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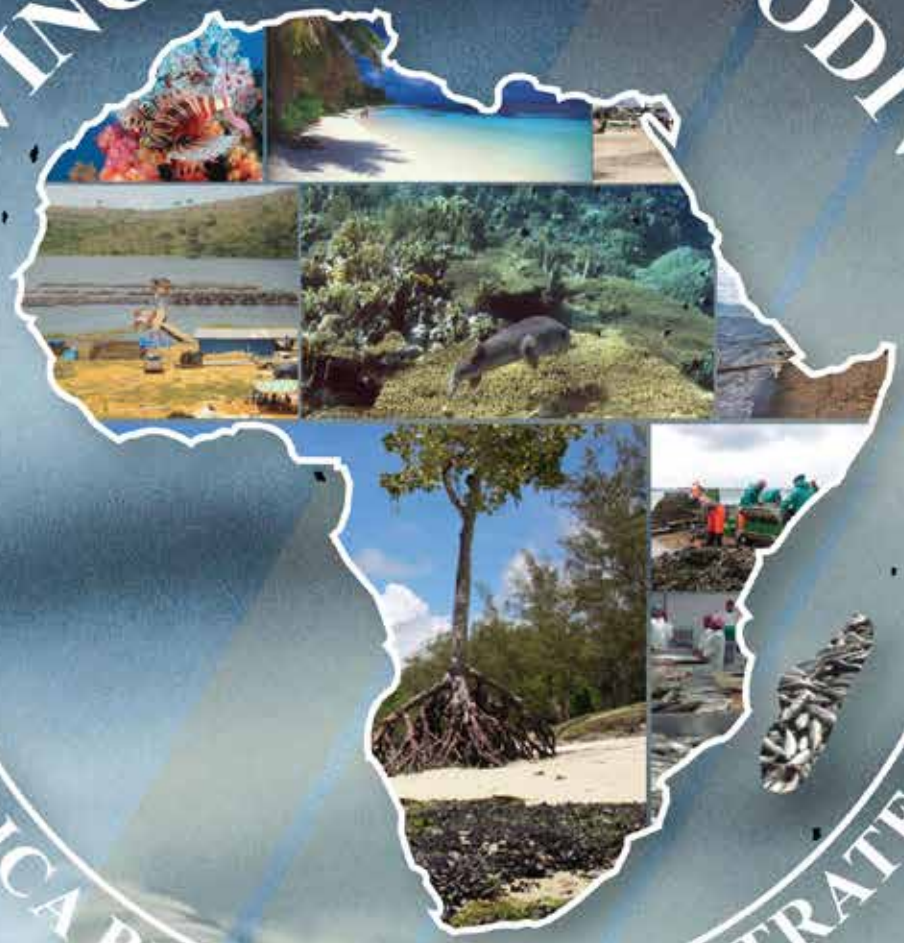
CONSERVING AQUATIC BIODIVERSITY



AFRICA BLUE ECONOMY STRATEGY

PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

OCTOBER 2021 – OCTOBER 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

The Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) identified environmental sustainability and biodiversity protection as a key Strategic goal for healthy ecosystems and sustainable blue economy development. The ABES which has a vision of an inclusive and sustainable blue economy that significantly contributes to Africa's transformation and growth was endorsed at a summit of the African Heads of States and Governments in February 2020.

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.

Accordingly, the African Union-InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), with funding support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), is therefore implementing a project on "Conserving Aquatic Biodiversity and Ecosystems in African Blue Economy', for a period of three years (October, 2021 – October, 2024). The total budget for this project that is supporting implementation of key aspects of the ABES is approximately USD 5.5 million. This overall goal of the project is to "Enhance institutional capacity of African Union Member States and Regional Economic Communities (for transboundary interventions) on the utilization, conservation and protection of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems 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 is 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.

Some of the issues identified in the project that are crucial to aquatic biodiversity conservation in the context of African Blue economy includes the following:

1. Aquatic biodiversity Conservation, Environmental protection and sustainability
2. Climate change impact
3. Impact of externalities on aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems, i.e. marine and coastal tourism, mining, oil and gas exploration
4. Need for strong African participation in global processes relating aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management
5. Increasing maritime safety, security and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing
6. Gender inclusivity
7. Partnership sand transboundary considerations

The concern and actions towards the protection and conservation of aquatic biodiversity is embedded in the following five thematic areas of Africa Blue Economy Strategy:

