

Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP Project
“Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal
Ecosystem Services”, PIMS ID: 02019
(2018-2024)



Evaluation Office of the United Nations Environment Programme

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Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services
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The evaluation consultant hopes that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the successful formulation of follow-on initiatives and to the continuous improvement of similar projects in other countries and regions.

Evaluation Team

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Brief Consultant Biography

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About the Evaluation

Joint Evaluation: No

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Brief Description: This report is a Terminal Evaluation of a UNEP project implemented between 2018 and 2024. The project objective was to incorporate the values of marine and coastal ecosystem services in the development and implementation of coastal and marine policies and decision-making. The evaluation sought to assess project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the project, including their sustainability. The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and the relevant partners and agencies of the project participating countries.

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Belgium
Canada
France
Germany
Italy
Monaco
Norway
Sweden
United States of America

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Private Sector	No
UN Body	Yes
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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANCORS	Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (University of Wollongong)
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COBSEA	Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia
CORDIO	Coastal Oceans Research and Development – Indian Ocean
EA	Expected Accomplishment
EF	Environment Fund
EIB	Ecosystem Integration Branch
EOU	Evaluation Office of UNEP
FFI	Flora and Fauna International
FMO	Fund Management Officer
GCRMN	Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network
ICRI	International Coral Reef Initiative
IPMR	Integrated Planning, Management, and Reporting
KMFRI	Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute
KM-GBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
MAP	Mediterranean Action Plan (Barcelona Convention)
MCEU	Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Unit
MFWB	Marine and Freshwater Branch
MPA	Marine protected area
MPAth	Marine protected area platform (project deliverable)
MTR	Mid Term Review
MTS	Medium Term Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPCR	Project Operational Closure Report
PIMS	Programme Information and Management System (replaced by IPMR)
PM	Project Manager
PoW	Programme of Work
PRC	Project Review Committee (internal UNEP committee that approves new projects)
ProDoc	Project Document
Rev	Revision / ProDoc Revision
RSCAP	Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans
RSP	Regional Seas Programme
RSU	Regional Seas Unit (now the Regional Seas Branch)
SBA	Sustainable blue economy
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSFA	Small scale funding agreement
TEEB	The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP FI	UNEP Finance Initiative
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre

Project Identification

Table 1: Project Identification Table

UNEP PIMS ID/SMA ID:	PIMS ID: 02019 SMA ID: 37979	Grant ID (IPMR):	SB-010591
UNEP Management (Division/Branch/Unit):	Ecosystems Division (Marine and Freshwater Branch/ Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Unit)		
Implementing Partners:	1 Blue Ventures 2 Coastal Oceans Research and Development – Indian Ocean (CORDIO) East Africa 3 Commonwealth Secretariat 4 Community Centered Conservation (C3), The Philippines 5 Corals for Conservation (C4C), Fiji 6 Department of Parks & Wildlife Management (DPWM), The Gambia 7 Edinburgh Napier University (ENU), UK 8 Fauna & Flora International (FFI), Kenya 9 GRID-Arendal 10 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) 11 Kenya Marine & Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), Kenya 12 Mision Tiburon 13 OCTO 14 The Nature Conservancy (TNC) 15 The Ocean Agency 16 The Reef-World Foundation 17 The University of Queensland 18 Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association (TASA), Belize 19 Universitat de Girona 20 University of Bremen 21 University of Portsmouth 22 University of Wollongong 23 Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) 24 World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC)		
Sources of Funding:	Countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Monaco, Norway, Sweden, United States of America	Institution Name/Type: European Commission - Multilateral Fund Global Fund for Coral Reefs - Multilateral Fund Joint SDG Fund - Multilateral Fund Foundation of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Environment Fund	
Relevant SDG(s):	14		
MTS (all that apply):	2018-2021 2022-2025	UNEP approval date:	28 August 2018
POW Output(s) number/reference	POW Output: POW SP3 EAa Output 6: Development and dissemination of tools and methodologies for integrated ecosystem management	POW Expected Accomplishment(s) number/reference (applicable for projects approved pre-2022):	POW Expected Accomplishment: PoW 20/21: SP3 EA (a) The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks, at the national and international levels.

			PoW 22/23: Nature conservation and restoration are enhanced
Sub-programme:	Nature Action (formerly Healthy and Productive Ecosystems)	Programme Coordination Project:	N/A
Expected start date:	01 May 2018	Actual start date:	10 May 2018
Planned completion date:	31 Dec 2021 30 June 2023	Actual operational completion date:	30 April 2024
Planned total project budget at approval:	US \$15,015,491	Actual total expenditures reported as of 30 April 2024:	US\$ 18,800,381.97
Planned Extra-budgetary Funds	<i>Cash:</i> US\$ 11,927,332.64	Secured Extra-budgetary Funds:	US \$ 15,844,394
	<i>In-kind:</i> US\$ 2,955,988.31	Actual Extra-budgetary Funds expenditures reported as of 30 April 2024:	US \$14,138,040
First disbursement:	Unknown	Planned date of financial closure:	Unknown
No. of formal project revisions:	4	Date of last approved project revision:	24 April 2024
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	1 Documented	Date of Last Steering Committee meeting:	3 March 2021
Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (planned date):	Sept 2020	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	July 2021
Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	December 2021	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	October 2024
Coverage – Implementing Country(ies):	Global: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Benin, Costa Rica, Fiji, Haiti, Kenya, Madagascar, Philippines, Solomon Islands, The Gambia, Trinidad and Tobago.	Coverage – Implementing Region(s):	Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean

Executive Summary

The Project

The Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services (MCES) project (PIMS ID: 02019) set out to incorporate the values of marine and coastal ecosystem services in the development and implementation of coastal and marine policies and decision-making. The project had five outputs addressing 1) science, 2) tools and approaches, 3) communications, 4) innovative financing, and 5) regional seas governance.

The project was implemented by the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Unit (MCEU) of the Marine and Freshwater Branch (MFWB) in collaboration with the Regional Seas Unit (RSU) in Ecosystem Integration Branch (EIB) in the Ecosystems Division.

The Project Document (ProDoc) was signed on 28 August 2018 with for a duration of 44 months and with a secured budget of US\$ 3,516,000. The project budget and duration were revised and increased through four ProDoc revisions. The final implementation period ran from 1 May 2018 to 30 April 2024 making a project duration of 72 months. The final approved project budget was US \$ 18,374,068 including in kind funding (staff time) and expenditure was US \$17,094,030.

The Evaluation

The evaluation has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and the main project partners. Based on the UNEP Evaluation Policy and guidance, the evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of the MCES project.

A summary table of the ratings is presented below while the detailed table including evaluation sub-criteria is provided in the report conclusions (Table 6). The evaluation ratings are based on a ratings matrix developed by the UNEP Evaluation Office which includes detailed descriptions of the main elements required to be demonstrated at each rating level.

The overall performance rating is **Satisfactory**.

Criterion	Rating
Strategic Relevance	HS
Quality of Project Design	S
Nature of External Context	MF
Effectiveness	S
Financial Management	S
Efficiency	MS
Monitoring and Reporting	MS
Sustainability	ML
Factors Affecting Performance	S
Overall Project Performance Rating	S

Key Evaluation Findings

The project scored highly on *Strategic Relevance* reflecting strong alignment to UNEP strategic priorities set Medium Term Strategy and clear contributions to UNEP's Marine and Coastal Strategy for 2020-2030, to the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2021-2025, and to delivery of relevant UNEA Resolutions.

Regarding effectiveness, the overall delivery of outputs and of outcomes, as qualified by indicators, was satisfactory. Highlights include release of four authoritative reports on corals, mangroves, seagrasses and kelps and support to over a dozen partner-led pilot interventions associated with development of knowledge product related to ecosystem restoration, blue carbon and gender, and establishment of establishment of the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR) hosted by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the UN-Multi Partner Trust Fund (UN-MPTF). The high-profile *Glowing Glowing Gone* Campaign highlighted that it is not too late to take action to protect and restore coral reefs. Cohesion amongst the regional seas conventions and action plans was strengthened through annual meetings, collaborative development of the 'Regional Seas Strategic Directions' document and contribution to several strategic reviews. Deliverables related to sustainable blue economy and marine protected areas effectiveness were only partly available at the end of the project. Articulation amongst project activities was not as strong as originally envisaged and integration of work between the MCEU and RSU was limited.

The project received extrabudgetary and largely earmarked funding from over twenty sources. Financial management was overall satisfactory although planning was hindered in the early years of the project by uncertainty around allocations and timing. Partners reported some administrative delays. The less favourable efficiency rating reflects the later than anticipated attainment of project targets and frequent extensions of incoming grants. Cost effectiveness was enhanced in several areas by a solid foundation of individual and institutional knowledge and know how, established delivery models, networks, and governance, and some longstanding partnerships.

Regarding sustainability, the MFWB, MCEU and RSU engaged with international policy processes throughout the project period, using information and knowledge generated by the project to connect to audiences and reinforce messaging. However, the continuation and expansion of benefits under the project remains highly dependent on future funding and financial flows and on institutional support.

Strategic Questions

The evaluation terms of reference included three strategic questions:

1. In which ways did the project adapt to changes in the UNEP delivery model during project implementation? There is no evidence of specific efforts to adapt to the new model, reflecting that the project approach and programming was largely defined by September 2022 when the new management approach started.
2. What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance? The pandemic heavily disrupted project implementation in 2020 with staff working from home for over a year. Ongoing travel restrictions affected organisation of project meetings and scheduling of international events targeted by the project. Incidental cost savings were effectively reprogrammed.
3. In what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of differentiated groups been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project? The project successfully engaged a broad cross section of stakeholders during implementation. Implementation partners were attentive to the needs of local stakeholders and beneficiaries. Outputs such as MPATh have a clear user orientation.

Lessons

The following lessons are highlighted as those with potential for wider application.

Lesson 1: Where the project involves development of services such as platforms and hubs, long term maintenance needs including curation and costs should be identified and planned for from the outset in order to secure continuity and assure currency of the service.

Lesson 2: UNEP's established partnerships and networks contribute strongly to relevance, readiness, efficient delivery, quality, and uptake and scaling of deliverables.

Lesson 3: There should be a clear definition of/and agreement on roles and responsibilities related to project monitoring and reporting where project responsibilities span more than one branch.

Recommendations

Most of the seven recommendations are at an institutional or strategic level since the MCES Project was completed in April 2024 and the follow-on project under the MFWB started in May 2024. Four recommendations refer to consolidation of activities undertaken during the project.

Recommendation 1: Continue to strengthen collaboration between the MFWB and Regional Seas Branch towards adoption and implementation of an ecosystem approach at regional and national level.

Recommendation 2: Undertake a review of formal and informal MCEU partnerships with a view to i) protecting the legacy of earlier or ongoing investments in partner- led activities and ii) developing an exit strategy with consideration of financial sustainability where it is no longer possible to guarantee support.

Recommendation 3: Liaise with relevant parties in UNEP to establish an advisory body to guide further development of the organisation wide work on SBE and ensure effective dovetailing of efforts across the organisation and with external actors.

Recommendation 4: Develop an options paper related to consolidation and future development of MPAtH including consideration for each option of funding and hosting implications

Recommendation 5: Collaborate with relevant partners including KMFRI and ENU to develop an authoritative guide or set of practice notes on community based blue carbon projects.

Recommendation 6: Develop an information document for external partners that sets out UNEP's policy and practice related to reports and publications including information on the publication pipeline (steps and timelines), intellectual property, acknowledgements, use and citation of pre-publications or grey literature and conditions for release of materials as partners publications.

Recommendation 7: Initiative a dialogue with relevant parties in UNEP towards developing guidelines or a code of conduct on partnership management including supervision, conflict resolution among partners, and appropriate approaches for flexible engagement on emerging topics.

1 INTRODUCTION

Institutional Context

1. The objective of the Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services (MCES) project was to incorporate the values of marine and coastal ecosystem services in the development and implementation of coastal and marine policies and decision-making.

2. The project (PIMS ID: 02019) was implemented by the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Unit (MCEU) of the Marine and Freshwater Branch (MFWB) in the Ecosystems Division under the overall supervision (from Revision 1 onwards) of the Chief of Branch¹. The MFWB was restructured on several occasions during the project lifetime. The Regional Seas Unit (RSU) was moved by early 2020 to the new Ecosystem Integration Branch (EIB) in the Ecosystems Division, with ongoing responsibility for implementation and reporting of designated project activities.

Timing and Extensions

3. The Project was reviewed by the Project Review Committee in May 2018 and approved following the submission of a revised draft in June 2018. The project document was signed on 28 August 2018. The official implementation period ran from 1 May 2018 to 30 April 2024 making a final project duration of 72 months.

- The 2018 project document (ProDoc) provided an umbrella framework for activities and projects that would be further developed and implemented to deliver on the Theory of Change (ToC). It set out a targeted results framework for the work to be delivered by the core project in the period to 31 December 2021 and detailed activities for which funds were available and needed to be utilized by December 2018.

4. There were four project revisions:

- The April 2020 revision (Rev 1) marked the end of the project inception phase. It incorporated additional funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the European Commission and extended the project by 12 months to December 2022. Rev 1 incorporated a new output (5) on regional seas governance as well as a direct outcome and related output (5a) addressing the role of regional seas programmes in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The project logframe was significantly expanded.
- The March 2022 revision incorporated additional funding and extended the project by six months. The project results framework was restructured based on the results and recommendations of the mid-term review (MTR) completed in July 2021.
- A third substantive revision in July 2023 incorporated additional funding from several sources and extended the project by the further seven months to the end of January 2024.
- The final revision - approved retroactively in April 2024 - extended the project by three months for operational purposes pending approval of a follow-on project.

5. The project was a successor to Project 321.2 *Global Coral Reef Partnership: Towards an Ecosystem Approach to Coral Reef Management*, that ran from January 2015 to December 2019. It has been succeeded by the MFWB project, Sustainable Management, Conservation and Restoration of Freshwater, Coastal and Marine Ecosystems (SMA ID: 188275), that started in July 2024.

¹ The project was initially supervised by the head of MCEU

Implementing Partners

6. The ProDoc identified Regional Seas Programmes, GRID-Arendal, United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) as executing partners. Additional technical partners were brought in as the scale and scope of the project expanded, with 16 external executing partners identified in Project Revisions 3 and 4. Twenty-four organisational partners as well as several specialised consulting groups received contracts during the six-year lifespan of the project.

Fit to UNEP Results Frameworks

7. The project was designed to contribute to UNEP's Subprogramme on *Healthy and Productive Ecosystems* (SP3) under the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2018-2021. It was characterized as a core project intended to make a significant contribution to the Subprogramme's expected accomplishments (EAs) set out in the Programme of Work (PoW) for 2018-2019:

- SP3 EA (a) The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks, at the national and international levels.
- SP3 EA(b) Policy makers in public and the private sector test the inclusion of the health and productivity of ecosystems in economic decision-making.

8. The project is also known as Project 316.1, reflecting its primary alignment with and expected contribution to the SP3 - EA a - Output 6: *Development and dissemination of tools and methodologies for integrated ecosystem management*, under the UNEP PoW for 2018-2019 and 2020-2021. It had a secondary contribution to EAa Output 7: *Support to cross-sectoral institutional frameworks and agreements for ecosystem management*.

9. From 2022, the project fell under the Nature Action Subprogramme under the MTS 2022-2025. It was expected to contribute to Outcome 2C in the new 2022-2023 PoW, *Nature conservation and restoration are enhanced*, and specifically to four direct outcomes identified in the subprogramme theory of change (ToC)²:

- 2.2 Public- and private sector financial flows contribute to improved ecosystem management
- 2.3 Productive land- and seascapes and freshwater are sustainably managed
- 2.4 Ocean are governed sustainably and holistically at the regional and global levels
- 2.8 A sustainable ocean and coastal economy contributes to prosperity and pollution-free development

10. The project reporting from late 2023 in the Integrated Planning, Management, and Reporting (IPMR) Solution identifies alignment for each project outcome to the prevailing PoW Indicators under each of the three Nature Action Subprogramme outcomes.

² As set out in ProDoc Revision 2

Budget

11. The project budget at approval was just over US \$ 5 million of which US\$ 3,516,000 was secured funding. The project budget was revised and increased through successive ProDoc revisions to reach a total amount of US\$ 18,374,069 at Revision 4 of which US\$ 1,100,000 was unsecured. The Revision 3 budget identified two sums of secured funding (just over US\$ 250,000) and one sum of unsecured funding (US\$ 500,000) that would be transferred to the successor project.

