. Also, within the framework of the African Fisheries Reform Mechanism (AFRM), periodic consultations will be organized under the Africa Platform for Regional Institutions in Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Systems (APRIFAAS) for information sharing on activities and workplans. These consultations would significantly involve, among others, Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs), LMEs secretariats and other partners to generate synergies in the implementation of activities. The project would work through regional economic communities (RECs) that have the mandate for regional integrations, specialized regional institutions and environmental-based NGOs.

Women need to be equally and actively involved in the processes to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity because they play critical roles as primary land managers and resource users, and they face disproportionate impacts both from biodiversity loss and gender-blind conservation measures. There is therefore the need for change at every level to improve the participation of women and girls in biodiversity conservation processes.



2. ISSUES OF BIODIVERSITY IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICA BLUE ECONOMY STRATEGY

i. Environmental sustainability and biodiversity protection



Conservation investments will be increased in the future to contribute to enhancing the carbon sink function of the watersheds and water catchment resources as well as improving the pollution status of African coasts regarding chemicals and plastics. Healthy blue ecosystems that are linked to environmental management and biodiversity protection will benefit from these measures. Capacities of various national ministries and regional institutions to undertake projects across the country and region on Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Land Degradation plus conservation (REDD+) will further contribute to the enhancement of blue ecosystems. It is also important to appropriately identify knowledge-based institutions within the continent for continuous capacity building on aquatic environmental, biodiversity and climate sciences as Centres of Excellence recognized by the African Union policy organs as well as regional policy institutions (RECs). The sustainable development of coastal, marine tourism as well as mining activities would be promoted that took due consideration for environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation.

ii. Climate change



Climate change and climate variability are already impacting Africa’s aquatic systems and food production overall. African Union Member States need to be supported in order to initiate activities for building resilience and reducing the vulnerability of the communities, including women and youth, to climate change and variability to ensure sustainable food systems and livelihoods security.

iii. Increasing maritime safety, security and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing



The security of EEZs of African Union Member States is of paramount importance to develop and guarantee the sustainability of the Blue Economy, which affects different maritime sectors including fisheries, tourism, transport, trade, offshore exploitation and many others. Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing is a serious challenge in Africa, both to inland and marine ecosystems with significant threats to food security, sustainability of environment, biodiversity and livelihoods.

3. OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The concern and actions towards the protection and conservation of aquatic biodiversity is embedded in the five thematic areas of Africa Blue Economy Strategy with the thematic number five (governance) dedicated to ensuring the overall coherence and coordination of all measures taken and implemented. More specifically, thematic areas 1. (Fishery and Aquaculture), 2. (Shipping and maritime trade), 3. (Climate change and environment) and 4. (Energy and mining) have a set of protection and conservation actions for aquatic biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

The overall objective of the project is to enhance the policy environment, regulatory frameworks and institutional capacities of AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities to sustainably utilize and conserve aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems.

3.1. *Strategic Objectives*

1. Ratify and/or align relevant international/regional instruments related to blue economy themes (with specific reference to protecting and conserving biodiversity)
2. Optimizing conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity while minimizing conflicts among blue economy sub-themes
3. Strengthening measures for mitigating the negative impacts of coastal and marine tourism, oil, gas, deep sea mining and climate change on aquatic biodiversity and environment
4. Strengthening gender inclusivity in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management

4. PROJECT DETAILS

Strategic Objectives (SO), Outputs, Activities and Sub-activities

SO 1: RATIFY AND/OR ALIGN RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL/REGIONAL INSTRUMENTS RELATED TO BLUE ECONOMY THEMES (WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY)

Output 1.1: Mechanisms for active participation of MSs in continental and global initiatives related to aquatic biodiversity and environmental regimes (ABNJ, CITES, CBD, COP meeting relating to CC, BRS, etc.) developed

1.1.1. Enhancing effective role and participation in continental and global aquatic biodiversity and environmental related regimes.

1.1.1.1 Undertake studies and develop a mechanism for enhancing effective role and participation in regional and global biodiversity and environmental related regimes.

1.1.1.2 Organize continental validation and awareness enhancing workshop among stakeholders on the relevant provisions, challenges and mechanisms for effective role and participation in these global regimes.