1. Fisheries, aquaculture conservation and sustainable aquatic ecosystems;
2. Shipping/transportation, trade, ports, maritime security, safety and enforcement;
3. Coastal and maritime tourism, climate change, resilience, marine ecosystem, environment, infrastructure;
4. Sustainable energy and mineral resources and innovative industries; and,
5. Policies, institutional and governance, employment, job creation and poverty eradication, innovative financing

The foregoing thematic number five (governance) is dedicated to ensuring the overall coherence and coordination of all measures taken and implemented across the other thematic areas (1: Fishery and Aquaculture), 2: Shipping and maritime trade), 3: Climate change and environment) and 4: Energy and mining) that, in our context, have a set of protection and conservation actions for aquatic biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

1.2 Overall Objective

The overall objective of the aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems 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.

1.2.1 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.

1.3 Synopsis of Key Achievements of project:

1. A mechanism for effective participation in Continental and Global Fora related to aquatic biodiversity and environment management was developed. The mechanism was adopted by the Highest AUC Policy Organ. Stakeholders have also been trained on how to operationalize the mechanism for effective participation in Global Fora including UNFCC, MSP Forum, Basel Convention, Lisbon Ocean Conference, FAO COFI meetings and the Blue Economy Forum in Ghana and Ethiopia;
2. The project has supported Djibouti, Egypt, Tunisia, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, Uganda, Ghana and the Kingdom of Eswatini to domesticate Continental and Global Instruments related to aquatic biodiversity and environment management;
3. AU Member States (Benin, Liberia, Togo, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria) of the fisheries committee for West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) were trained and their capacities on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance systems for combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing and protection of aquatic biodiversity and environment enhanced;
4. In collaboration with IUCN, the project supported the Dusornoo Community Resource Management Areas (CREMA) in Ghana to develop Gender-sensitive management plans for conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environment;
5. In collaboration with Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute (KEMFRI), the project supported capacity building of coastal communities in nature-based solutions and also identified and mapped degraded mangrove areas in Gazi Bay;
6. The project, collaborated with the West Indian Ocean Science Association (WIOMSA) to develop a roadmap and draft MOU between Kenya and Tanzania for joint management of Transboundary Marine Conservation Area (TMCA) in the Indian Ocean;

7. Supported Benin and Togo to ratify the report on State of the Marine Environment, which is a giant step towards establishing a transboundary Marine Spatial Planning between the two Countries;
8. The project developed a Continental Strategy for mainstreaming gender in the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and supported Cote D'ivoire, Ethiopia and Malawi to mainstream continental strategy-aligned gender-sensitive actions into their National Instruments for conserving aquatic biodiversity and environment;
9. The project supported Nigeria, Gabon, Egypt, Kenya and Angola to develop Masterplans and Regulatory frameworks for sustainable coastal and marine tourism, mining and oil and gas exploration.
10. The project is collaborating with SADC Secretariat to operationalize the SADC Fisheries Monitoring, Control, Surveillance Coordination Centre.
11. Collaborating with Zanzibar Seaweed Culture Initiative to mainstream environmental and climate change considerations seaweed farming.
12. The project is facilitating the utilization and implementation of project's results by stakeholders, numerous knowledge products, in the form of Information Notes, Policy Briefs, Policy Notes, succinct guidelines, Technical Guidelines and Advocacy Notes etc, have been developed and disseminated.

2. DETAILS OF KEY ACHEIVEMENTS OF THE PROJECT FOR THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW (OCTOBER, 2021 – OCTOBER , 2024) synopsis

SO1. Ratify and/or align relevant international/regional instruments related to Africa Blue Economy Strategic Areas (with specific reference to protecting and conserving biodiversity)

Output 1.1 *Mechanisms for active participation of African Union member states in regional and global initiatives related to aquatic biodiversity and environmental regimes (ABNJ, CITES, COP meeting relating to CC, BRS, etc) developed.*

i. Two Mechanisms (for 1. West, Central and Northern regions; and 2. Southern and Eastern regions) were developed for effective participation of AU member states in Global fora related to aquatic biodiversity conservations and environmental management and validated by stakeholders. This was as a result of the studies that identified, assessed and prioritized global fora related to aquatic biodiversity conservation and environment that are relevant to African AU member states. The studies focused in two regional clusters in Africa (West-Central-North and South-Eastern) on mechanisms
ii. The mechanism for effective participation of African stakeholders in continental and global fora related to aquatic biodiversity was developed and endorsed by the summit of African Heads of States and Governments in February 2024 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

iii. The project supported AU member state's effective participation in identified Continental and Global fora; UNFCCC in Abu Dhabi , 2nd MSP Forum in Tanzania; 36 FAO COFI Session in Rome; Basel Convention in Geneva; Blue Economy Forum in Addis Ababa. The project sponsored the participation of the following member states to high level continental and global Fora: Seychelles to the UN Review Conference on the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10th December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in New York: Tanzania to the 36 Session of FAO Committee on Fisheries meeting in Rome where issues of aquatic biodiversity, climate change and pollution were on the agenda; Togo, Kenya and Zimbabwe to the UNFCC Conference Abu Dhabi: DR Congo to the second Global MSP Forum in Tanzania.