12. The project operational completion report indicates that total secured funding for the project was US \$18,800,382 while total expenditure (cash and in kind) was US \$17,094,030.

Evaluations

13. The Mid Term Review (MTR) completed in July 2021 rated the project Moderately Satisfactory with all but one of the principal ratings assigned at this level.

14. This Terminal Evaluation (TE) has two primary purposes: i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP and target countries. The aim of the Evaluation is to encourage reflection and learning by UNEP staff and project stakeholders who are the primary audience for this evaluation.

2 EVALUATION METHODS

2.1 Evaluation Criteria and Ratings

16. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme Manual, this Terminal Evaluation (TE) has been carried out using a set of nine commonly applied evaluation criteria, namely: 1) Strategic Relevance, 2) Quality of Project Design, 3) Nature of External Context, 4) Effectiveness (incl. availability of outputs; achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact), 5) Financial Management, 6) Efficiency, 7) Monitoring and Reporting, 8) Sustainability and 9) Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues.

17. Seven of the evaluation criteria are rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). 'Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact' are rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and 'Nature of External Context' is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). The ratings against each criterion are 'weighted' to derive an Overall Project Performance Rating. The greatest weight is placed on the achievement of outcomes, followed by dimensions of sustainability.

18. The UNEP Evaluation Office has developed detailed descriptions of the main elements required to be demonstrated at each level (i.e. Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory) for each evaluation criterion. The evaluation team has considered all the evidence gathered during the evaluation in relation to this matrix in order to generate evaluation criteria performance ratings.

2.2 Strategic Questions

19. The evaluation Terms of Reference includes three strategic questions that were included in the evaluation Terms of Reference. These are questions of interest to UNEP and to which the project may be able to make a substantive contribution.

- a) In which ways did the project adapt to changes in the UNEP delivery model during project implementation? (Addressed under *Quality of Project Management and Supervision*).
- b) What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance? (*External Challenges*)
- c) In what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of differentiated groups been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project? (*Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation*)

20. The evaluation matrix in Annex II provides an extended set of questions based on the evaluation criteria and strategic questions set out in the terms of reference.

2.3 Approach

21. The evaluation adopted a participatory approach, consulting with project team members, partners and beneficiaries at several stages throughout the process. Central to the evaluation was the analysis (and reconstruction) of the project's theory of change (ToC). Consultations were held during the evaluation inception phase to arrive at a nuanced understanding of how the project intended to drive change and what contributing conditions ('assumptions' and 'drivers') would need to be in place to support such change. The (reconstructed) ToC, supported by a graphic representation and narrative discussion of the causal pathways, was discussed further with respondents during the data collection phase,

and refined as appropriate. The final iteration of the ToC is presented in this final evaluation report (Section 4) and has been used throughout the evaluation process.

22. Throughout this evaluation process and in the compilation of the Final Evaluation Report, efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. Data were collected with respect for ethics and human rights issues. All pictures were taken, and other information gathered after prior informed consent from people, all discussions remained anonymous, and all information was collected according to the UN Standards of Conduct.

2.4 Data Collection

23. The findings of the Evaluation were based on the following a) a desk review of relevant background documentation; b) face to face and remote interviews and c) a field visit to project sites in Kenya. Efforts were made to triangulate information and findings from different sources.

Desk Review

24. The desk review spanned project management related documents, project deliverables, webpages and records of events (Annex IV) including:

- Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); work plans and budgets, revisions to the project (Project Document Supplement), and the logical framework.
- Mid-Term Review of the project.
- Project reports such as progress reports to donors, meeting minutes, and relevant correspondence.
- Available information on grants to UNEP, and Project Cooperation Agreements / Small Scale Funding Agreements (PCAs / SSFAs with implementing partners, including reporting.
- Project deliverables including publications, communications materials and technical outputs.
- Records corroborating policy relevance and influence of the project and its outputs.

Key Informant Interviews

25. The evaluation aimed to contact a representative sample of interviewees across all outputs, reflecting both the scope of work and allocation of budget (Annex III). In all 36 interviews were conducted reaching 38 people (21 male and 17 female).

26. Face to face interviews were held with available members of the project team and other key informants at the UNEP offices in Nairobi including the three project managers, the project team, the UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO), and a representative of the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, a UNEP-hosted regional seas secretariat. It was not possible to speak to the project supervisor who was actively transitioning to a senior role in an external organisation at the time of the evaluation. The field visits provided an opportunity for individual interviews with three implementing partners and two of the UNEP team members.

27. Project activities were delivered by a wide range of partners and individuals, and most interviews were held online. Potential interviewees (selected project partners including beneficiaries of the UNEP and International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) small grants programme, resource persons in partner organisations including WCMC and GRID Arendal, representatives of donor organisations, and individual consultants) were contacted by email in an incremental manner based on names and contact details provided by the project team

and by other interviewees. Two team members did not reply to requests to provide contacts and/ or contact details. Typically, up to two reminders were sent, with the last reminder identified as such. In a few cases interviewees were encouraged to respond by other participants in the evaluation³. Interview requests were accompanied by a letter of introduction from the UNEP Evaluation Office.

28. Of the 47 individuals contacted for remote interviews, eight did not reply (including four UNEP staff) and eleven declined interviews or were unavailable during the data collection period. The response rate was highest amongst implementing partners who received direct funding from UNEP - including the UNEP/ICRI and other pilot projects - and amongst partners with an ongoing relationship with UNEP. It was lowest amongst organisations/individuals involved in a single project activity. The response rate was affected to some extent by individuals' changes in role, notably in donor organisations. Six individuals who had moved on to new roles or were new in their role referred to their successor/ predecessor but only one of the referred interviews materialised. Several individuals provided useful feedback by email.

29. The identified key informants had diverse interests in and experience with the project and interviews were tailored to reflect their roles, responsibility and interests in the project and its objective. Interviews were prepared through a review of agreements, reporting and deliverables made available by the project team. Interview length was typically one hour but varied from 30 to 90 minutes.

Field Visits to Pilot Sites

30. The evaluator visited four pilot projects in Kenya including three projects that were supported through the UNEP/ICRI small grants programme (Annex V). The visits provided an opportunity to meet with project partners and to consult with representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's associations) in larger focus group meetings at the three sites. The sites were selected by the project team and Evaluation Office reflecting i) the concentration of projects in a single country and ii) the opportunity to combine a visit to projects in Kenya with face-to-face meetings at the UNEP Office in Nairobi.

31. The pilot project managing mangroves for climate change regulation and other ecosystem services in Vanga was funded through the first round of UNEP/ICRI projects under the 2017 call for proposals supported by the predecessor project. The visit provided an opportunity to look at the long-term results of the blue carbon model that was expanded in scope (to seagrasses in Vanga) and scale (to the wider Lamu area) under the MCES project.

Data Analysis

32. The approach to data collection and analysis was largely qualitative, taking a deductive approach to collate and triangulate data based on themes raised in the evaluation terms of reference, discussions with the evaluation manager, and initial interviews.

33. Reported delivery toward the output and outcome indicators was verified using information for diverse sources including availability of products and services, formal reporting, interviews, documentation provided by interviewees and online searches. The evaluation has considered the wide range of deliverables produced by the project including background documents and outputs that have not yet been published. The evaluation criterion on availability of outputs places emphasis on products and services being available to the intended beneficiaries and non-availability has affected rating for level of achievement in the delivery matrix.

³ This is not considered to have biased responses in view of the unique roles played by different project stakeholders.

34. Achievement of outcomes, particular Outcome 1, was considered through a contribution analysis that looks at the plausibility and significance of stated contributions (as specified by indicators) based on project outputs and the outcome milestones that were sometimes delivered as distinct activities.

35. The project rating for likelihood of impact was based on application of the UNEP Results of Outcome to Impact tool and refers to the impact pathways as well as drivers and assumptions identified in the reconstructed theory of change and to the stakeholder analysis.

2.5 Limitations

36. Variously termed an umbrella, core, or programme of work project, the MCES project was not a classic project in the sense of having a fixed timeframe, budget, and defined set of activities. The project scope, budget and planned duration were modified through successive revisions as new funding was received. The project overlapped with the predecessor project and was extended in view of the later than expected approval of the successor project. This means the benchmarks against which technical and financial performance is considered shifted continuously through the life of the project. The evaluation has used Rev 2 as the baseline for considering effectiveness.

37. The project had many activities including some of which built on established working relationships with partners and strong knowledge of the subject and related processes and actors, and others that were more exploratory in nature with some work coming to fruition only after the project ended. Differences in performance are reflected in the analyses of effectiveness and efficiency and under in explanatory factors. At a practical level the Evaluation Office ratings guidance had to be adapted to avoid weaknesses related to a single project component or grant skewing the overall rating that was not reflective of the overall project performance.

38. Data collection was delayed by difficulties in reaching project team members who had not been available during the evaluator's visit to Nairobi in late November 2024, by the end of year holidays, and by busy agendas at the start of 2025. Many prospective interviewees were able to schedule meetings only some weeks after the initial contact. The project officer responsible for the regional seas work was available only near the end of the data collection period leading to limited and late follow up with related stakeholders. The scope of enquiry was sufficient to triangulate key findings, but these may have been further nuanced with additional interviews.

3 THE PROJECT

3.1 Context

39. The project document (ProDoc) summarized the range and value of services provided by marine and coastal ecosystems to coastal and inland populations and notes that these systems are subject to increasing pressure from anthropogenic activities and unsustainable exploitation that threaten their resilience as well as the communities that depend on them. It convincingly argues that managing marine and coastal ecosystems so that they remain healthy and continue providing ecosystem goods and services is integral to achieving sustainable development and a more prosperous future for humanity.

40. The ProDoc highlighted that UNEP is well placed to lead global action on the sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems. Drawing on earlier UNEP guidance and experience⁴, it identified principles and approaches for the adoption and implementation of the ecosystem approach at the level of the regional seas.

41. Barriers to sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems were identified as follows:

- i) Ecological and social scientific information on coastal and marine ecosystems is still lacking and there are large gaps in knowledge, reducing the scope for appropriate policy development.
- ii) Current environmental management or sustainable development policies and strategies do not appropriately consider the ecosystem services and their values, so that appropriate management actions are not taken.
- iii) There is insufficient or limited knowledge and understanding of wider socio-economic benefits derived from coastal and marine ecosystems, so that those benefiting from specific ecosystems services sometimes do not make enough effort to maintain the integrity and health of these ecosystems.
- iv) For efficient implementation of sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems, stakeholders including private sector and civil society stakeholders are not integrated well enough into process of developing and implementing policies, tools and other solutions. Relevant sustainable financing streams are not widely available.

42. Revision 1 (Rev 1) of the ProDoc included a slightly expanded justification including notably the addition of a fifth barrier to sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystem.

- v) Oceans and seas are transboundary in nature and therefore, marine resources management requires intervention at all levels including global, regional and national level such as through regional frameworks for cooperative management and protection of shared marine and coastal environment.

43. The project operated largely at a global and regional level working to develop and disseminate tools, knowledge and models to influence and strengthen governance and increase investment in favour of better management of marine and coastal systems. Activities at national and local level to enrich knowledge and understanding and to pilot new approaches and/or respond to priorities identified by the UNEP administered Regional Seas programmes were identified and specified during the project.

⁴ UNEP. 2011. Taking Steps to Ecosystem-based Management of Marine and Coastal Areas

44. The ProDoc did not identify any specific external challenges faced by the project (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, unanticipated political upheaval). The COVID-19 Pandemic emerged as a significant external challenge in 2020 and was identified as such in Revision 2.

3.2 Results Framework

45. The project objective was to incorporate the values of marine and coastal ecosystem services in the development and implementation of coastal and marine policies and decision-making.

46. The original ProDoc included one outcome. This was reformulated as two outcomes following the mid-term review as formalised in the March 2022 revision (Revision 2).

- Outcome 1: Governments, Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, and partners use data and information on marine and coastal ecosystem services to implement actions for more sustainable coastal and marine ecosystem management
- Outcome 2: Increased investments in the sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems.

47. The original project included four outputs. A fifth output (Regional Ocean Governance) was added at the end of the inception phase (Revision 1). The outputs set out in the ProDoc and revisions were formulated as strategic actions and have been reformulated for the purposes of the evaluation to better correspond to the UNEP definition of outputs (Section 4.1).

- Output 1. Partnerships established and policy relevant scientific knowledge, data and analysis produced and disseminated on globally critical marine ecosystems (As revised at Rev 1).
- Output 2. Customized tools and approaches for ecosystem-based management and sustainable blue economy are developed, tested and made available to support sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystem services (Rev 1).
- Output 3. Communication made available on the value of ecosystem services, supported by operational knowledge platform and outreach.
- Output 4. Guidance disseminated and technical support provided for the development of innovative financing projects
- Output 5. Services and guidance made available to strengthen Regional Ocean Governance (Added at Rev 1).

48. An additional direct outcome (1a) and sub-output were added in the April 2020 Revision (Revision 1) to reflect the specific aims of a European Union (EU) supported policy project that started in January 2020:

- Outcome 1a. The post 2020 Biodiversity Framework reflects the regional seas programmes and conventions roles in achieving the global biodiversity goals and targets.
- Output 5a: Mechanisms for the regional seas programmes to contribute to achieving biodiversity related objectives and targets are elaborated and proposed by UNEP and the regional seas secretariats and CBD⁵ Parties are informed of the proposed roles of regional seas programmes and conventions in the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework.

5 Convention on Biological Diversity

3.3 Stakeholders

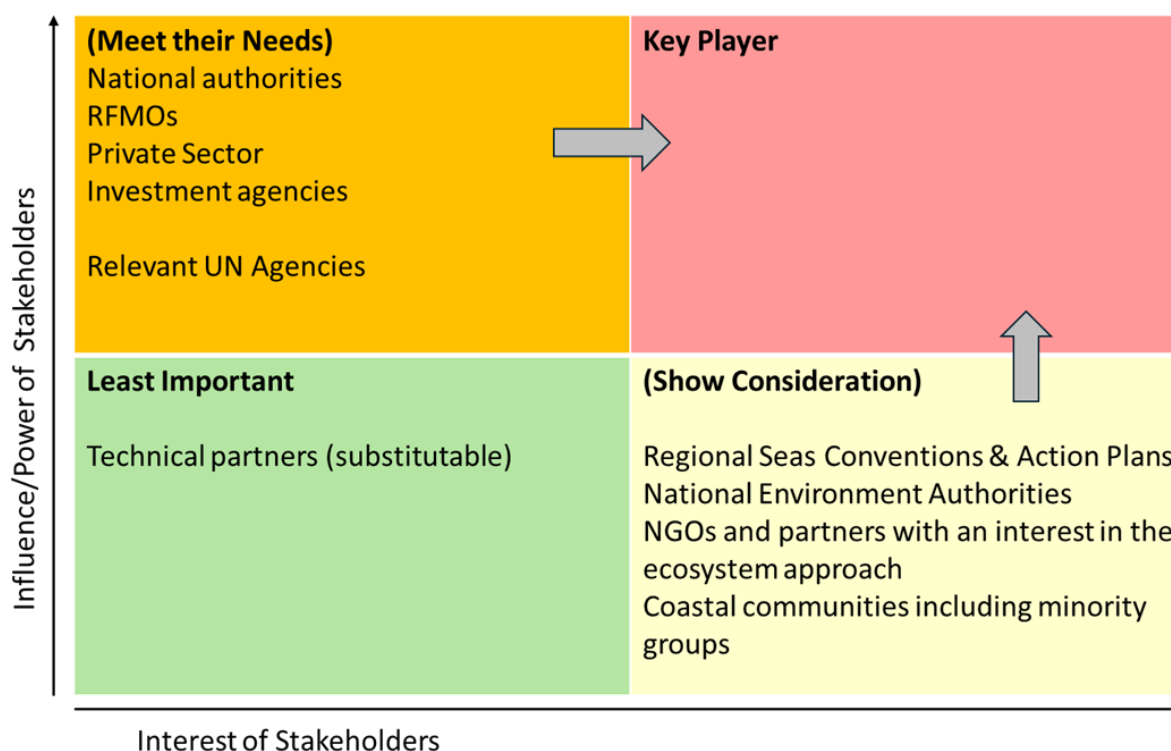
49. Identified stakeholders in the project document include the regional seas programmes, member states/ministries of environment, member states/other agencies whose activities affect marine and coastal ecosystems, regional fisheries management organizations, UN agencies (FAO, IMO, IOC/UNESCO, UNDP), multilateral development banks), the private sector, and partners with an interest in the ecosystem approach (GRID Arendal, WCMC, ICRI, UNEP Finance Initiative). The latter category overlaps with project partners.