1.1.1.3 Conduct a workshop for identified negotiators (10) to technically support AU MSs in global negotiations e.g. CC COP meetings, CITES

1.1.1.4 Support the participation of 5 AU MSs in relevant aquatic biodiversity and environmental fora and 2 selected negotiators to 2 events per year for 2 years (two selected negotiators to accompany the 5 AU MSs to provide technical guidance

Output 1.2. Ratification and implementation of conventions and agreements related to conservation of aquatic biodiversity from perspectives of ABES thematic areas in AU MSs and RECs supported

1.2.1. Identify continental and global biodiversity and environmental instruments relevant to sustainable management of Africa Blue Economy Resources.

1.2.1.1 Conduct assessment of relevant continental and global biodiversity and environmental instruments to develop priority actions for enhanced ratification and implementation.

1.2.1.2 Conduct two virtual validation and regional awareness enhancing workshops on identified documents including key provisions and benefits.

1.2.1.3 Support 10 AU member states to review national policies, regulations and align national instruments with relevant regional and global biodiversity and environmental instruments.

1.2.1.4 Conduct national level validation workshops to validate the reviewed policies.

SO 2: OPTIMIZING CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE BIODIVERSITY WHILE MINIMIZING CONFLICTS AMONG USERS OF BLUE ECONOMY RESOURCES.

Output 2.1: Enforceable Regulatory frameworks for effective and sustainable regional MCS systems developed.

2.1.1 Enhancing Sustainable Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) Systems for conservation and protection of biodiversity:

2.1.1.1 Conduct a study to assess the status of MCS for combating unsustainable practices of fishing and other blue economy resources in AU member states and regional economic communities and develop mechanism to strengthen MCS; identifying capacity strengths and weaknesses

2.1.2. Support the establishment of cost-effective and sustainable financial arrangements for effective regional cooperation on MCS and enforcement in selected regions

2.1.2.1 Develop framework for establishing functional financial and sustainable regional MCS systems.

2.1.2.2 Organize two virtual regional workshops to validate findings and recommendations of the studies in 2.1.1.1. and 2.1.2.1.

2.1.2.3 Pilot and operationalize the recommendations (in 2.1.1.1. and 2.1.2.1.) in 2 regional institutions; piloting should aim at strengthening capacity.

2.1.2.4 Support to implementation of cost-effective sustainable financial systems.

Output 2.2. A framework for establishing national, regional and transboundary cooperation on Africa Blue Economy Strategy Thematic Areas established

2.2.1. Establish regional cooperation on transboundary issues in shared aquatic ecosystems towards formulating harmonized regional frameworks on aquatic biodiversity conservation.

2.2.1.1 Conduct integrated assessment of two identified transboundary aquatic ecosystems to identify critical aquatic environmental issues affecting biodiversity and develop mechanisms for joint management plans and protocols in shared blue economy resources; towards developing harmonized regional frameworks for aquatic biodiversity conservation

2.2.1.2 Conduct two virtual validation and awareness enhancing workshops on critical environmental issues in 2 transboundary ecosystems and the draft harmonized regional frameworks for aquatic biodiversity conservation

2.2.1.3 Support to provide technical assistance to five AU Member states to rollout their joint management plans and protocols and the harmonized regional frameworks for conserving aquatic biodiversity;

2.2.2. Formulate mechanisms to institutionalize Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) at national and regional levels

2.2.2.1 Conduct an assessment to map MSPs in Africa, document lessons, best practices and develop guidelines for their institutionalization at national and regional levels.

2.2.2.2 Convene two virtual regional Think Tank meetings on MSP implementation and governance to validate the findings of the consultants in 2.2.3.1 and make recommendations

2.2.2.3 Support to specialized regional institutions to strengthen identified transboundary MSPs; integrating best practices including elements such as conservation and recovery of degraded ecosystems, resilience to climate change impacts; improve current management strategies in the regional protocols, control and monitoring systems or agreement;

Output 2.3. Capacities for restoring and conserving threatened aquatic biodiversity and environment strengthened.

2.3.1 Support rehabilitation of depleted aquatic biodiversity and habitats

2.3.1.1 Conduct a continental review of existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), document lessons, best practices and formulate guidelines for their sustainable implementation and governance.