iv. The project identified and recruited resource persons and conducted a training workshop for 10 pre-determined negotiators, from AU member states (including from Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Gabon, Ghana, Uganda, and other regional institutions (WIOMSA, ECOFISH project, Nairobi Convention, ACECOR (UCC)). The project seeks to technically support AU MSs in upcoming Global negotiations e.g. CC COP meetings, CITES, FAO Fisheries meetings etc. The participants to the training include representatives from Coastal and Island States.

Output 1.2 *Ratification and implementation of conventions and agreements related to conservation of biodiversity in AU MSs and RECs supported.*

i. The assessments of global instruments, related to conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management, were conducted in the five regions of the continent and priority actions developed for their enhanced ratification and implementation by AU member states.

ii. Based on the recommended actions to enhance implementation and ratification of the identified instruments, the Project supported nine AU member states – Egypt, South Sudan, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Kingdom of Eswatini, Tunisia, Uganda and Ghana to domesticate prioritized and relevant global instruments (including CBD, MALPOL, UNCLOS, RBS etc.) relating to aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management into their national relevant instruments, including policy, strategies and regulatory frameworks.

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.*

i. Two studies were commissioned to determine the status and challenges of Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) systems, including regional MCS initiatives, in five regions of the Continent (East, South, West, Central and Northern Africa) was conducted; and mechanisms for incorporating protection of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management into MCS initiatives were proposed.
ii. Guided by the recommendations from the above studies:, the Project, in collaboration with the Fisheries Committee for West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), trained 18 MCS experts of FCWC member states (Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Benin, Togo and Cote D'ivoire) on VMS (Vessel Monitoring Systems), AIS (Automatic Identification Systems) and RADAR as well protection of aquatic biodiversity and environment, Marine Spatial Planning, Marine protected Areas, closed areas and seasons.
iii. AU-IBAR and FCWC conducted a scoping mission to three selected FCWC member states (Liberia, Benin & Nigeria) and gathered information on fisheries management measures, status of MCS systems and strategies put in place for aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental protection.
iv. The Project is also in the process of strengthening capacity of FCWC to diversify measures for the protection of aquatic biodiversity.

v. Also, the Project collaborated with the SADC Secretariat to support the operationalization of SADC Fisheries Monitoring, Control, Surveillance Coordination Centre to be located in Maputo, Mozambique.
vi. A study was conducted to develop a framework for establishing cost-effective and sustainable financial arrangements for effective regional cooperation on MCS and enforcement in the south-eastern regions of Africa. The findings were disseminated and validated by stakeholders Additionally, the process of identifying a suitable consultant for the study on formulation of framework for establishing cost-effective and sustainable financial arrangements for effective regional cooperation on MCS and enforcement for the West, Central and Northern regions of Africa is ongoing.

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

i. Regional assessments of transboundary aquatic ecosystems (marine and freshwater ecosystems) were conducted in respective ecosystems and reports validated by stakeholders. The two studies identified critical aquatic environmental issues affecting aquatic biodiversity and developed separate mechanisms for joint management plans and strategies in shared freshwater and marine ecosystems.
ii. Based on the outcomes of the above study for transboundary freshwater ecosystems, the Project, in collaboration with Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO), supported the Governments of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania to develop harmonized national strategies for Management of transboundary or shared freshwater ecosystems (Lake Victoria) for conservation of aquatic biodiversity.
iii. Also, based on the outcomes of the above study for transboundary marine ecosystems, the Project, in collaboration with Regional Fisheries Commission for Gulf of Guinea (COREP), supported the Governments of Republic of the Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo to develop harmonized national strategies for Management of transboundary or shared marine ecosystems (in the Gulf of Guinea Large Marine Ecosystems) for conservation of aquatic biodiversity.
iv. Assessments were conducted to map Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in Africa, document lessons, best practices and develop guidelines for their institutionalization at national and regional levels including; current management strategies and identification of elements pertinent for the regional MSP.
v. Based on the outcome of the study, the project collaborated with Abidjan Convention (of UNEP) to support the Governments of Benin and Togo to attained critical process in establishing transboundary MSP between two coastal countries. Through the support of the project, the report on state of shared marine environment between the two countries was signed by respective ministers of environment from the two countries.
vi. The project, in collaboration with UNESCO/IOC, supported the second MSP global Forum in