50. The stakeholder interest vs power/influence matrix in Figure 1 reflects the situation at the start of the project with reference to the stakeholder groups in the project document, with a focus on achievement of the project objective. Achieving success in the project implies:

- Changing the perspective of the private sector and government agencies with high power but low or insufficient interest over the project objective so that they understand and support the objective (e.g. through actions that directly affect coastal areas or through investment). This is reflected primarily in project outputs 3 (communications) and 4 (investment and financing).
- Empowering stakeholders with high interest but limited power over the project objective and providing them with resources to exercise this power. This is reflected in outputs 1 (partnerships for knowledge), 2 (tools and guidance), 5 (governance) and 5b (recognition), and indirectly through output 4.

51. Based on the project document, technical partners are identified as 'least important' in that they are largely substitutable in this project. In practice, the involvement of a wide range of experienced technical and implementation partners was crucial to the efficient delivery of the project outputs and outcomes, and some outputs were dependent of the engagement of specific partners.

Figure 1. Power Interest Matrix related to the Project Objective

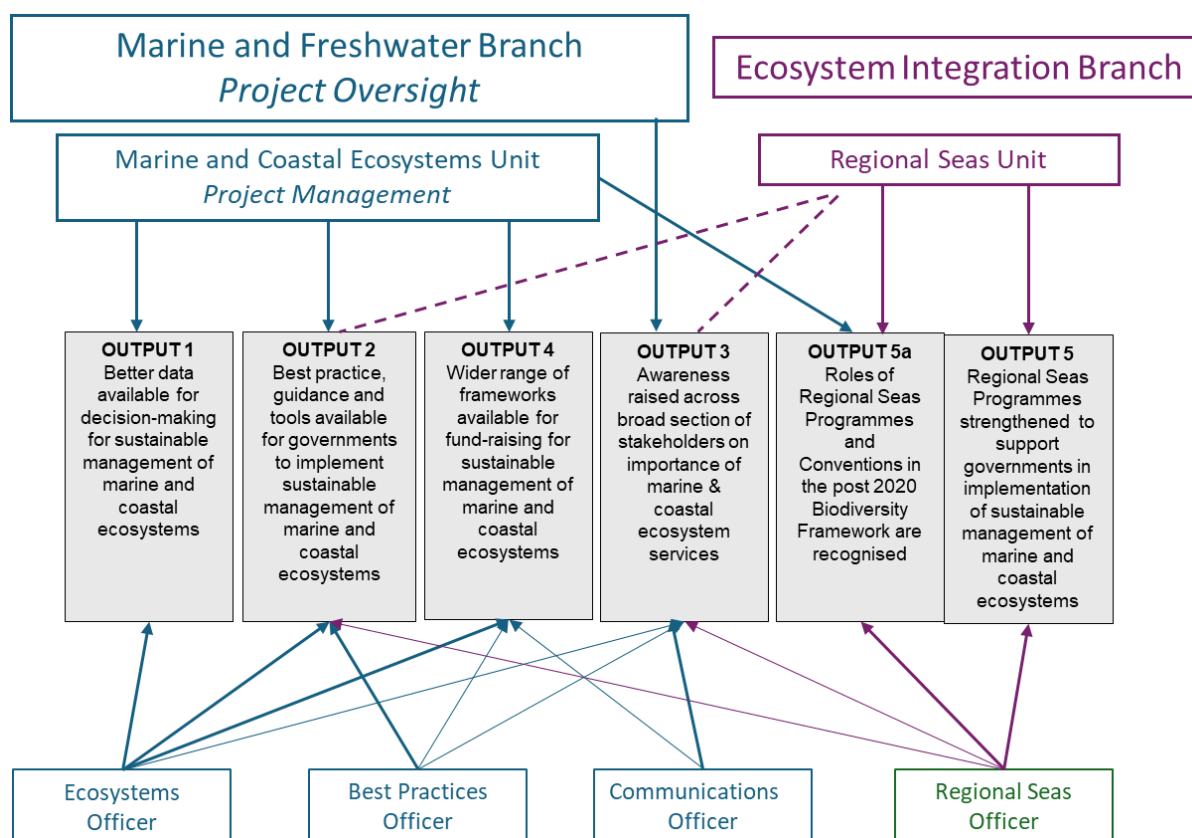


52. The extent to which different categories of stakeholders were engaged varied greatly according to the activity and output. The project team and partners conducted more detailed stakeholder analyses during design of specific activities (e.g. pilot projects). Project activities such as a needs analysis related to development of an MPA toolbox allowed activities to be refined during the life of the project to meet the needs of intended beneficiaries.

3.4 Project implementation structure and partners

53. The project was managed by MCEU which led on Outputs 1, 2 and 4. The project was initially supervised by the Head of the MCEU, then from 2020 by the Head of the MFWB. Output 5 was led by the RSU. Output 5a was initiated by the Head of the MCEU and taken over the RSU in mid-2022. Output 3 was initially supported by a UN Volunteer and by the Communications Division, then by a dedicated officer reporting directly to the Head of the MFWB. Figure 2 depicts the responsibility for delivery of the five project outputs.

Figure 2. Project Structure showing Responsibility for Delivery by Output



54. Consistent though not always full-time roles through much of the project period include the project manager and supervisor and four project management officers associated with ecosystems, best practices, regional seas and communications (initially with the Communications Division and later the MFWB). The officer in charge of ecosystems acted as project manager until early 2022 when the incumbent moved to an unrelated post the UNEP system and the role was taken over by the head of MCEU. Several staff - notably three UNVs and a JPO - took on increasingly senior roles through the life of the project (Table 2).

55. The project engaged a range of technical implementation partners in the delivery of the project activities including UNEP collaborating partners WCMC and GRID Arendal, partners with long standing memoranda of understanding with UNEP such as the Reef-World Foundation, and new partners including universities, NGOs, and specialised service providers. Private sector partners collaborated on a pro bono basis in campaigning work.

56. The RSU worked closely with the secretariats and coordinating bodies of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) including six of the UNEP-administered RSCAPs (the coordinating bodies for the Abidjan Convention, Caribbean Convention, Nairobi Convention, Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) and the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) as well as the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

57. Internal UNEP stakeholders important to the delivery of the project but not part of the project team include the UNEP Finance initiative (UNEP FI), UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and the Communications Division. The project was less successful in engaging other Regional Offices in project delivery.

Table 2: Principal Project Partners

Result Area	Partners
Output 1: Science	GCRMN, GRID Arendal, Norwegian Blue Forests Network, WCMC
Output 2: Tools and Approaches	ANCORS; Blue Ventures Conservation; C3, The Philippines; C4C, Fiji; Commonwealth Secretariat; CORDIO-EA; DPWM, Gambia; ENU; FFI, Kenya; Fragments of Hope; GRID Arendal; GWA; Howell Marine Consulting; IUCN, NL; KMFRI; Mision Tiburon; OCTO; Reef-World Foundation; SymbioSeas; TASA, Belize; TNC; UNEP TEEB; University of Girona; University of Portsmouth; University of Queensland; WCMC; WCS; WWF.
Output 3: Communications	Adobe, Ocean Agency, Vulcan
Output 4: Innovative Financing	ENU, GFCR, KMFRI, UNCDF, UNEP FI
Output 5: Regional Seas Governance	CBD Secretariat; Regional Seas Coordinating bodies (particularly: Abidjan Convention, Cartagena Convention, COBSEA, MAP, Nairobi Convention), Seascope Consultants, WCMC

3.5 Project financing

58. The original ProDoc set out a targeted results framework for the work to be delivered by the core project in the period to 31 December 2021 and included activities for which funds were available and needed to be utilized by December 2018. The four ProDoc revisions each incorporated additional funding that, in each case, was largely identified as secured. Table 3 provides an overview of budget summaries in the project document and official revisions.

Table 3: Project Budget set out in ProDoc and Revisions (all figures in US \$)

Version	Date	Secured XB Budget	Unsecured	In kind	Total
Original	28 Aug 2018	3,516,000	1,500,000	<i>Not specified</i>	5,016,000
Rev 1	20 Apr 2020	8,281,941	200,000	<i>Not specified</i>	8,681,941
Rev 2	17 Mar 2022	12,059,503	0	2,955,988	15,015,491
Rev 3	3 July 2023	13,318,080	2,100,000	2,955,988	18,374,068
Rev 4	24 Apr 2024	14,318,080	1,100,000	2,955,988	18,374,068

Source: ProDoc and Revisions 1-4

59. **Table 4** provides an overview of planned cash and in-kind funding by source, corresponding to the summary in Revision 4, and of secured funding based on the Operational Project Closure Report (OPCR). The secured funding was approximately three percent more than the planned budget at Revision 4 (April 2024). It includes four sources of funding that were not mentioned in Rev 4.⁶

⁶ The completion report includes US \$1 million from the GFCR that was identified as 'unsecured' at Rev 4 and four sources of funding not mentioned in Rev 4. The includes an amount from the UNEP Thematic Fund that was originally allocated in September 2023 to the follow-on project.

Table 4: Project Funding Sources

Funding source <i>All figures in US \$</i>	Planned funding	% of planned funding	Secured funding	% of secured funding
Cash				
Funds from the Environment Fund	250,700	1.4	250,700	1.3
Extra-budgetary funding (listed per donor):				
<i>Belgium</i>	100,000	0.5	100,000	0.5
<i>France</i>	14,938	0.1	9,201	< 0.1
<i>USDOS</i>	2,707,685	14.7	2,476,032	13.2
<i>Swedish Min Env</i>	809,703	4.4	1,140,980	6.1
<i>Italian Fund</i>	1,520,468	8.3	1,520,468	8.1
<i>Monaco</i>	252,003	1.4	476,228	2.5
<i>GIZ</i>	314,824	1.7	260,903	1.4
<i>Foundation of Prince Albert</i>	138,382	0.8	138,056	0.7
<i>European Union</i>	233,623	1.3	233,624	1.2
<i>Norway</i>	292,576	1.6	195,000	1.0
<i>GIZ BMU</i>	0	0.0	45,611	0.2
<i>Sida</i>	5,605,917	30.5	6,061,376	32.2
<i>UNEP-FAO-ROLAC</i>	9,640	0.1	10,000	0.1
<i>UNEP-UNDP FUND</i>	19,279	0.1	20,000	0.1
<i>GFCR</i>	2,588,404	14.1	1,176,994	6.3
<i>GFCR SDG-Fiji Fund</i>	379,137	2.1	379,137	2.0
<i>Australia</i>	180,800	1.0	178,992	1.0
<i>Canada</i>	0	0.0	17,996	0.1
<i>SIDS Flagship</i>	0	0.0	21,546	0.1
<i>Thematic Fund</i>	0	0.0	1,131,549	6.0
Sub-total: Cash contributions	15,418,080		15,844,394	
In-kind				
Environment Fund staff - Post costs	2,955,988	16.0	2,955,988	15.7
Sub-total: In-kind contributions	2,955,988		2,955,988	
Co-financing				
Co-financing cash contribution	Not provided			
Co-financing in-kind contribution	Not provided			
Sub-total: Co-financing contributions	0		0	
Total	18,374,068		18,800,382	

Data Source: Rev 4, Operational Project Closure Report, 2024

60. Table 5 provides an overview of cash expenditure by output at project completion. There is no comparable breakdown available for the estimated cost at design⁷ and the cost-at-design figures in Table 5 are from the costed workplan of March 2022. Total expenditure amounted to 92 percent of the final estimated budget at Rev 4 and to 89 percent of secured cash funding⁸.

61. The total project cost, including in kind funding of US \$2,955,988, was US\$ 17,094,028.

Table 5: Expenditure by Output (All figures in US \$)

Output	Estimated cost at design - Rev 2 ^a	Actual Cost/ expenditure ^b	Expenditure ratio (actual/planned) %
Output 1: Science	500,000	2,166,354	433
Output 2: Tools & Approaches	6,058,000	8,036,848	133
Output 3: Communications	885,000	1,228,054	139
Output 4: Innovative Financing	605,000	754,105	125
Output 5: Regional Seas Governance	1,901,489	1,952,680	103
Total	9,949,489	14,138,040	142

Data Sources: ^a Rev 2 Workplan 2022, ^b OPCR 2024. The sum of outputs expenditure is equal to verified funding.

7 Costed workplans were prepared in 2021, 2022 and 2023 and account for up to US \$9.95 million (2022). Some Output 1 activities were moved to Output 2 in Rev 2. The March 2022 budget attached to ProDoc Rev 2 includes a breakdown of allocations by activity and output for 2022 and 2023, totaling just over USD 4 million.

8 Cash figures only. The final figure for secured funding is taken from the Operational Completion Report. Funds from five donors were carried forward to the successor project totaling just over US \$1.7 million, a figure that largely accounts for the difference between secured funding and verified funding (expenditure).

4 THEORY OF CHANGE AT EVALUATION

4.1 Reformulation of the ToC

62. The project ToC in the ProDoc describes the progression from outputs to outcomes, intermediate states and impact in an extended narrative and in diagrammatic form. The project outcomes were reformulated i) following the inception phase with addition of direct outcome related to a subsidiary EC funded policy project (Rev 1), and ii) following the MTR when the original outcome was separated into two parts (Rev 2). The outcomes are specified in the ProDoc and revisions by milestones, and by indicators with incremental targets.

63. The project outputs set out in Rev 1 were well defined (Section 3.2) and strategic in nature but were formulated as approaches or strategies rather than outputs. They were supported by a clear narrative description of related activities and included in the project logframe together with SMART indicators (with targets and baselines) and milestones.

64. While there is a logical flow from outputs to outcomes, one weakness in the original design was the large leap in thinking between the project outputs and the outcome(s). The Rev 2 ToC (and the related explanatory text) was improved through inclusion of a set of five 'intermediate pathways of products and services leading to outcomes', that clarify how the project approaches will contribute to the outcomes. These correspond more closely to the UNEP definition of outputs and were taken up in the reconstructed ToC (RToC) at evaluation inception as outputs. The original indicators and milestones for each of the five outputs set out in Revision 2 of the ProDoc remain applicable.

65. Despite the strategic nature of the outputs, a second weakness in the original ToC was the insufficient development of drivers and assumptions related to progression from outputs to outcomes and from outcomes to higher level results. The assumptions in the RToC underscore the importance of engaging key actors including governments, RSCAPs and the private sector.

66. The drivers in the ProDoc and Rev 2 ToCs were largely related to negative factors in the coastal environment (e.g. related to climate, governance, population) that could affect achievement of impacts and are not consistent with the current definitions used by UNEP⁹. The drivers in the RToC (Figure 3) clarify the importance of external actors that the project has set out to influence but does not control.

67. Eventual direct beneficiaries whose immediate livelihoods depend on sustainable use of marine and coastal resources have been included through the reformulation of outcome (to refer to sustainable *and equitable* management) and one intermediate state (to refer to *healthy and productive ecosystems and wellbeing of coastal populations*).

68. Development of the RToC was informed by the project document and its revisions, by the MTR, and by the UNEP guidance document on use of theory of change in project evaluations. A prefinal draft was discussed with the project manager and a senior project officer during development of the evaluation inception report and was reviewed by the wider project team as part of the review of that report.

⁹ An assumption is a significant external factor or condition that should be present for the realization of the intended results but is beyond the influence of the project and its partners. Assumptions are often positively formulated risks (see also Driver). A driver is a significant external factor that, if present, is expected to contribute to the realization of the intended results of a project. Drivers can be influenced by the project and its partners. (See also Assumption).

4.2 Theory of Change and Causal Pathways

69. The original ProDoc ToC included one outcome to which the original four and later five outputs contributed. The outcome was split into two parts following the MTR that noted that the original outcome¹⁰ combined two topics (i) incorporation of the value of marine and coastal ecosystem services into decision making, and ii) investments in sustainable management) and lacked specificity and measurability.

70. The corresponding ToC (Rev 2) reinforced two causal pathways with Outputs 1, 2 and 5 (respectively, scientific knowledge, tools and approaches, regional seas governance) leading to Outcome 1 (Use of data and information on marine and coastal ecosystem services to implement actions for more sustainable coastal and marine ecosystem management) and Outputs 3 & 4 (communications and fundraising) leading to Outcome 2 (Increased investments in the sustainable and equitable management of marine and coastal ecosystems). Output 5a describes a distinct set of policy activities towards direct outcome 1a.

71. The project pathways are thus concerned with i) enabling and providing a foundation for better management through development of knowledge, tools and approaches and governance framework and ii) improving prospects for funding of management through communications and awareness, direct fundraising and more strategically, creation of innovative and targeted financing mechanisms. The combination of approaches with five supporting causal pathways is a classic approach that is typically developed in support of durable outcomes related to a defined area, region or process.