2.3.1.2 Convene two virtual regional Think Tank meetings on MPA implementation and governance to validate the findings of the consultancies

2.3.1.1. and develop recommendations;

2.3.13 Based on the outcomes of the studies on review of existing MPA initiatives, the project would provide technical and direct support to two specialized regional institutions

2.3.2 Establish Continental Centres of Excellence for capacity building on aquatic biodiversity

2.3.2.1 Support the establishment of two continental Centres of Excellence on aquatic biodiversity; this activity is supporting the implementation of 2014 Ministerial Decision to identify Centres of Excellence in relevant aquatic fields including biodiversity

2.3.2.2 Strengthen capacity of two identified Centres of Excellence - based on identified gaps (equipment and training materials);

SO3. STRENGTHENING MEASURES FOR MITIGATING THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF COASTAL AND MARINE TOURISM, OIL, GAS, DEEP SEA MINING AND CLIMATE CHANGE ON AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT.

Output 3.1 Measures for minimizing the negative impacts of climate change on biodiversity and environment strengthened and implemented

3.1.1.1 Conduct studies on the negative impact of climate change on aquatic biodiversity and environment and recommend mitigation strategies.

3.1.1.2 Conduct a virtual continental validation workshop on the studies on impact of climate change on aquatic biodiversity, their environment and develop recommendations.

3.1.1.3 The project would support to strengthen conservation and climate change impact mitigation efforts for identified ongoing initiatives on ecosystems restoration (mangroves, sea grass etc) on mitigation of climate change impact (increasing carbon sink).

Output 3.2. Strategies for an integrated strategic framework for sustainable coastal and marine tourism and mining developed.

3.2.1. Identify priority issues and actions for sustainable coastal and marine tourism and mining activities on aquatic biodiversity and environment and develop guidelines.

3.2.1.1 Conduct studies to identify priority issues and actions for sustainable coastal, marine tourism and mining activities for aquatic biodiversity conservation and environment protection.

3.2.1.2 The studies would be followed by five national stakeholder’s consultations to develop national master plans on sustainable coastal and marine tourism and mining development for biodiversity conservation and environmental protection; the private sector would be part of the sector holder’s workshop.

3.2.1.3 Based on the identified priority issues in the national master plan, the project would support development or (strengthening), monitoring and

regulatory frameworks in 5 AU member states for sustainable coastal and marine tourism and mining for biodiversity conservation and environmental protection.

SO4. STRENGTHENING GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Output 4.1. Continental strategy for gender inclusivity in aquatic biodiversity and environmental management developed

4.1.1. Support development of a continental strategy for inclusion of gender in aquatic biodiversity and environmental management

4.1.1.1 Convene an Expert Consultative meeting to identify priority issues and actions for enhancing the role of women in aquatic biodiversity and environmental management.

4.1.1.2 Convene a virtual continental think tank stakeholder’s consultation workshop on identified priority issues and actions for enhancing the role of women in biodiversity and environmental management.

4.1.1.3 Technical support would be given to 3 AU MS to develop all-inclusive and deliberate biodiversity strategies as important entry points for women’s empowerment.

4.1.1.4 Mapping of ongoing environmental based-NGOs focusing on conserving biodiversity and environment protection would be conducted and technical support provided by the project to develop or strengthen gender-sensitive workplans to enhance the role of women and youth in biodiversity protection and environmental governance (NGOs include Non-State Actors, CSOs, Private sector involved in environmental management).

5. IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

The African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) will be responsible for the overall management and coordination of the project, under the political leadership of the AU Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE) who will provide political leadership. AU-IBAR will be responsible for grant management, sub granting arrangements (this is not expected in this project) and reporting to the Funding Partner (SIDA). In order to dispense its functions effectively the following project management structures and monitoring mechanisms shall be established.

Project Management Unit (PMU)

Project Steering Committee (PSC)

Project Technical Committee (PTC)

Performance and Results monitoring and reporting

Communication and visibility

Evaluation

Audit

Beneficiaries and partners:

55 AU Member States, 8 Regional Economic Communities, Specialized regional institutions in disciplines related to fisheries, aquaculture, aquatic environment, related blue economy sectors, Non-State Actors, Private sector, Civil Society Organizations, including women and youth

For more information on the Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity in African Blue Economy, you can access the Project microsite on: <https://www.au-ibar.org/au-ibar-projects/conserving-aquatic-biodiversity-african-blue-economy>