Africa that was held in Tanzania, and

vii. The project, in collaboration with WWF, finalized the regional vision and roadmap for regional MSP process for the Northern Mozambique Channel, a critical that would be beneficial to Mozambique, Madagascar, Tanzania and Comoros.

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

i. Two continental reviews of existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Africa (in 1. East-southern regions and 2. West, Central and Northern regions in Africa) were conducted on existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), lessons, best practices documented and guidelines formulated for their sustainable implementation and governance.
ii. The project collaborated with WIOMSA (Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association) to develop a roadmap and MOU for on institutionalizing joint management of transboundary Marine Conservation Area between Republics of Tanzania and Kenya.
iii. The Project collaborated with COREP to strengthen Governance mechanism for the transboundary MPA (binationale Mayumba Conkouati) between Republics of Gabon and Republics of Congo
iv. Three institutions have been shortlisted and verifications missions conducted to these institutions for considerations for selection as centres of excellence for training on aquatic biodiversity conservation and ecosystems management. These are: University of Ghana, Pwani University in Kenya, University of Nairobi, Kenya.

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.*

i. The study on the negative impact of climate change on aquatic biodiversity and environment in Africa was conducted. The report of the study and mitigation strategies were developed and disseminated to stakeholders.
ii. The project has collaborated with Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) to support or leverage on ongoing KMFRI's initiatives on 'Strengthening Conservation and Restoration of Blue Carbon Ecosystems for Community Benefits and Environmental Sustainability' to jointly carry out the following activities of the project: (a) mapping and identification of degraded mangrove areas (b) community training on nature-based solutions for aquatic biodiversity conservation and ecosystems restoration c), training on tree planting for ecosystems restoration and climate change mitigation. The project is implemented in GAZI Bay community on the shores of the Indian Ocean and (d) supported exchange program for Gazi bay communities to the neighbouring coastal communities in Kilifi County – north coast Kenya to learn on best practices on nature-based enterprises for ecosystem/mangrove conservation.
iii. The project is currently collaborating with Zanzibar Seaweed Cluster Initiative (ZaSCI) to mainstream climate change and environmental consideration as best practices in seaweed

farming to conserving aquatic biodiversity and environmental protection.

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

i. A study that identified priority issues and strategic actions and developed continental framework for sustainable coastal, marine tourism, mining activities ,oil and gas exploration toward conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environment was conducted. The study report was disseminated to stakeholders in the continent.
ii. Based on the framework, AU-IBAR, with support from the SIDA project, supported Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, Gabon and Angola to develop national masterplans and policy guidelines to strengthen regulatory frameworks on sustainable coastal, marine tourism, mining activities', oil and gas exploration for conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management.

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*

i. A continental strategy for inclusion of gender in aquatic biodiversity and environmental management was developed and validated by stakeholders.
ii. The continental strategy was endorsed in February 2024 by the Summit African Heads of States and Governments in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
iii. The gender mainstreaming strategy is being rolled out in AU member states to support coastal community-based non-governmental organizations for livelihoods enhancement;
iv. The Republics of Cote D'Ivoire, Malawi and Ethiopia were supported to develop gender-sensitive strategies for the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management, based on the continental strategy

Output 4.2 *Regional environmental based-NGOs supported to implement gender-sensitive work plans for enhancing the role of women and youth in aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental governance*

i. In collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the project supported implementation of Gender specific activities to enhance governance structures in the Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) in the Anlo-Keta Landscape and provide funding for some gender-specific livelihoods activities in the management plan to ensure effective and inclusive management of aquatic biodiversity in Ghana.
ii. The project supported the development of gender sensitive management plans for the coastal community-based organization and supported assessment that have identified alternative livelihood options in the communities towards minimizing pressure on mangroves.
iii. The Project is currently collaborating with South Africa based NGO, Mabuyi Development Planners through a Consultancy, to mainstream and develop gender policy and actions for the small-scale fisheries communities in South Africa.