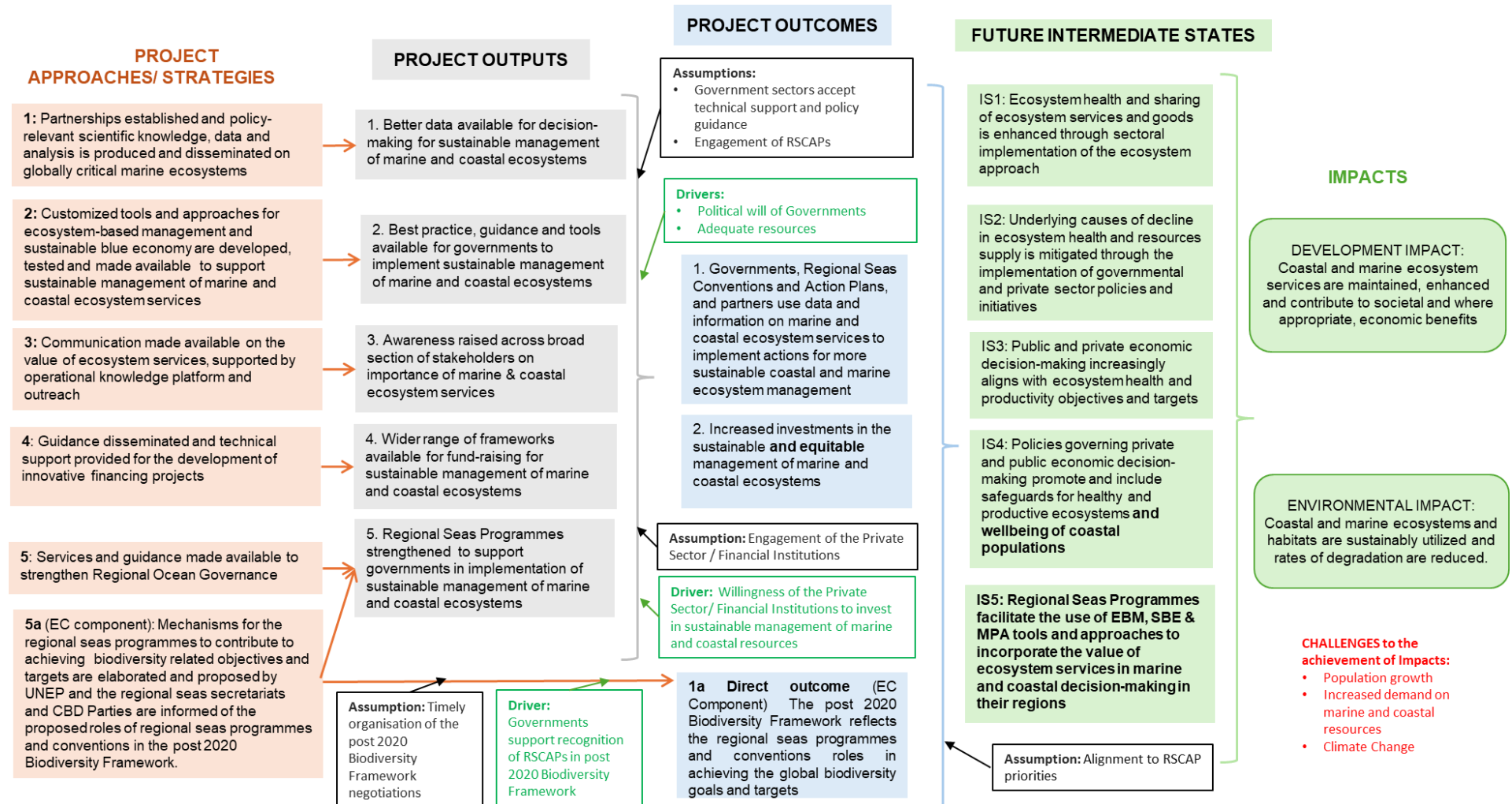
72. The combined output-to-outcome pathways in Figure 3 reflects that the project outputs have at least complementary if not interdependent roles in bringing about the project outcomes. For example, Output 3 on communications/awareness raising built on deliverables under Output 1 to make the case for conservation of ecosystem services as well as on the practical solutions developed and demonstrated under Output 2. The combined outcome to intermediate states pathway reflects the need to secure funding for uptake of new information and practices for sustainable coastal management This echoes the ProDoc rationale that Output 4 on financing underpins the other project outputs by leveraging the support necessary to expand and upscale the activities planned under this project.

73. The intermediate states (1-4) set out in the original ToC are ambitious and far reaching, addressing sectoral implementation of the ecosystem approach as well as the wider policy and investment environment shaping decisions and actions that affect coastal and marine ecosystems and resources. The ToC impact pathways suggest that the project could plausibly contribute in each of these areas, that in turn support the anticipated development and environmental impacts.

74. The RToC includes an additional intermediate state (5) that describes the role of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) in the scaling up and articulation of results. This reflects the ProDoc focus on adoption and implementation of the ecosystem approach at the level of the regional seas The related assumption is that the solutions and services provided by the project in support of an ecosystem approach align to prevailing RSCAP priorities.

10 The value of marine and coastal ecosystem services is incorporated into coastal and marine decision-making and that there is increased awareness and investments in the sustainable management of coastal and marine ecosystem services.

Figure 3: ToC at Evaluation



5 EVALUATION FINDINGS

5.1 Strategic Relevance

5.1.1 Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities

75. The project was designed as a “core” or “umbrella project” of the Healthy and Productive Ecosystems sub-programme (SP3) as described in the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) for 2018-2021. It was intended to contribute and clearly aligns to two expected accomplishments under the Programmes of Work (PoW) for 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 (Paragraph 7).

76. Revision 2 of the ProDoc describes updated alignment to the Nature Action subprogramme as described in the MTS for 2022-2025 (Paragraph 9), while relevant outcome indicators are identified in Rev 3¹¹. There is limited consideration of these outcomes in the project operation completion report but in general terms there is a good match and potential for longer term contributions in these areas.

77. The project aligns to UNEP’s Marine and Coastal Strategy for 2020-2030, adopted in 2019 in response to UNEA Resolution 2/10 with strong contributions to three of the four topics. The project contributions to this strategy are evident in periodic updates to the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives.

78. The project broadly supported knowledge sharing and capacity development in line with the UNEP Strategic Priorities including the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building. South-South Cooperation was supported through the Regional Seas Programmes and other regional collaborative efforts including notably support for blue economy work in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region. Project outputs such as the ecosystem assessments engaged experts from relevant regions.

Rating for Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory

5.1.2 Alignment to Donor/Partner Strategic Priorities

79. Regarding alignment to donor priorities, much of the funding to the project was earmarked to identified areas topics (e.g. coral reefs, blue economy, regional seas) or to even to individual activities. Alignment to donor strategic priorities is evident in the individual donor agreements with UNEP and, in some cases, in the project proposals and /or dedicated reporting to those donors. For example, support from Italy to develop a toolkit for marine protected areas (Output 2) was in line with the *2016 Rome Call to Action to promote the design of effective, equitable and financial sustainable MPAs*.

80. The project contributed to the implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017-2020 and to the development and implementation of Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2021-2025 that was developed with project support.

81. International project implementation partners were largely selected in view of their mandate or their competence and expertise related to their area of engagement. Several partnerships built on collaboration on earlier projects. The project worked with

¹¹ (i) Number of national or subnational entities that, with UNEP support, adopt integrated approaches to address environmental and social issues and/or tools for valuing, monitoring and sustainably managing biodiversity; (ii) Number of financial, public- and private sector entities whose financial decisions and risk management frameworks take biodiversity and ecosystem services into consideration, and the increase in financial flows towards ecosystem management as a result of UNEP; (iii) Number of countries and national, regional and subnational authorities and entities that incorporate, with UNEP support, biodiversity and ecosystem-based approaches into development and sectoral plans, policies and processes for the sustainable management and/or restoration of terrestrial, freshwater and marine areas; (iv) Increase in territory of land- and seascapes that is under improved ecosystem conservation and restoration.

implementation partners at the local and national level based on their established programmes (e.g. pilot project selected under the ICRI small grants programme).

Rating for Alignment to UNEP/ Donor Strategic Priorities: Highly Satisfactory

5.1.3 Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities

82. Relevance to global priorities is evident in the project's anticipated contributions and clear alignment to the sustainable development goals (SDGs), notably SDG 14 (Life Below Water) particularly targets 14.2 (ecosystem-based approaches), 14.5 (marine protected areas), and 14.a (scientific knowledge). Several project outputs specifically explore the contribution of project themes or approaches to global targets, including notably the 2022 review of regional seas alignment and contributions to the SDG 14 targets. The project contributed to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).

83. The project responded directly to UNEA Resolution 2/10 on Oceans and Seas (2016) that requests UNEP to step up its efforts to assist countries and regions in the application of the ecosystem approach to managing the marine and coastal environment. It also contributes to UNEA Resolution 2/12 on sustainable coral reef management. Its continuing relevance is evident in the adoption of subsequent UNEA resolutions that the project informed, including Resolutions 4/12 on mangroves and 4/13 on coral reefs (2019).

84. Relevance to regional priorities is evident in the project's core strategy of support to RSCAPs, that in turn reflect national priorities, and is also reflected in support to SBE in the ASEAN region and pilot testing of the SBE rapid readiness assessment in the Caribbean.

85. The project conducted work in individual countries through pilot projects and through rapid readiness appraisals related to sustainable blue economy (SBE). The relevance of the pilot project is established in the project proposals, while country involvement in the SBE process was based on expressed interest and willingness.

Rating for Relevance to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Priorities: Satisfactory

5.1.4 Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence

86. The six-year project was wide ranging on scope with interventions at local to global scales. It is beyond the scope of the evaluation to look comprehensively at complementarity with existing interventions.

87. Several project outputs project build on and continue work on topics where UNEP and long-term partners such as WCMC have an established mandate and comparative advantage (marine and coastal ecosystems assessment, ecosystem management, regional seas). UNEP participated in the evolving dialogue sustainable blue economy (SBE) which was an emerging topic when the project was developed and where thinking and approaches continue to evolve.

88. The project pilot interventions were timely and often strategic contributions to longer running interventions at the local level, providing resources to explore new topics or approaches, to scale up or to consolidate work at the local level.

89. The project team contributed technical expertise and funding to collaborative work other UNEP divisions/ branches (e.g. UNEP FI), incorporated project-relevant tasks at the request of other branches and divisions (e.g. on seaweeds) and collaborated effectively with UNEP-led projects such as the Go Blue project in Kenya that incorporated project tools and approaches.

Rating for Complementarity with Existing Interventions/Coherence: Satisfactory

Rating for Strategic Relevance: Highly Satisfactory

5.2 Quality of Project Design

90. The evaluation undertook an in-depth review of quality at entry during the Inception phase using the UNEP Evaluation Office matrix designed for this purpose. Where possible, the assessment was based the second project document revision that was approved in March 2022 following the MTR. Where relevant information was missing from Rev 2 (e.g. project justification and relevance), the review referred to next most recent version of the ProDoc with that information.

91. Each of the review criteria was rated on a scale from 1-6 where 1 indicated highly unsatisfactory and six indicates highly satisfactory. Seven of the thirteen criteria were rated as satisfactory. Strengths identified during the inception phase include strategic relevance, the project logical framework, efficiency, sustainability / replication and catalytic effects. The problem and situation analysis under *project preparation* was strong.

92. Criteria with moderately satisfactory ratings were i) *project preparation* reflecting the limited evidence of stakeholder consultation during project preparation; ii) *intended results and causality* reflecting the ambitious outcomes and that the ToC in Rev 2 did not well capture the policy and advocacy/engagement needed to drive from the intermediate products and services to outcomes; iii) *governance and supervision arrangements*, in view of the limited information on allocation of tasks and that the project manager was more junior to members of the project team; iv) *partnerships* in view of the limited consideration of how other implementation partners will be selected , and, v) *risk identification and social safeguards reflecting the limited consideration of risks to project delivery and achievement of outcomes*. One criterion, *financial planning / budgeting*, was rated as moderately unsatisfactory reflecting a lack of coherence in the succession of earlier budget summaries. The overall weighted rating for the Quality of Project Design was 4.44 which corresponds to Satisfactory.

Rating for Project Design Quality: Satisfactory

5.3 Nature of the External Context

93. The ProDoc did not identify any key external features of the project's implementing context that may have been reasonably expected to limit the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, unanticipated political upheaval). The project intervention areas had not yet been identified when the project was developed and the ProDoc noted that population fluxes and insecurity were possible risks in intervention areas and should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. *Competing government priorities* was identified as a potential governance risk.

94. The 2021 ICRI pilot project reports (Output 2) and others pilot initiatives at local and national level refer to only a limited number of challenges related to the external context, with COVID-19 mentioned most frequently. Three of the ICRI pilot projects reported delays related to organization of elections while two of these and one other pilot project mentioned security concerns. One pilot project had to operate in the absence of a local banking system. Activities in two pilot projects were disrupted by severe weather conditions. One pilot project was affected by fuel scarcity. Pilot projects working on blue carbon reflected on the evolving global policy context and uncertainties related to national responses and to carbon pricing.

95. This evaluation includes a strategic question, *what changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?* The global COVID-19 Pandemic emerged as an operational challenge in early 2020 with the MTR reporting in 2021 that UNEP project team and most implementing partners had been working from home for more than one year, that face-to face-meetings were being held online, that

there had been a general slow-down in implementation and that further delays may be expected.

96. The ProDoc Rev 2 thus included a new risk, The COVID-19 pandemic disrupts major conferences and workshops as well as international travel, with the mitigation strategy, all workshops and activities to be carried out online. The Revision also included a new activity, to develop a report on the impacts of COVID-19 on the Regional Seas Programme. The Nairobi and Cartagena Secretariats developed in depth reports on implications of COVID-19 on biodiversity and related policy implementation.

97. Project reporting (PIMS, donor report and implementing partner reports) reflects that several planned face-to-face meetings were held online; a change associated with cost savings that were typically reprogrammed within the same project /activity area, as well as a reduction in carbon emissions from travel. However, in some cases virtual meetings were seen as being less effective, notably in planning of complex multi-partner activities. Reporting in PIMS indicates effects were most marked in 2020 but continued until the end of 2021. In another example, the team leading the ASEAN work was unable to travel; this was mitigated to some extent by recruitment of a local consultant and support from UNEP's ROAP.

98. The pandemic also affected scheduling of global meetings and events targeted by certain project activities. For example, negotiations for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework were expected to be finalised in May 2021, but the framework was adopted only in December 2022. This in turn reduced opportunities for follow on engagement with member states through the RSCAPs (Output 5a). The 22nd Annual Regional Seas meeting was postponed by 18 months to May 2022 leading to a 32-month gap between meetings.

99. The immediate post pandemic period was marked by a resurgence of tourism activities including in coral reef areas of interest for this project. One pilot project reported difficulty in retaining trained and experienced local monitoring staff who took up more lucrative opportunities in the dive industry. At a wider scale, The Reef-World Foundation was able to respond through the project-supported *Green Fins* programme to develop guidelines that addressed the growing use of harmful disinfectants and bleach in the dive industry as a reaction to the pandemic.

Rating for Nature of the External Context: Moderately Favourable

5.4 Effectiveness

100. The project had two outcomes, one direct outcome and five outputs, each associated with a set of indicators and milestones. The project indicators were amended over successive project revisions reflecting changes in the scope and, to some extent, the scale or ambition of the project.

101. Annex VII provides an overview of delivery against indicators and targets that has been verified by the evaluation¹². Each of the indicators is rated as achieved (green), partially achieved (yellow) or not achieved (red) with remarks qualifying this rating. Reporting against indicators reflects the situation at project completion in April 2024 unless otherwise specified.

¹². This is not an exhaustive description of project activities and deliverables.

5.4.1 Availability of Outputs

Output 1: Better data available for decision-making for sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems

102. Output 1 addressed establishment of partnerships and production and dissemination of policy relevant scientific knowledge, data and analysis on globally critical marine ecosystems. Expenditure on Output 1 totalled US\$ 2.16 million, equivalent to 15 percent of the overall project expenditure. While Output 1 is defined by two specific indicators, several of the deliverables under Output 2 also contribute to development of scientific knowledge in support of Outcome 1. Both indicator targets under Output 1 were delivered.