6. LOGFRAME

LOGFRAME for the “*Enhancing institutional capacity of African Union Member States and Regional Economic Communities on the conservation of aquatic biodiversity in the context of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy*”

RESULTS CHAIN / DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS	BASELINES	TARGETS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Impact: Sustainable conservation and utilization of aquatic biodiversity and marine environments for food and income through improved policy, regulatory frameworks and institutional capacities.	Change in reported IUU incidences (Used as a proxy for overexploitation of resources)	A study / Survey will be conducted working with RFBs and RECs to establish the current number of incidence reported in each region	Reduction 30%	AU-IBAR Reports	Political will and corporation from Regional and National authorities on development and enforcement of relevant Legal Frameworks
	# of RECs (or specialized regional institutions) and MSs whose institutional capacities on conservation and utilization of aquatic biodiversity were enhanced	0	4 RECs 15 MSs	AU-IBAR Reports	
Outcomes:					
Improved ratification and alignment of relevant policies and regulations to relevant international and / regional instruments related to protection and conservation of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems	Ratification rates of relevant legal instruments (Disaggregated by instrument)	A study is planned to determine the relevant instruments and their baseline ratification rates	%	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	

RESULTS CHAIN / DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS	BASELINES	TARGETS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Improved capacities for sustainable management, utilization, protection and conservation of living aquatic resources and related ecosystems	# of MSs and RECs (or specialized regional institutions) and specialized institutions) implementing the ecosystems approach to managing marine and coastal ecosystems	A baseline survey will be conducted	15	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
Measures for mitigation impacts of coastal and marine tourism, oil, gas, deep sea mining and climate change on aquatic biodiversity and environment strengthened	# of RECs and MSs in which the recommendations on mitigating the negative impacts of climate change are piloted	0	10 MSs	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
Improved participation and engagement of women and youth in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management	# of RECs and MSs in which measures to enhance participation of women and youth in aquatic biodiversity and environmental management are implemented	0	5 MSs (including other organizations)		
Outputs:					
1.1: Mechanisms for active participation of MSs in regional and global initiatives related to aquatic biodiversity and environmental regimes (ABNJ, CITES, COP meeting relating to CC, BRS, etc.) developed	# of mechanisms for enhancing effective participation of Africa in global negotiations developed/	0	1	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
	# of AU MSs supported to participate in relevant aquatic biodiversity and environmental fora	0	5	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	

RESULTS CHAIN / DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS	BASELINES	TARGETS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
1.2. Ratification and implementation of conventions and agreements related to conservation of biodiversity in AU MSs and RECs supported	# of MSs and RECs supported to review and align national policies and instruments with relevant regional and global instruments	0	10MSs	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	Corporation and willingness to learn by key stakeholders involves since BE transcend different sectors
2.1. Enforceable Regulatory frameworks for effective and sustainable regional MCS systems developed	A continental framework for sustainable financing mechanisms of fisheries and aquaculture resources and related ecosystems developed	0	1	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
2.2 A framework for establishing national, regional and transboundary cooperation on Africa Blue Economy Strategy Thematic Areas established	# of Regional institutions in which the recommendation and lessons on MSP are implemented	0	2	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	Timely availability of financial, human and material resources
2.3 Capacities for restoring and conserving threatened aquatic biodiversity and environment strengthened	# of shared transboundary ecosystems in which MPA guidelines are piloted	0	2	AU – IBAR Reports	Innovative technologies are used to facilitate implementation in lite of Covid 19 induced restrictions
	# of aquatic centres of excellence established and strengthened	0	2		
3.1. Measures for minimizing the negative impacts of climate change on biodiversity and environment strengthened and implemented	A study on the negative impact of climate change on aquatic biodiversity and environment conducted	0	1	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	

RESULTS CHAIN / DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS	BASELINES	TARGETS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
3.2. Strategies for an integrated strategic framework for sustainable coastal and marine tourism and mining developed	# of MSs supported to pilot guidelines on sustainable marine and coastal tourism and mining to ensure biodiversity and environmental conservation	0	5	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
4.1 Continental strategy for gender inclusivity in aquatic biodiversity and environmental management developed	# of AU MS supported to implement regional strategy for enhancing the role of women and youth in aquatic biodiversity and integrated environmental management	0	5	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	
	# of environmental based NGOs supported to implement gender sensitive workplans	0	2	AU- IBAR Implementation and Monitoring Reports	

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