3. FORGING PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLBORATION FOR SYNERGIES

In the course of implementation of the project, the project has forged partnerships with various organizers including the following:

a. Abidjan Convention
b. Nairobi Convention
c. WIOMSA
d. KMFRI
e. IUCN
f. RECs (e.g. SADC)
g. UNESCO/IOC
h. Specialized Regional Fisheries Bodies e.g. LVFO. FCWC, COREP
i. WWF
j. Mabuyi Development Planners
k. Zanzibar Seaweed culture initiative
l. University of Ibadan

These institutions are invited to participate in the activities of the project. The highlight of these partnerships was the collaboration with IGAD to organize a knowledge share fair which strengthened stakeholder's knowledge on blue economy concepts, project activities and intended outputs.

4. EMBRACING GENDER DIMENSIONS AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN PROJECT ACTIVITIES

In line with the provision of the project, AU-IBAR has ensured participation of women and private sector in the projects' activities. Gender considerations and private sector through the participation of women and private sector representative in the formulation of sustainable coastal and marine tourism and mining activities' masterplans and regulatory frameworks for conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environment. The collaboration with KEMFRI on restoration of aquatic ecosystems as well as with IUCN on mainstreaming gender in their community-based mangrove restoration activities has placed women and private sector in project activities. The project is also promoting gender inclusivity in small-scale fisheries in South Africa.

The collaboration with seaweed culture initiative in Zanzibar would have a twin objectives of climate change mitigation and strengthening women role.

5. PROJECT TECHNICAL STAFF:

1. Dr. Mohamed Seisay – Project coordinator (Sustainable Blue Economy Expert)
2. Mr. Eric Nadiope - Legal, Policy and institutional Expert
3. Mr. Joel Mokenye – Aquatic Biodiversity Specialist
4. Ms. Stephanie Achieng – Gender Policy and Strategy Expert
5. Mr. Oroko Kennedy – Planning and Monitoring Officer

6. CHALLENGES AND EMERGING ISSUES

The implementation of the project continues largely accordingly to the workplan for the third year, but there are some issues that deserve mentioning. These include:

i. Delay in implementation or completion of Studies in project:

These delays were experienced in the first year in recruitment of experts to conduct studies. Because of the delay in identification of appropriate experts, some critical studies continued well into the second and third year of project implementation. The delays in concluding the studies on schedule significantly impacted the timely rolling out the outcomes of the project.

II. Incessant demand on the project:

Whereas, the project has provided support to AU member states or collaborated with some regional institutions, there is increasing demand by AU member states and regional institutions for support to enhancing aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management. The project has sensitized the continent on aquatic biodiversity conservation as a comprehensive and integrated strategy for management of aquatic living resources, including fisheries and aquaculture resources. The awareness created has brought about numerous requests by stakeholders for policy support to strengthen their management scenarios regarding integrated ecosystems and their biodiversity..

III. Strategic challenges

The project document acknowledged existence of other partners working in the same space with the project. The project takes due cognizance of the fact that there is an overwhelming risk of overlap or duplications. However, in spite of this, several regional or international organizations have collaborated with the project to synergize interventions (including UNEP, IUCN, FCWC, WIOMSA, FAO, WWF, etc.)

The project is presently forging partnerships with partners that have initiatives on MSP, MPA, and MCS. The challenge here is to align African Union regulations (e.g. financial regulations) with partners' regulations in joint implementation of activities.

With the finalization of various study reports, a key strategic challenge is utilization of project results for policy reform in AU member states or institutions for aquatic biodiversity conservation and environment. This challenge is partly been addressed by synthesizing the project's outcomes or interventions into knowledge products.

As the numerous study reports are being finalized, there has been increasing call and request for production of physical copies to ensure wider dissemination among stakeholders, in particular the knowledge products (Policy briefs, information note, guidelines etc).

7. DISCUSSIONS

The implementation of the project is, on the overall, has been very successful towards meeting the stated overall goals and strategic objectives. What has become clear or emerged (as issue) is the overwhelming enthusiasm in the AU member states or regional institutions where project's outcomes are being piloted. These have created recurring requests for support from other AU Members or other regional institutions, which the project cannot now handle due to the budgetary constraints. The project has brought or intruded dimensions in aquatic resources management in national and regional institutions that have, hitherto focused on limited scope e.g. fisheries management without due regard to other species and their ecosystems. The concept has been ingrained – the imperative need for aquatic biodiversity conservation and their environments. The limited duration of the project, i.e. 3 years, was considered insufficient for meaningful impact on strengthening institutional capacity, at national and regional levels, for effective biodiversity conservation and environment given the huge challenge in the blue economy space.