103. The first indicator under Output 1 refers to new or updated functioning partnerships and expert networks, ensuring gender balance, established and operational for knowledge products and dissemination. The knowledge products themselves are addressed under indicator 2. The target was achieved in general terms through work with established partnerships, notably the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GFCRM) and new partnerships such as the International Seagrass Experts Network and Norwegian Blue Forests Network. The outputs on mangroves and seaweeds, and under Output 2, work on marine protected areas (MPAs) and SBE, created activity specific networks and partnerships. Networks included expertise from relevant regional and countries while author lists reflect involvement of both women and men. Many of these efforts engaged significant voluntary efforts. At a more general level, UNEP's financial support and engagement through the project has been critical to the functioning of established policy and implementation partners including the international Coral Reefs Initiative (ICRI) and The Reef-World Foundation.

104. The target for the second indicator was accomplished with release of four authoritative reports on corals, mangroves, seagrasses and kelps. The fifth report is a timely assessment of the potential for sustainably upscaling of seaweed upscaling. The work on mangroves and seagrasses was complemented by pilot projects on blue carbon and payment for environment services under Output 2 and is taken up at a strategic level in the successor to this project.

105. The 2020 *Status of Coral Reefs of the World* - the sixth report in this flagship series – is a landmark volume that builds on the contributions of hundreds of scientists and organisations with data spanning nearly 2 million observations recorded at more than 12,000 sites in 73 countries. The summary for policy makers underscores the importance of global action and capacity of coral reefs to recover; a message taken up in the Glowing Glowing Gone Campaign (Output 3).

106. New funding for Output 1 was introduced in Rev 3 leading to a substantial increase in expenditure against this output particularly in the project's final year. This is largely accounted for by UNEP's support to monitoring and evaluation for the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR); a role that can be expected to continue to 2030 (See Output 4). There were no related changes to the project indicators or targets.

Output 2: Best practice, guidance and tools available for governments to implement sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems

107. Output 2 was concerned with development and testing of customized tools and approaches for ecosystem-based management and sustainable blue economy to support sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystem services. By far the largest output, expenditure on Output 2 totalled US\$ 8.04 million, representing 57 percent of the overall project expenditure.

108. The principal components were i) development of a MPA toolbox (indicator 1) and related training (indicator 2), ii) development of a transition framework on sustainable blue economy (indicator 3), and iii) implementation of pilot projects selected following the second ICRI call for proposals in 2021 (indicator 6), and gender mainstreaming (indicators 7 and 8). Seven of the nine indicator targets were achieved or partly achieved, with work towards indicator 3 continuing under a follow-on project.

Marine Protected Areas Effectiveness

109. The work on MPA effectiveness was primarily developed under a standalone grant from the government of Italy that set out to support effective MPA planning and management by making available tools and practical guidance and to support national capacity development, regional cooperation and global knowledge-sharing.

110. The approach – development of a toolbox and online learning platform - was refined and specified at an inception meeting in December 2019 bringing together experts and potential implementation partners. A gap analysis was conducted in early 2021 through a survey to members of an online community facilitated by Open Communications for the Ocean (OCTO) that brings together of marine protected areas managers and the wider community interested in MPA management. Content was commissioned between through agreements with three partners - OCTO, The Nature Conservancy, and the University of Queensland - who in turn organised contributions from a wide network of experts.

111. Development of the online toolbox – the MPAtH Platform¹³ - started in later 2021. MPAtH was designed as an innovative platform that would enable different groups of users to access material relevant to their immediate management and implementing questions, including through guided online learning tours. The MPAtH ('Marine Protected Areas Tools Hub') was introduced at IMPAC 5 in Vancouver in February 2023 and a prototype was formally launched through a webinar on World Oceans Day in June 2024. However, hosting arrangements were modified during 2024 leading to some issues with site accessibility and stability. The planned delivery of training workshops on implementation of MPA tools (indicator 2) did not take place. Online end-user testing and feedback sessions were organised in 2024 have been used to develop ideas for MPAtH 2.0.

112. The prototype Platform is attractive, accessible and intuitive to use and rich in content but has only been promoted to a limited extent to date. There is strong scope for further development to incorporate opportunities presented by new and emerging artificial intelligence tools that were not available when the platform was specified and developed. There is also a continuing need to curate and expand content to incorporate developments in MPA policy, science and practice and to reflect the role of MPAs as one approach amongst a suite of more comprehensive management approaches.

113. The project experienced several challenges including differences around the scope, targeting, presentation and attribution of material and around organization of work, leading to one partner pulling out in mid-2021. Collaboration was seriously hampered by working across time zones and by COVID-19.

Sustainable Blue Economy

114. The initiative on SBE grew out of an initial scoping phase with in-depth consultations across UNEP Divisions (Ecology, Economy and Science divisions), Regional Offices, Regional Seas Programs and with partners as to how UNEP could engage on this topic. Early outputs include a conceptual scoping document on TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity) for Coasts. The MCEU officer leading this work continued to collaborate with the UNEP FI on operationalisation of the SBE Finance Principles in support of Output 4.

¹³ <https://mpath.unep.org/>

115. Foundations for development of a transition framework were laid through a working partnership between MCEU, GRID (for earlier products), WCMC and the University of Portsmouth toward the development in 2021 of a timely and very substantial set of working documents including a vision and pathways for SBE, an analysis of how SBE support the SDGs, a decision support framework for SBE, a prototype transition framework (TF) and draft guidelines for implementation of the TF. From UNEP's perspective, the initial partnership struggled to bring the SBE concepts and transition ideas into practical use and the work was only able to advance when a new partner with policy expertise and practical implementation experience (Howell Marine Consulting) was engaged.

116. UNEP also engaged with the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security, who worked in collaboration with UNEP MCEU and ROAP to develop and deliver training webinars on SBE equity in support of the 2021 ASEAN Policy Declaration on SBE, and to undertake a pilot rapid readiness assessment (RRA) related to implementation of SBE in Vietnam. ANCORS also developed two comprehensive guidance documents on social and equity considerations in SBE, that, while not formally published, have been taken up in its international training programme.

117. Additional RRAs led by the Commonwealth Blue Charter with the University of Portsmouth and Howell Marine Consulting were undertaken in 2022 in Trinidad & Tobago and Antigua & Barbuda, building on the lessons from Vietnam. Further work in this area is being championed by the Commonwealth Blue Action Charter Group led by Antigua and Barbuda. Beyond the MCES project, the RRA approach has been applied in Kenya through the EU Go-Blue project has been taken up in the multi-region the UNEP-FAO SIDS Restoration Flagship project.

118. The work on SBE was innovative and increasingly ambitious in a rapidly evolving context with several other organisations (notably the World Bank and European Commission) producing recent guidance on the topics for the same target audience. Several partners expressed concern about shifting goalposts during their involvement in the project and about timeliness of release in an increasingly crowded space. UNEP's holistic and integrated approach to SBE is attracting interest and has been recognised, for example, in an independent evaluation of WB's blue economy investments¹⁴.

119. The TF document was further developed in collaboration with Howell Marine Consulting building on the practical experience in applying the RRA and was being finalised for publication during the first months of 2025. It is scheduled for launch at the third UN Oceans Conference in June 2025¹⁵.

Pilot Projects

120. Approximately seven percent of the project budget was allocated to pilot projects in critical ecosystems that, while having potential to contribute to change at local level, were primarily justified as demonstration projects to engage and inform partners as a basis for their replication at regional level.

121. A second call for proposals for pilot projects under the UNEP /ICRI small grants programme was launched in 2021 building on an earlier ICRI call in 2017 that supported five projects under the MCES predecessor project. The call for proposals was broad-based, spanning community-based ecosystem restoration; development, management and sustainable financing of locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) or MPAs; community-based blue carbon projects; co-management of marine resources through public and private partnerships; payment for coastal ecosystem services; and mainstreaming of gender in coastal ecosystem management.

¹⁴ World Bank (2024). Making Waves. World Bank support for blue economy 2013-2024.

¹⁵ UNEP (2025). Transitioning to a Sustainable Blue Economy. A Practical Framework.

122. Seven projects were selected and started in 2021 and a further three projects started in 2022 (Output 2, Indicator 6). Two projects were extended to a second phase based on earmarked funding. Project reporting and evaluation interviews and visits reflect that these were strategic interventions that added value in the targeted areas to largely ongoing projects that are dependent on grant-based funding.

123. An additional three pilot interventions in Kenya and in Benin were supported through targeted grants providing specific insights on blue carbon and on gender. The pilot in Vanga followed development in 2020 of a *Community Guide on Protecting Seagrass Through Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES)* led by a team at Edinburgh Napier University (ENU). The project was well received at local level reflecting positive engagement in a blue carbon project under the first round of UNEP/ICRI pilots and involvement of the Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI). Progress was made towards designation and demarcation of an LMMA. While the project highlighted the complexity and relatively high costs of measuring carbon sequestration in seagrass meadow, the initiative will receive credits through the Association for Coastal Ecosystem Services (ACES) based on a 'carbon-plus' PES model.

124. The CORDIO-EA project on empowering women in community based natural resource management supported establishment for four women's groups in Kwale and Kilifi counties. Lessons from the project are included as a case study in the 2020 *Gender Mainstreaming in Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management* produced UNEP with the Gender and Water Alliance (Indicator 7, below).

Gender Mainstreaming

125. UNEP collaborated with the Gender and Water Alliance to develop two volumes on Gender Mainstreaming in the Management of the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems i) a guidance document (published in the Regional Seas Reports and Studies series) and ii) and volume of case studies and lessons learned, that illustrates the mainstreaming principles using ten case studies describing experience in ten countries. A webinar based on the 2020 Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines was organised in 2021 with presentations from five case studies including the CORDIO EA project that received support through the MCES project. The ANCORS reports on Social and Equity Consideration in SBE and embedding equity in SBE Governance also contribute to this milestone. Both related indicators were fully achieved.

Other Output 2 Activities

126. With regard to the other indicators

- Two guides related to coral reef restoration were developed and published in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and ICRI, with one specifically targeting the tourism sector in the Caribbean. (Indicator 5).
- UNEP and partners including SymbioSeas who undertook data analysis, developed and published a report on projections of future coral bleaching. The report includes regional seas summaries and considers management applications related to the different timing of anticipated bleaching. (Indicator 5).
- An internal stocktaking exercise of regional seas tools, methodologies and knowledge was conducted in 2020 towards development of a management and information sharing platform under Output 4. (Indicator 4)
- A new Green Fins Hub was launched for tracking data and reporting from Green Fins partners such as dive centres, as part of a wider package of work designed to maintain and expand the initiative that aims to reduce the environmental impacts of scuba diving, snorkelling, and other marine sports. (Indicator 9).

Output 3: Awareness raised across broad section of stakeholders on importance of marine & coastal ecosystem services

127. Expenditure on Output 3 totalled US\$ 1.23 million, equivalent to 9 percent of the overall project expenditure. Three of the four indicator targets were delivered or partly delivered with campaign messages and product launches reaching large international audiences.

128. The project supported the high-profile *Glowing Glowing Gone* Campaign that ran from 2019 to 2022 and highlighted that it is not too late to take action to protect and restore coral reefs. The campaign delivered in collaboration with The Ocean Agency featured dramatic imagery using three dedicated 'Pantene' colour tones in collaboration with Adobe. Over 1,500 designers and artists joined a global 'Creative Challenge' to use the Glowing colours to highlight ocean warming and leading entries were featured on billboards and wallpapers. The campaign created partnerships with World Surf League, Green Fins and PADI to promote action through the surf and diving communities.

129. The campaign tied up with the 2022 UNEP *Wild for life* campaign on illegal trade in wildlife through the 'Reef Rider' Journey which was amplified through social media influencers. Engagement through likes comments and shares on World Wildlife Day in 2020 reached over 4.2 million.

130. The Output 1 reports were featured in a series of interactive deep dives that focus on how humanity can safeguard and restore underwater habitats. The launch of the Coral Reef Status report generated 592 articles in 480 outlets across 62 countries in 18 languages. An information brochure and PowerPoint presentation on SBE were developed in 2022. There is no evidence of a dedicated communications product related to marine protected areas.

131. Broader communications support for the project is apparent ongoing development of the MFWB web presence including anchor pages for activities supported under this project, timely feature articles and video clips, and more recently in support for the Global Fund for Coral Reefs and for the ICRI and GFCR Coral Reef Breakthrough. The project explored development of regional Seas knowledge management and information sharing platform established but instead revived and relaunched the Regional Seas Webpages in the lead up to the 50th anniversary of the programme in 2024.

132. The work under this project supported wider UNEP communication and engagement with policy processes beyond the scope of this project, with pilot interventions providing valuable grounding of UNEP's messages.

Output 4: Guidance disseminated and technical support provided for the development of Innovative Financing projects

133. Expenditure on output 4 totalled US\$ 0.75 million, equivalent to 5% of the overall project expenditure. Two indicator targets were fully delivered and two partly delivered.

134. The main development under this output was the establishment of the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR) hosted by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the UN-Multi Partner Trust Fund (UN-MPTF). The Fund, now supported by a coalition of over 50 members, comprises a Grant Fund and an Investment Fund, intended to promote market-based solutions in support of coral reef resilience. UNEP was one of three founding UN organisations and has taken on responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation of the GFCR programmes included developing a monitoring and evaluation framework in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

135. Also contributing to the indicator 2 target, the project explored community-based blue carbon payments through pilot project in Kenya and Benin and through development of a community guide for protecting seagrasses through PES. There is potential to further consolidate knowledge and guidance in this area.

136. The project participated in and contributed financially to development by the UNEP Finance Initiative of guidance for financial institutions on Blue Economy (Turning the Tide, Diving Deep and Setting Sail) towards operationalisation of the UNEP FI SBE Principles.

137. The indicator 2 and 3 targets were partially delivered through inclusion sustainable financing and business planning in the MPA toolkit. However, the information as presented is fragmented and falls short of a comprehensive guidance document.

Output 5: Services and guidance made available to strengthen Regional Ocean Governance

138. Output 5 was delivered by the Regional Seas Unit working in collaboration with the RSCAPs and included direct delivery through five UNEP-administered RSCAPs. RSU activities related to Output 2 and Output 3 are reported above. Expenditure on Output 5, including output 5a, totalled US \$ 1.52 million representing 15% of overall project expenditure. Output 5 was formally added to the project in April 2020 (Rev 1) but the project incorporates some activities from 2019¹⁶.

139. The 21st, 22nd and 23rd Annual meetings of the Regional Seas were convened respectively in October 2019, May 2022 and November 2023. Meeting reports are available online and full documentation for of the two post Covid Meetings available on the UNEP events website. Amongst other agenda items, the 2202 annual meeting discussed the possible role of the Regional Sea Programme in the implementation of five UNEA 5.2 Resolutions.

140. Key published deliverables were the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022-2025, a review of Ocean governance at regional level, and the Regional Seas SDG 14 'Outlook' report.

- The Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022-2025 was developed through consultative process led by the University of Wollongong and building on a technical evaluation of progress on implementation of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2017-2020. The 2021 Document, together with a policy brief, was launched at UNEA 5.2 in February 2022.
- The 2023 *Regional Ocean Governance* report developed by WCMC provides an overview and analysis of cooperation between the Regional Seas organizations and regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), regional economic commissions and other intergovernmental bodies. The report supports the engagement of the RSU and individual RSCAPs in processes such as the CBD led Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI).
- A first workshop on preparation of the Regional Seas SDG 14 Outlook report was organised in November 2019 in collaboration with WCMC. The report, Contributions of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans to a Healthy Ocean, was published in 2022. The report summarises different regional sea programmes contributions to all ten SDG 14 targets.

141. Additional policy documents developed in response to the requests of the annual meetings include the *Guide on Sustainable Blue Economy for the Regional Seas* which was developed in 2023 independently of the MCEU Blue Economy Work. The indicator working group finalised description of the 22 indicators including their metadata toward development and operationalisation of the Regional Seas Indicator Monitoring Framework (RSIMF).

142. The supported priority actions identified by five regional seas secretariats covering the Abidjan, Nairobi and Cartagena Conventions, the Mediterranean Action Plan and COBSEA in support of delivery of their individual action plans and in the Regional Seas Strategic Directions. These activities are not reflected in the project logframe but are included in workplans and budgets.

¹⁶ There was no expenditure under this output in 2024

Output 5a, Mechanisms for the regional seas programmes to contribute to achieving biodiversity related objectives and targets are elaborated and proposed by UNEP and the regional seas secretariats and CBD Parties are informed of the proposed roles of regional seas programmes and conventions in the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework.

143. *Output 5a* was incorporated into the MCEs project as a sub-project funded through UNEP's Programme Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU. The project was delivered over the period January 2020 – March 2022. The deliverables described in the three project indicators were achieved, with one activity adapted in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. The principal deliverable was a report on *Regional Seas Biodiversity under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*: an extended and in-depth review of the roles and mandates of RSCAPs related to biodiversity conservation that was formally submitted as an information paper to CBD's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) in February 2021. A synthesis report, *A Role for Regional Seas Programme under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework* was published in 2021.

144. Financial savings (from virtual meetings) were used in 2021 and 2022 to produce three additional technical reports related to harmonised reporting, spatial planning approaches, and application of the ecosystem approach, of which one has been published.

145. Several virtual consultative meetings were organised in the lead up to SBSTTA. The project outputs and continuous engagement with partners including the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity provided a foundation for achievement of the project's direct outcome. The work is further described in Annex VIII.

General Remarks

146. Many of the activities and contributions to outputs differ substantially to those described in ProDoc Rev 2. Several are less ambitious and the articulation amongst project activities was not as strong as originally envisaged. For example, lessons from the pilot projects have not generally fed into development of guidance documents except those related to coral reef restoration and gender. In contrast, the scope of work on SBE expanded significantly from the original envisaged 'approach paper' to describe potential pathways towards environmental and ecosystem-based policies for SBE; a decision that contributed to the work not being completed in the project period. However, the work undertaken by the RSU on SBE remains independent.

147. The package of work on coral reefs across different outputs was comprehensive and included several strategic activities that are not well captured in the project indicators including development of the ICRI Plan of Action for 2020-2024 (Turning the Tide for Coral Reefs), support to ICRI and GCRMN communications, and support to the GCRF-led Coral Reef Breakthrough.

148. The performance rating for outputs is based primarily on the availability of programmed outputs to intended users or beneficiaries. The ratings for availability of Outputs 1, 3, 4, 5 and 5a are satisfactory to highly satisfactory. The rating for Output 2 is moderately satisfactory reflecting that deliverables related to SBE and to a lesser extent MPAs were only partly available by the end of the project.

Rating for Availability of Outputs: Satisfactory

5.4.2 Achievement of Project Outcomes

149. Details on project delivery on outcome indicators are provided in Annex VII.

Outcome 1: Governments, Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, and partners use data and information on marine and coastal ecosystem services to implement actions for more sustainable coastal and marine ecosystem management

150. Outcome 1 addressed use by governments, RSCAPs, and partners of data and information on marine and coastal ecosystem services to implement actions for more sustainable coastal and marine ecosystem management. Outcome achievement is qualified by six indicators and eight milestones. Reporting against the outcome indicators and milestones during project implementation was limited¹⁷.

151. The first two indicators are concerned with practical implementation of ecosystem-based approaches. The MTR noted that the indicators are difficult to quantify and considered ambiguous.

152. Indicator 1 responds to SDG14.2 and counts the number of regions and countries that have adopted ecosystem-based management measures which increase the area of their Exclusive Economic Zones under ecosystem-based management. The ambiguity of this indicator makes it difficult to qualify the reported progress in this area, which describes progress toward adoption of protocols, strategy or actions plans by the parties to the Cartagena, Barcelona and the Abidjan Conventions. Attribution is uncertain.

153. Indicator 2 counts the number of partners and countries that are implementing ecosystem-based approaches/integrated ocean management for management of coastal and/or marine environments. The indicator was reported as achieved through the direct support to the pilot projects implemented by 13 implementing partners in 12 countries (Output 2 Indicator 6). While this support was undoubtedly valuable, many of the interventions are small scale and/or were ongoing. It is not clear whether these interventions are commensurate with the original ambition for the outcome indicator.

154. The next three indicators refer directly to uptake of approaches by the regional seas and capture the impact pathway towards adoption and implementation of the ecosystem approach at the level of the regional seas expressed in the ProDoc (Paragraph 74).

155. Indicator 3 addressed strengthened ocean governance through agreements between RSCAPs and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs), building off the work towards Output 5 Indicator 1. Three RSCAPs reinforced collaboration with RFMOs during the project period.

156. Indicator 4 counts the number of RSCAPs that are implementing priority actions identified in the strategic document Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022-2025 that was published in 2021. The project directly supported activities in five regions.

157. Indicator 5 counts the number of Regional Seas Programmes and countries that adopted sustainable blue economy approaches and gender mainstreaming principles in their strategic plans. The reporting against this milestone reflects UNEP (MCEU) technical and policy support for development of SBE in the ASEAN region which adopted a Blue Economy Framework in 2023. UNEP (MCEU and ROAP) provided technical support to Indonesia during development of its strategy document for Blue Economy and is acknowledged in the Indonesia Blue Economy Roadmap. UNEP (MCEU) provided technical support for the formulation and adoption of the 'G20 Chennai High-Level Principles for a Sustainable and

¹⁷ PIMS reports include a six-monthly narrative account of project activities that contribute to the outcome. There is no reporting against the Outcome 1 indicators or milestones since these are not detailed in PIMS. Progress against indicators is reported in the OPCR prepared in 2024.

Resilient Blue/Ocean-based Economy' in 2023. Policy engagement on Blue Economy continued in the closing months of the project towards the G20 meeting in Brazil. Several of the UNEP RSCAPs have been working independently on SBE.

158. There was no reporting against the milestones towards achievement of Outcome 1 and it is difficult based on available records to determine the extent to which these were attained and whether milestone attainment was timely.

Outcome 2: Increased investments in the sustainable and equitable management of marine and coastal ecosystems

159. Outcome 2 addressed increased investments in the sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems. Reporting against the Outcome 2 indicators and milestones was limited¹⁸.

160. Financing was addressed at outcome level in the 2018 ProDoc by a single indicator that counted the number of projects by partners that are approved by financial institutions incorporating innovative financing or blue economy financing principles for sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystem. The early focus of this work was on proposal development targeting multilateral funds, including through capacity building for Regional Seas Programmes (ProDoc Rev 1). The MTR reports on delivery of a GEF project identification form for a project entitled, fisheries and ecosystem-based management for the blue economy of the Mediterranean. The project was approved for implementation in August 2022¹⁹. RSU contributed to the development of the Environment Component of the EU-supported Kenya Go Blue Project²⁰ that was codeveloped by MCEU and UN Habitat.

161. The splitting of outcomes at Rev 2 and addition of a second indicator, *number of global funds launched to support SDG 14* (with a target of 2), provided a more strategic perspective on global financing. Outcome indicator 2 was partially achieved with the launch in 2020 of the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR). Co-founded by the UNCDF, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNEP, the fund is a blended finance mechanism characterised as an implementation vehicle for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) and SDG 14. UNEP's continuing role in monitoring and evaluation of the GFCR programmes is directly supported by the Fund that will run until 2030. Outcome indicator 1 was fully achieved with 14 programmes approved for funding under the GFCR by mid-2024.

162. The project work on blue carbon has potential to generate longer term contributions to this outcome while project support to the operationalisation of the UNEP FI blue economy finance principles is helping shape investment in coastal and marine environments.

163. The Outcome 2 Milestones were attained or attained late. Three of the milestones relate directly to the outcome indicators, while the fourth was attained through the SBE RRAs undertaken in three countries.

Outcome 1B: The post 2020 Biodiversity Framework reflects the regional seas programmes and conventions roles in achieving the global biodiversity goals and targets

164. Project Outcome 1B is a direct outcome stating that the post 2020 Global Biodiversity framework reflects the roles of regional seas programmes and conventions and other regional marine organisations in achieving the global biodiversity goals and targets. The milestones towards achievement of Outcome 1b were very specific and depended on processes beyond

¹⁸ Outcome 2 was only partially addressed in PIMS with reference to a single milestone (Section 5.7.3). Progress against indicators is described in the OPCR.

¹⁹ <https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/10560>

²⁰ <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/oceans-seas/enabling-sustainable-resilient-and-inclusive-blue-economies/go-blue>

the immediate control of the project. They were partially attained. The three indicators describe activities and deliverables.

165. While Regional Seas are not explicitly mentioned in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the outcome was achieved in general terms through the parallel adoption by the CBD parties in 2020 of Decision [CBD/COP/15/24](#) on *Conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity*. The Decision recognises the importance of marine and coastal biodiversity as one of the key cross-cutting elements of the KM-GBF. It notes the role of relevant global and regional bodies and initiatives, including, the RSCAPs, in the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity, and invites them to support the implementation of the KM-GBF with respect to marine and coastal biodiversity and to contribute to monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the framework.

166. The CBD decision has been reinforced by a 2024 UNEA resolution (6/15) that highlights the role of regional seas programme in implementing the KM-GBF and aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), paving the way for reporting to UNEA on contributions of the RSCAPs.

167. The results under Outcome 1B are illustrative of the broader contribution of the project in reinforcing collaboration amongst the RSCAPs through concerted development set of outputs that set the scene for their playing a strong and better recognised role in ocean governance.

General Comments

168. The project at design was a complementary and well-constructed package of work. However, while there is a clear pathway from outputs and outcomes, not all the project outputs and deliverables can be considered necessary to deliver the outcome, notwithstanding their value to their target audiences and more broadly to the generation of knowledge. The increase in ambition at output level (expressed in indicator targets) was not fully commensurate with the increase in funding and project duration during the second half of the project.

Rating for Achievement of Project Outcomes: Satisfactory

5.4.3 Achievement of Likelihood of Impact

169. The rating for likelihood of impact determined by application of the UNEP evaluation template is *moderately likely* to *likely* based on consideration of the project as a whole. The rating is based on i) whether assumptions and drivers are in place for the transition from outputs to outcomes, from outcomes to intermediate states, and from intermediate state to impact and ii) to what extent the higher-level results (outcomes, intermediate states and impact) have been achieved.

170. Progress towards intermediate outcomes and impacts in the original and reconstructed ToC was premised on the achievement of the two complementary project outcomes, so that mobilization of resources through investment (Outcome 2) would provide for continued actions towards more sustainable coastal and marine ecosystem management (Outcome 1). In practice achievements related to the two outcomes are only partially complementary and the contributions towards Outcome 1 have not been systematically secured through changes to investment and revenue streams leveraged under Outcome 2. Financing through UNEP and other actors thus becomes a critical assumption for continuation of benefits under Outcome 1 (Section 5.8.2). There is a wealth of anecdotal evidence that project deliverables have been taken up by implementation partners and others and that services such as webinars and campaigns have been influential.

171. The RTOC includes a specific assumption for progress from outcomes to intermediate states (Paragraph 74), that the project outcomes would be aligned to RSCAP priorities. At this stage there is only limited evidence of uptake by the RSCAPs of knowledge and tools and

approaches developed by the project with the MCEU and RSU responding to the separate priorities of the Branch and of the Regional Seas.

172. The likelihood of impact through the GFCR and UNEP FI SBE work (Outcome 2) is considered high. The potential for impact related to blue carbon is also promising with this project providing the opportunity to replicate and scale up results from earlier projects including an earlier UNEP/ICRI pilot project in Vanga on community-based carbon trading for mangroves.

Rating for Achievement of Likelihood of Impact: Likely

Rating for Effectiveness: Satisfactory

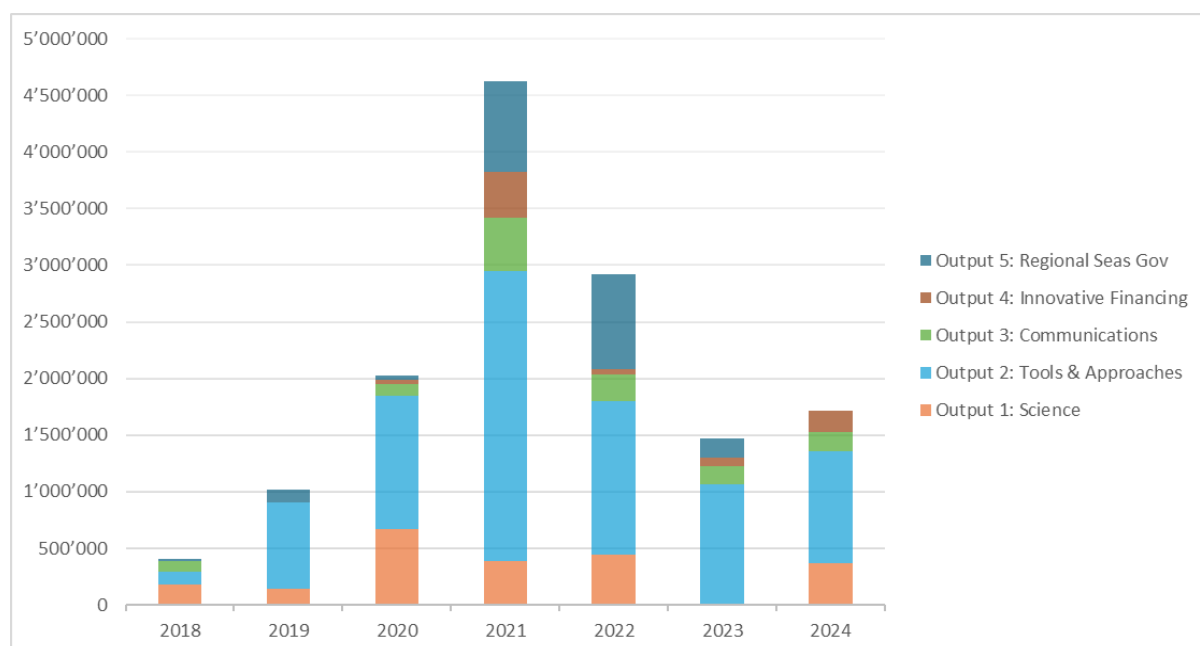
5.5 Financial Management

173. The evaluation of financial management considers i) management adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures, ii) completeness of financial information and iii) communication between financial and project management staff. The financial management table in Annex IX summarises the performance against these criteria using the sub criteria in the table and in the evaluation rating guide (Sections 5.5.2, 5.5.3 and 5.5.4). This section also provides background on disbursement (5.5.1). The question as to whether any aspects of financial management affected project performance is addressed under efficiency (Section Effectiveness).

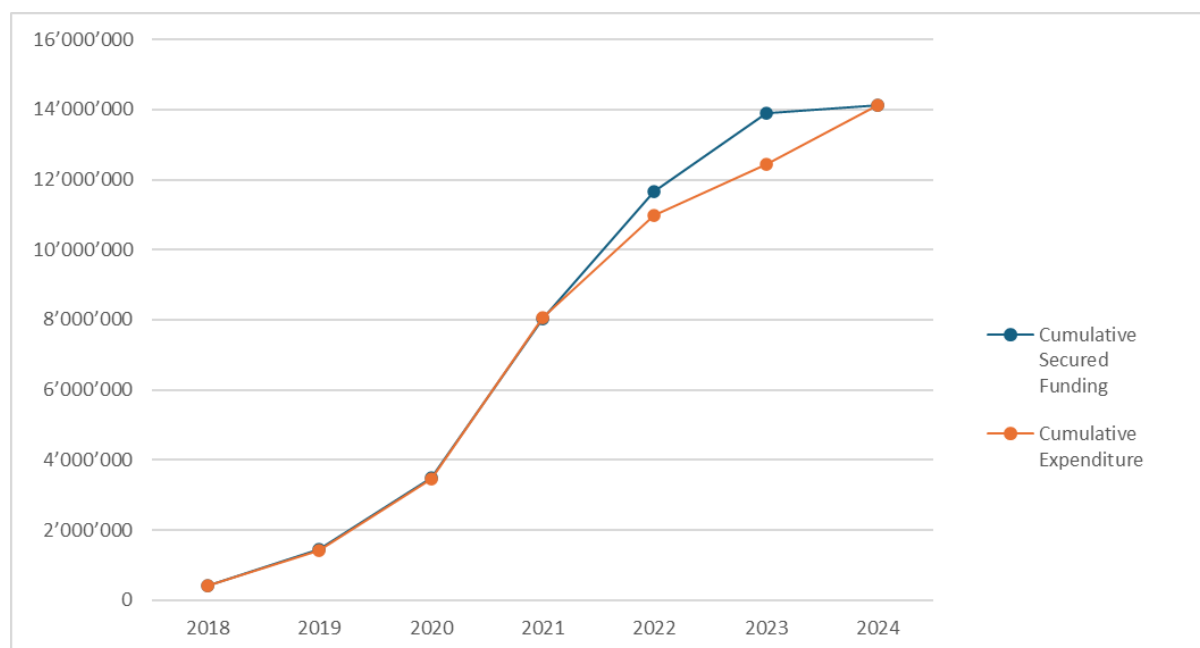
5.5.1 Project Disbursement

174. Figure 4 below details cash expenditure by output and by year while Figure 4 below shows cumulative expenditure and secured cash income by year. Expenditure peaked in 2021, with cumulative cash expenditure by the end of the year reaching 57 percent of the end of project total (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Cash Expenditure by Output and by Year (US \$)



Source: Finance assistant - Overview of expenditure data for the OPCR

Figure 5: Cumulative expenditure and funding over time (US \$).