Another important emerging observation is that, though member states are being assisted to develop strategies, frameworks or domesticate prioritized instruments through expert consultations,, there were incessant requests for the project to conduct nation-wide broader stakeholders' consultations, which allocated funds in the project did not allow.

The preliminary results of the project has engendered enormous interest and created momentum amongst AU member states and regional institutions: such as enhancing awareness on existing global fora on aquatic biodiversity and environment (e.g. Basel convention, UNFCC, UNFSA, etc) ; mechanism effective stakeholders' role and participation in these fora;, domestication of regional and international instruments relating to aquatic biodiversity and environmental (e.g. MARPOL, CBD, ; Monitoring, Control and Surveillance systems taking into consideration protection of aquatic biodiversity and ecosystems; Marine Spatial Planning; Marine Protected Areas; effect of climate change, coastal and marine tourism, deep-sea mining; gender mainstreaming in aquatic biodiversity for promoting sustainable blue growth in Africa Aquatic ecosystems.

Forging partnership with institutions to leverage on ongoing existing initiatives was an important strategy that have contributed immensely to the success of the project and increased prospects of sustainability of projects' outcomes. The development of exit strategy for the project has also identified activities and partners that are likely to continue with activities that project have jointly implemented.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

a. To continue into a new phase of the project that will comprehensively enhance continental capacity on aquatic biodiversity conservation and ecosystems management.
b. To enhance political ownership through support for broader consultative processes at national and regional levels.
c. To expand the project scope to cover studies and implementation of recommendations in more countries and regional institutions.
d. To organize knowledge share fair for wider dissemination of project's outcomes.
e. To develop continental guidelines on nature-based solutions for conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management.
f. Develop a Continental strategy for combating plastics and microplastic pollution in aquatic ecosystems.

9. PROJECT DOCUMENTS

Reports

a. Mechanism for enhancing effective role and participation in regional and global biodiversity and environmental related regimes.
b. Relevant continental and global biodiversity and environmental instruments to develop priority actions for enhanced ratification and implementation.
c. Status of MCS in the West, North and Central, East and Southern Africa.
d. Lessons and Best practices for implementing MSP and guidelines for institutionalization at national and regional levels (transboundary).
e. Transboundary issues in conservation and of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management in fresh and marine ecosystems and frameworks for regional protocol and strategy.
f. Lessons and Best {practices for implementing MPA and guidelines for implementation and governance}.
g. Impact of climate change and mitigation measures in Africa.
h. Priority actions for sustainable coastal and marine tourism, oil, gas and mineral exploration.
i. A continental strategy for gender mainstreaming in conservation of aquatic biodiversity and environmental management.
j. Draft MOU for transboundary Marine Conservation Area (TBCA) between Kenya and Tanzania

k. Dusornu Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) Management Plan (2023- 2028)
l. Socio-economic Livelihood Needs Assessment for Prioritising Livelihoods in the Dusorno Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) communities in the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site (KLCRS): Implementing the Gender -Sensitive Management Plans For the newly established CREMA

Knowledge products (Policy briefs)

a. Advocacy Note Mitigating measures for impact of climate change in aquatic ecosystems of Africa.
b. Continental guidelines for institutionalizing MSP in Africa.
c. Policy Note on enhancing domestication of relevant global instruments related to aquatic biodiversity conservation and environmental management.
d. Policy Note on sustainable coastal and marine tourism for conservation of aquatic ecosystems and environment.
e. Policy Note on sustainable mining activities for conservation of aquatic ecosystems and environment.
f. Policy Note on aquatic biodiversity hotspots in Africa.
g. Policy Orientation Paper: Mechanism for Mainstreaming Gender in Aquatic Biodiversity Conservation and Environmental Management: A case study of the Dusorno CREMA community in Ghana.
h. Policy Note: Nature-based Solutions to strengthen Climate Change Impact Mitigation efforts that promote the conservation of Aquatic Biodiversity Ecosystems - A Case Study of Gazi Bay, Kenya.
i. TRANSBOUNDARY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AFFECTING BIODIVERSITY IN FRESH WATER ECOSYSTEMS IN AFRICA: A Mechanism for Development of Harmonized Framework for Conservation of Aquatic Biodiversity in Africa
j. TRANSBOUNDARY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AFFECTING BIODIVERSITY IN SHARED MARINE ECOSYSTEMS IN AFRICA: A Mechanism for Development of Harmonized Framework for Conservation of Aquatic Biodiversity in Africa

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