Source: Expenditure data - Operational Completion Report; Actual Secured Funding by year - Rev 4

175. Figure 5 indicates that annual expenditure closely matched secured funding for the first 4 years of the project. Annual and cumulative expenditure lagged available income in 2022 and 2022. Expenditure to the end of 2021 slightly exceeded available income to the same date.

176. The figure for cumulative cash expenditure at the end of each year falls within the figures for secured funding in the prevailing ProDoc Revision²¹. The 2018, 2019 and 2020 figures for 'actual secured income' are markedly lower than the figures for secured funding provided in the ProDoc and Rev 1. The low expenditure at the start of the project is at least partly explained by the overlap with the predecessor project and the relatively limited ambition of the original project document (in both budget and scope). The original workplan included just twelve activities including support to the first ICRI small grants programme and earlier support to Green Fins were incorporated into the predecessor project²².

177. The situation was reversed at the end of the project with the later than expected approval of the successor project²³. Activities and expenditures originally planned under the successor project were initiated under the MCES project affecting programming and expenditure in the last months of the project. These changes were not included in Revision 4 but have been reported in IPMR.

178. The figure for 'in kind' funding was set out in the March 2022 budget and covers staffing from 2018 to mid-2023. This figure was not adjusted over the life of the project and is considered conservative particularly in view of the further project extensions.

179. The project received extrabudgetary funding from over 20 sources (Table 4) over its six-year duration, with several donors providing multiple and sometimes annual grants. The global data on income and expenditure provides only a partial picture of the rate of

²¹ Expenditure was uneven across activities and components. The evaluation did not look at when expenditure was first authorized on individual grants.

²² Project 321.2 Global Coral Reef Partnership: Towards an Ecosystem Approach to Coral Reef Management was extended in mid-2018 by 18 months to the end of 2019.

²³ The successor project, Sustainable Management and Restoration of Marine, Freshwater and Coastal Ecosystems, was submitted for approval in October 2023 but started only in July 2024.

disbursement. Expenditure in some areas – notably MPA effectiveness and blue economy (Output 2) – was significantly delayed. These issues are further explored under efficiency (Section 5.6).

180. This history of incoming grants and multiple project activities makes it difficult to determine an overall rate of disbursement relative to the project budget or workplan.

5.5.2 Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures

181. Adherence to procedures is concerned with timely disbursement to partners, regular analysis of actual expenditure against budget and workplan, timely submission of regular expenditure reports, expenditure falling within approved limits, and appropriate budget revisions.

182. Tracking of expenditure was a continuous activity. There is evidence of detailed planning (including budget links in workplans) and tracking but not of periodic (6-monthly) expenditure reports being produced. Expenditure at overall project level based on end of year expenditure data fell within the latest approved funding in the ProDoc or revision.

183. A significant minority of partners referred in reporting or interviews to delays in issuance of contracts, in receipt of cash advances and /or in receipt of final payments. These issues were more acute during the COVID-19 pandemic when staff were working from home. Final payments were delayed in the last year of the project.

184. Budget revisions are evidenced in the documentation of new income of the course of the project. The first three project revisions were timely and submitted in line with the need to approve new income. The final project revision was submitted retroactively in view of the later-than-expected approval of the successor project.

Rating for Adherence to UNEP's Financial Policies and Procedures: Satisfactory

5.5.3 Completeness of Financial Information

185. A broad cross section of documents was made available to the evaluations as set out in Annex IX and reflected in the background data in Section 3.5 .

186. The UNEP ProDoc budget summary sets out sources of secured and unsecured cash funding for the project as well as in kind funding. The information on secured funding in earlier budget summary tables (ProDoc, Rev 1 and the MTR) is difficult to follow across ProDoc revisions with sources and amounts varying and some round figure contributions appearing to be estimates. The budget information was stable from Rev 2 and the established baseline remains consistent across subsequent budget summaries and reporting.

187. The budget summary in Rev 2 was supported by a detailed and FMO signed high-level budget showing allocation of income from different donors by year and of in-kind contributions (post costs). The budget accounts for 85% of total project expenditure and to 84% of secured funds at Rev 4. The retroactive budget allocations for 2018, 2019 and 2020 closely match the reported expenditure for those years in the OPCR suggesting that financial tracking at this time was both thorough and up to date. Expenditure projections for 2022 and 2023 were supported by a costed logframe with activities mapped to individual sources of funding.

188. It was not possible to obtain similar high-level budgets for Rev 3 and 4 and there is no evidence they were prepared. However, the budget summary tables include a summary of income by year that points to continued mapping of the additional income. Evidence of detailed budget planning is also apparent in the costed workplans developed in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

189. The project completion report includes a detailed overview of project expenditure by output (illustrated in Figure 4) and is supported data provided for the evaluation on expenditure by year and by sponsored class.

190. Detailed documentation of partners agreements and extensions was provided for work delivered by the MCEU, and partial information was available for work delivered by the RSU. Audits were conducted for each of the four implementing partners that received a PCA (TNC, OCTO, University of Queensland and Reef-World Foundation) in line with UNEP's requirements.

Rating for Completeness of Financial Information: Moderately Satisfactory

5.5.4 Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff

191. Awareness of the financial status of the project was compromised by poor budget information at the start of the project reflecting the overlap between this project and its predecessor (with movement of some activities and associated funds) as well as uncertainties regarding the timing and exact amount of the Sida grant. Documented information is consistent from Rev 2 in March 2022.

192. There is evidence of regular and constructive communication between finance and project management staff related to budget planning and in day-to-day management of grants to UNEP and of agreements and payments from UNEP to implementing partners. Project management staff were aware of restrictions in the use of or timing of grants and were involved in related correspondence with donors to extend agreements and where necessary seek approval of proposed changes at activity level.

Rating for Communication Between Finance and Project Management Staff: Satisfactory

5.5.5 Effects on Project Performance

193. Budgeting and programming were affected in the first years of the project by uncertainty over the level and timing of funding allocations, notably on the Sida grant which is allocated through the UNEP Executive Office.

194. Reports from several implementing partners reflect that there were delays in conclusion of agreements and subsequent transfer of funding. While some organisations were able to prefinance work, others could not in view of administrative constraints or insufficient reserves. The delays had practical repercussions, squeezing the implementation period, disrupting procurement of goods and services, and in some cases delaying work dependent on weather conditions. The small grants projects included detailed activity-based budgets and were affected by increased costs between project approval and commencement (e.g. fuel costs).

Rating for Financial Management: Satisfactory

5.6 Efficiency

195. The efficiency criterion looks at i) project timeliness, ii) at factors contributing to cost effectiveness, and iii) at the way in which the project contributed to minimising UNEP's carbon footprint. External factors affecting performance are considered in Section 5.3

Timeliness

196. The MCEU project scope and scale expanded significantly in the project period and the project logframe and workplans were adapted over time to accommodate new (largely earmarked) funding and to deliver related activities. The project was revised four times extending the implementation period from 32 to 72 months and the secured budget from US\$

3.5 million to US\$ 14.3 million. The repeated extension of the project is not a direct reflection of efficiency in view of the institutional nature of an umbrella project. However, it did influence efficiency in that it provided a framework for the extension of individual project activities and associated grants beyond their original timeframes.

197. The project logframe outputs and indicators were substantially expanded at Rev 1 and restructured with the addition of a new target at Revision 2 in March 2022. The targets for four of the ten outcome indicators and for four of the 27 output indicators were increased in ProDoc revisions 2 and 3. Ten of the output indicators²⁴ and one outcome indicator had been achieved at Rev 2, increasing respectively to 23 and three at Rev 3. Thirty nine of the 45 output milestones were reportedly achieved by the end of 2022 (when reporting in PIMS ended), of which 21 were attained late.

198. Implementation of workplan activities was uneven. The MTR highlighted the need to accelerate the pace of work on best practices (Blue Economy, MPA effectiveness) under Output 2. The MPA effectiveness work under a dedicated grant from the Government of Italy was particularly delayed with the project extended three times and implementation period increasing from two to five years. The delays reflect the later than expected start of the work but also the complexity of the task in the face of different visions as to the scope and presentation of information which contributed to withdrawal of one project partner. The SBE component delivered substantially but had not yet published the transition framework by the end of the project, again reflecting the complexity of this rapid evolving topic.

199. There is limited evidence of timesaving measures except in 2023 when implementing partners were encouraged to complete activities promptly in view of the anticipated project completion at the end the year.

Cost Effectiveness

200. Financial efficiency was enhanced by the project-funded pilot projects (ICRI and others) being implemented by national or local organisations or by national organisations with an established local presence. Existing assets including legal status, qualified local personnel, networks, infrastructure and equipment allowed partners to launch activities quickly with project funds largely used for operations.

201. Incidental savings were made on travel costs because of travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic which led to meetings being postponed or held virtually. There is some evidence that the change in working patterns has endured, with subsequent project meetings and events, including the 22nd Regional Seas meetings, held in virtual or hybrid format. Extension of the EU-supported sub-project was a result of cost savings on meetings and allowed for development of several further outputs. The project benefitted from substantial voluntary contributions of individual experts and networks through sharing data and contribution to technical reports.

202. The project benefitted substantially from individual and institutional knowledge and know how, networks of UNEP and its partners, established delivery models and governance frameworks (e.g. ICRI, GCRMN), and some longstanding partnerships.

203. The UNEP/ICRI grants programme was efficient mechanism for identification of small grants. The transaction costs for the management of the of other small grants (including in one case development of a full UNEP project document) were high but this is justified by the value the projects brought to the overall project as well as to implementing partners and beneficiaries.

²⁴ Targets were increased for two achieved indicators

Carbon Footprint

204. Travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic led to significant if initially unplanned saving on carbon emissions; a pattern that has continued through the ongoing use of a hybrid meeting format. The project provided a dedicated grant to the University of Bremen as meeting host to develop an emissions report and at least partially offset carbon emissions of the 14th and 15th International Coral Reef Symposium (ICRS) meetings.

205. The project contributed to pilot projects on blue carbon in Benin, the Gambia, Kenya and Haiti. The project funded under the predecessor project on community-based carbon trading in Vanga, Kenya has reached maturity with credits now available for local management and for community projects. This paved the way for a follow-on project on seagrasses in the same area and helped engage existing and new partners in scaling projects in the wider Lamu area.

Rating for Efficiency: Moderately Satisfactory

5.7 Monitoring and Reporting

5.7.1 Monitoring Design and Budgeting

206. The ProDoc included a straightforward monitoring plan covering ten indicators with reference to baselines, targets and timing, data sources, frequency and responsibility. The latest version of the monitoring plan in Rev 2 covers the 27 output indicators from the revised logframe and follows on the same format (though without timing for targets).

207. The output indicators take a goods and services approach, describing project deliverables to be produced and disseminated or project activities such as workshops. Overall, they are SMART. They are superficially specific (though leaving some space for interpretation as to what counts), measurable as simple counts, ambitious and realistic within the scope of the project timeframe and budget. They are timebound by the output level milestones in the project. Gender specific indicators are included.

208. While the monitoring plans do not include outcomes, the project outcomes are specified by indicators and milestones in the project logframe. The outcome indicators provide a sense of direction for the project, but the Outcome 1 indicators lack specificity as to what qualifies or counts. The outcome milestones are specific, measurable (as counts) and timebound. They are ambitious but not necessarily achievable and are at least superficially realistic within the project timeframe.

209. There was no explicit budget for monitoring. This was not needed in view of the straightforward nature of monitoring which could be covered by staff time. There is evidence the project anticipated a budget for the mid-term review finalised in 2022 and for a terminal evaluation.

Rating for Monitoring Design and Budgeting: Satisfactory

5.7.2 Monitoring of Project Implementation

210. The indicators in the monitoring plans correspond to those in the prevailing logframe with six monthly data collection, so that monitoring essentially corresponds to reporting in PIMS. In addition, ProDoc Revisions 2,3 and 4 include a complete tabulated summary of progress against outcome and output indicators but without any related narrative explanation.

211. The detailed project workplans developed at each revision – with reference to budget, partners, timing and project indicators - were described by one interviewee as exemplary. They provided a useful - if punctual - overview of the project. Weaknesses included some large lump sum allocations and some open ended or mismatching timelines with the latest running

activities described as ending in December 2022. The activity list was not prescriptive and there is no systematic record of how or why these were modified.

Rating for Monitoring of Project Implementation: Moderately satisfactory

5.7.3 Project Reporting

212. Project progress against logframe indicators and milestones was reported in UNEP's Project Information Management System (PIMS) twice yearly until the end of 2022 with updates covering the 6-month periods to June and December of each year. The reporting framework was revised within the constraints of system capability following the recommendations of the MTR to reformulate and split the original Outcome 1 and to align indicators in the project logframe, monitoring framework and PIMS. The revised structure remains incomplete at outcome level with reporting under Outcome 2 largely referring to Outcome 1b (Regional Seas)²⁵.

213. The reporting in PIMS is uneven. Narrative texts are well developed and refer to highlights such as events and deliverables in the reporting period. The overall account is somewhat fragmented in view of the large number of project activities. There is limited narrative reporting under indicators and milestones and most of the indicator counts are estimates rather than actual. The 'means of verification' fields in PIMS were not completed²⁶. The narrative reporting provided by the Regional Seas for this evaluation is reflected in PIMS but was not broken down into reporting against indicators and milestones.

214. Project reporting was migrated to IPMR following the closure of PIMS and continued to mid-2024. The original output and outcome indicator targets are reported as in IPMR having been fully delivered (green rating) but this is not fully supported by indicator counts nor by any narrative description of developments in 2023. The report describes a small number of ongoing activities related to SBE and regional seas, as well as new activities identified in the December 2023 ProDoc Revision which were expected to continue into the successor project (Pilot work in Benin and the Caribbean, as well as UNEPs support to monitoring and evaluation for the GFCR). It introduces two new activities that have been supported through thematic funding²⁷.

215. The operational project completion report (OPCR) provides a succinct overview of project highlights, challenges and of expenditure including a breakdown by outputs. The reporting against project outcomes, outputs and indicators is coherent and includes links to deliverables. Reporting differs to that in IPMR in that it correctly indicates that not all indicator targets were fully achieved. It was not possible to substantiate all the reported deliverables in the OPCR.

216. Detailed reports were prepared for donors where required including a pre-final report for Italy on MPA effectiveness, annual and final reports the EU on Output 5a using the appropriate templates for projects under the EU programme cooperation agreement, and annual reports to the GFCR. Reports to selected donors who provided support to ICRI from 2017 to 2023 were prepared only in 2023; the reports cover activities under the MCES project and its predecessor reflecting the continuous nature of support to the ICRI Secretariat, meetings and plan of action.

25 The narrative reporting, three indicators and 3 of the four milestones under Outcome 2 describe progress towards Outcome 1b.

26 The evaluation did not have direct to PIMS which did include attachments

27 Preparation of a background paper on marine spatial planning for the G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Group (ECSWG) under Brazil's presidency, and organization of an event on sea level rise (Sik/Swim) at the Barbados hosted SIDS conference in 2024

217. Project activities are also addressed in reporting to the Committee of Permanent Representatives on implementation of the Marine and Coastal Strategy for 2020-2030, including with reference to relevant UNEA resolutions.

Rating for Project Reporting: Moderately Unsatisfactory

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Moderately Satisfactory

5.8 Sustainability

218. The sustainability criterion looks at conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of benefits achieved at the project outcome level. There is some variation in the extent and ways in which benefits generated through the different project workstreams are sustainable. Contributions to knowledge through reference documents and guidelines that have been published or otherwise taken up through partners represent a sustainable legacy of the project that is independent of continued support.

5.8.1 Socio-political Sustainability

219. The project operated at a global and regional scale. Continuation of benefits under the project is dependent on political support at a global scale for a healthy marine and coastal environment. Positive support for this area is reflected in the high project rating for relevance.

220. The MFWB, MCEU and RSU actively and consistently engaged with international policy processes throughout the project period, using information and knowledge generated by the project to connect to audiences and reinforce messaging. Policy developments during the project included the adoption of UNEA resolutions related to marine and coastal ecosystems and to the regional seas, and recognition of the role for regional seas in delivery of the KM-GBF. Political support is also apparent in the adoption of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions for 2022-2025.

221. It was not possible to look individually at the socio-political sustainability at each of the pilot projects. Information collected during the evaluation interview did not identify any political threats at the project level, but project areas remain subject to a wide range of external pressures.

Rating for Socio-political Sustainability: Likely

5.8.2 Financial Sustainability

222. The continuation and expansion of benefits under the project is highly dependent on future funding and financial flows. It is not possible to determine to what extent future funding needs have been secured. There are several areas where continued support is needed to consolidate work and to protect existing investments to allow for continuation and scaling of benefits. Immediate follow is only partly covered by the follow-on MFWB project which started in July 2024.

223. Project work on financing and communications have contributed to a better funding outlook. The project facilitated direct mobilization of funds in support of ecosystem management through the GFCR and through work on blue carbon, both offering strong potential for expansion in scale and or scope. The project also reported some success related to direct fundraising through support to project development in the first half of the project.

224. UNEP's support to the pilot projects was short term with follow up dependent on the continued support of the implementing partner. There is evidence (evaluation visits, interviews, partner websites) of ongoing work through further grant-based funding.

Rating for Financial Sustainability: Moderately Likely

5.8.3 Institutional Sustainability

225. The extent to which continuation of benefits is dependent on continued institutional support varies. There is no evidence of an exit strategy having been developed for the project, but several workstreams have continued under the follow-on project.

226. The immediate benefits related to ecosystems are relatively stable in view of the focus on knowledge products under Output 1. The pilot projects were delivered by established partners with a long-term commitment to the area where they are working. The pilot projects contributed to creation or strengthening of local management structures and capacity.

227. The work on ecosystems thrived in the context of long-term partnerships and working relationships as well as strong institutional memory. Continued support to these partnerships and processes is vulnerable to shifts in institutional priorities. The relationship with GCFR represents a new institutional model where UNEP provides a service function beyond the timeframe of an individual project or PoW cycle.

228. The continuation of benefits through the regional seas coordination is strongly dependent on the continuation of the coordination function as well as wider institutional setting of the individual RSCAPs (including those administered by UNEP. The institutions themselves are stable - as evidenced by the 50th anniversary of the Regional Seas Programme in 2024 and recent creation of a UNEP Regional Seas Branch - while the project has demonstrated the added value of a coordination function.

229. The work on SBE has continued in the successor project with publication of the transition framework anticipated in 2025. Intermediate knowledge products have been taken up by partners. There are clear opportunities to expand efforts and influence in this area and to support roll out of the framework with the RRA approach providing a promising entry point. However, the work has not been institutionalised within UNEP and remains largely dependent on a single staff member.

230. Finally, there was insufficient consideration of long-term institutional support to the development and maintenance of MPArh which requires continued IT support to remain stable, and updated content to stay relevant as a service. This dynamic hosting role was not guaranteed by UNEP or other partners in the project at the time the MCES project was completed²⁸

Rating for Institutional Sustainability: Moderately Likely

Rating for Sustainability (Likelihood): Moderately Likely

5.9 Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

5.9.1 Preparation and Readiness

231. The first draft of the ProDoc was submitted for approval in view of available funds that needed to be utilized by December 2018. The scope of the project - notably inclusion of regional seas - was reduced in response to the initial PRC review. The project undertook an extended inception phase in the leading to the incorporation of the Regional Seas and to the approval to a ProDoc Revision in April 2020. There was no ProDoc annex on the project design process and no inception report as such.

232. The project started promptly on approval of the ProDoc with first disbursements in 2018 and expenditure backdated to the project start date. Staff mobilisation was good, and

²⁸ Additional funding was identified in 2025 to configure and anchor MPArh within UNEP standard web architecture.

project team was able adapt over time to respond to emerging needs. The team continuously engaged with a wide range of stakeholders.

233. There were some differences between project components that are reflected under efficiency. The work on ecosystems built on the predecessor project and was able to start rapidly with experienced staff in place and established partnerships and networks supporting several areas of work. The regional seas work similarly operated in a well-defined institutional context.

234. The SBE work took shape through later consultations (in 2019 and 2020²⁹) and in this sense was less well prepared at project design with the complexity underestimated in the context of an emerging topic. The MPAs work was well prepared in that there was a dedicated project document but again become increasingly complex as the products were defined.

235. The project was dynamic in nature, expanding to accommodate new activities and related funding. Costed workplans were developed through the life of the project with varying levels of resolution. There was no procurement plan as such. Legal agreements with partners were developed on a needs basis, with some delays experienced.

236. Most of the implementing partners in the project were contractually engaged for a specific set of timebound tasks that they were well qualified to deliver. Readiness was compromised in some cases by delays in start dates or receipt of funding; factors that were largely beyond the partners' control.

237. SBE work in the ASEAN region was strongly supported by the ROAP office. However, plans under this project to pursue a similar strategy in two other regions was hindered by the absence of office focal points willing or able to take on this work, suggesting that consultation during the design of these activities was insufficient.³⁰

Rating for Preparation and Readiness: Moderately Satisfactory

5.9.2 Quality of Project Management and Supervision

238. Principal project management tasks included development of project document revisions, workplans, and budget as well as monitoring and reporting and preparation of the operational completion report. While none of the three project managers had full line-management responsibility over the project team, there is clear evidence that these tasks were delivered in a collaborative manner though not always evenly across project components (Section 5.7.3). A mid-term review was organised in 2021 and a management response developed. Beyond these required tasks, there is limited evidence of management of the project as distinct or entire entity, perhaps reflecting that the project was integral to the wider work of the responsible units and branches.

239. The project delivery can be considered in three broad clusters or components – ecosystems, best practices and regional seas – that were planned and implemented as parallel rather than as synergistic workstreams. The work on Output 3 (communications) and Output 4 (finance) built off these topics but related deliverables were distinct. The independence of the RS work was underscored by the move of the RSU to the EIB. This echoes a strategic divergence in the project with the work of the MCEU falling under the UNEP Marine and Coastal Strategy 2020-2030 while the work of the RSU responded to the Regional Seas Strategic Directions papers and to the priorities established at the Regional Seas Annual Meetings.

²⁹ Building on a separate Project Preparation Proposal developed in 2017.

³⁰ The SBE RRA has subsequently been applied in the Kenya EU Go-Blue and in the SIDS Restoration Flagship projects in collaboration with the UNEP Regional Offices for Africa (ROA) and for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) and Nairobi Convention colleagues.

240. Regarding oversight, there is limited evidence that the project steering committee was established or met regularly as envisaged in the ProDoc. The steering committee held one documented meeting to consider the MTR and related ProDoc revision (Rev 2). The absence of a steering group was somewhat compensated by individual staff members developing and maintaining relationships with a wide range of stakeholders related to project delivery as well as engaging with the wider scientific and policy community.

241. Relationships with partners in the project were for the most part constructive. Most of the 40 plus agreements with implementing partners were delivered to at least an acceptable level and in a timely manner, with some well justified extensions. None of the project deliverables were rejected and none of the agreements were cancelled on the UNEP side.

242. Relationships were strained in the MPA effectiveness sub-project where partners became frustrated by shifting goalposts, unsustainable workloads exacerbated by perceived uneven allocation of work, and the failure to resolve editorial differences, as well as issues of intellectual property. This led to the withdrawal of one partner. The late and only partial availability of the final product (MPAth) since mid-2024 has been a source of significant disappointment. Relationships were also somewhat strained by the sense of shifting goalposts in the SBE work with expectations of flexibility sometimes going what partners considered could be reasonably expected in view of their own planning constraints and limited contracts.

243. Work in both these areas would have benefited from a more collaborative approach to planning at the activity or sub-project level as well as tighter supervision and oversight to help bring the products to conclusion.

244. No major issues arose related to management by partners, with most contracted activities delivered as expected or amended. Reporting was timely and, in some cases, very comprehensive. The interviews with and visits to the pilot projects underscored that project staff were committed to outcomes and staff at all levels were empowered to work in an effective manner.

245. The evaluation includes a strategic question, *in which ways did the project adapt to changes in the UNEP delivery model during project implementation?* The new 'Delivery Model' (DM) Policy was developed and formally approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT) in September 2022 and aimed to address a set of recognised management challenges: siloed entrepreneurialism; constrained collaboration; stagnant system capability; lack of shared leadership and impaired accountability³¹.

246. The MCES project was fully defined at Rev 2 in March 2022 and funding was largely programmed before September 2022³². There is no evidence that the project delivery model was adapted after September 2022. Several of issues experienced by the project are illustrative in general terms of the challenges that the new system set out to address though applying these labels or characterisations is perhaps excessive in most cases. The project also includes some good examples of working across barriers.

Rating for Quality of Project Management and Supervision: Moderately Satisfactory

5.9.3 Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation

247. The team's continuous engagement with a wide range of stakeholders in line with the needs and opportunities of individual project activities was crucial to the success of the project.

³¹ Formative evaluation of the New Delivery model (2024) <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/47005>

³² Apart from the Thematic Funds accessed in the final year of the project, funding received after Rev 2 was strongly earmarked.

248. The evaluation includes a strategic question, in what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of differentiated groups been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project?

249. The stakeholder matrix (Section 3.3) categorises stakeholders identified in the project document into two groups: those that the project set out to empower or strengthen, increasing their power over the project outcome with the scope of their needs and interests, and those that it set out to engage in order to increase their interest and influence their behaviour related to the project outcome. The project was effective in engaging both groups of stakeholders across scales from pilot projects to regional and global ocean governance.

250. There is evidence of good overall consideration of stakeholders' needs in the project activities and documentation (e.g. project proposals and reporting): The pilot intervention provided immediate benefits to local actors including employment, capacity development, and increased revenues, with potential for longer term benefits to wider communities through conservation and restoration activities. The MPA effectiveness sub-project organised a far-reaching needs analysis through the OCTO communities of practice while consideration of the needs of different types of users was integral to the design of MPAtH.

251. The project document stressed the importance of engagement of the private sector but lacked specificity as to how this would be achieved; a weakness identified in the MTR. The private sector actors identified in earlier reporting largely acted as service providers, including on a pro bono basis, contributing to quality products. Engagement of the private sector remains challenging but later work in the project highlighted two models for engagement.

- i. The Green Fins work with dive operators in a growing number of countries and TNC-led work with the coral restoration & tourism policy with the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism association demonstrated practical methods and opportunities to engage with small and medium enterprises at scale through identification of common interests. (Output 2).
- ii. The project helped pave the way for systemic influence of private sector activities through its support and contribution to the FI led work on Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Principles (Output 4).

252. Stakeholders were not directly involved in overall project performance monitoring though this was supported by timely reporting by implementation partners.

Rating for Stakeholders Participation and Cooperation: Satisfactory

5.9.4 Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality

253. The project self-rating on the Gender Marker Self-Assessment was 2A indicating that gender was well mainstreamed. This rating is considered appropriate since gender was reflected in the project narrative, logframe and monitoring framework. It was included indirectly in the budget in that the project included dedicated activities associated with project indicators related to gender.

254. Five of the project indicators refer directly to gender, with two addressing gender as the principal topic. (Output 2 indicators 7 & 8). Related deliverables include two reports addressing the role of gender in management of coastal ecosystems, a webinar, and a successful pilot project led and delivered by CORDIO EA in Kenya whose lessons have been widely shared. Gender is addressed as a topic in several of the pilot projects (See also, Section 5.9.5). Gender is addressed in the draft SBE guidance documents, in the ANCORS reports related to an equitable blue economy that have been taken up in international training and in the RRAs. It is addressed to a more limited text in the Output 1 deliverables, falling short of the anticipated 'dedicated chapter' in each report.

255. The other two project indicators refer to gender balance in project activities. It has not been possible to track this systematically for the activities concerned, but the evaluation found strong representation of women project activities at all areas including in leadership roles within the UNEP team, amongst implementing partners, and in local management structures. Women acted as senior authors and editors on several publications and are well represented in related expert groups.

256. Human rights is briefly mentioned in the ProDoc that refers to the rights and responsibilities of coastal resources users; a theme that runs through many of the project activities. The human rights-based approach is explicitly taken up in the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022-2025 and other project deliverables related to ocean governance. The importance of this topic, including at regional level, is underscored in a new Human Rights Council report on the ocean and human rights by which recognises the importance of regional approaches. (Ref [A/HRC/58/59](#)).

Rating for Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality: Highly Satisfactory

5.9.5 Environmental and Social Safeguards

257. A Safeguard Risks Checklist was completed the ProDoc and in Rev 2 in line with UNEP requirements, with neither list identifying any specific risks. While this assessment seems reasonable at the overall project level, there was an ongoing need to assure monitor project implementation for possible safeguard issues as project activities – including pilot projects - were developed and new activities introduced. The only documented effort in this area is the Checklist in Rev 2.

258. The project includes an intermediate outcome, policies governing private and public economic decision-making promote and include safeguards for healthy and productive ecosystems and wellbeing of coastal populations (with the underlined words added in the RToC). Environmental safeguarding is integral to the project and to deliverables supported by the project. The language of safeguarding ecosystems or ecosystem services is widely used in project outputs and best practice in this area is set out to influential effect in the Turning the Tide and Diving Deep criteria under the FI SBE portfolio.

259. The evaluation did not find and evidence of any negative (intended or unintended) environment or social and economic consequences of the project activities. The pilot projects were sensitive to local concerns and two pilot projects changed intervention areas and/or strategy in view of negative feedback from the original target community. In one case this reflected negative community experience with enforcement in an unrelated environmental initiative and in the second owing to the unacceptability of roles and responsibilities assumed by younger women (exposure to risk during fieldwork and/or concerns about loyalty in kinship relations). Both projects were able to respond in an appropriate manner with involvement of older women easing tensions in the second case.

260. One project stakeholder raised general concerns during the evaluation about UNEP support to coral reef restoration, noting that there is increasing investment in this area but that many short-term projects have failed with net negative impacts on reef health. It is beyond the scope and timeframe of this evaluation to determine the success of the project interventions in this area but of note that partners in the project supported activities have had long term engagement in this area. The project supported development of two related guidance documents (Output 2 Indicator 5).

Rating for Environmental and Social Safeguards: Satisfactory

5.9.6 Country Ownership and Driven-ness

261. The country ownership of this global project echoes relevance and is underscored by approval of the UNEP Marine and Coastal Strategy for 2020-2030 and Regional Seas Strategic

Directions 2022-2025 during the project period and the project response to existing and new UNEA resolutions.

262. The project was active in ten countries through pilot projects and a further three countries through the SBE RRAs. The work responds to opportunities and interest in the countries identified by UNEP and relevant partners such as the Commonwealth Secretariat. Green Fins supported the work of its members in over 60 countries with in-country activities such as training delivered in over a dozen countries. The individual pilot projects were justified in the local context as part of the selection procedure and involved national and local partners.

263. The work of the RS component has responded to the priorities identified RSCAPs and by the group as RSCAPs at their annual meeting which are in turn informed by their members. Similarly, work in support of ICRI and its constituents was largely developed in support of the ICRI plan of action and governance structures.

Rating for Country Ownership and Driven-ness: Satisfactory

5.9.7 Communication and Public Awareness

264. The project had a dedicated output on communications described in Section 0**Error! Reference source not found.** that supported dissemination of information on project activities and deliverables, support to communications platforms, and campaigning. The project also provided direct support to partners to upgrade communication platforms and reach to target audiences (notably, ICRI and Green Fins).

265. Communications was magnified through participation by UNEP and by its implementing partners at a wide range of technical and policy events spanning marine and coastal ecosystems, blue economy, marine protected areas and ocean governance, including some project-organised or supported events. Implementing partners have used project materials and knowledge in their further activities and training beyond the immediate scope of the project.

266. Numerous well-developed project technical remain unpublished and unavailable to the public. This includes ~~internal~~ working papers but also several documents that are fully laid out for publication by UNEP or by project partners such as ANCORS. Others – such as the SBE RRAs for the Caribbean and coral reef restoration guidelines – were directly published by partners. At least three pieces of work were adapted for publications in the academic literature with UNEP support duly acknowledged.

267. The introduction of a new UNEP [Publications Policy](#) and [Publications Guidelines](#) in 2022 had the effect of reducing the number of UNEP publications that are produced each year. Several partners made observations around the publications pipeline and more generally intellectual property and there are documented examples of differences in opinion related to attribution and visibility of contributors³³. Partners noted that delays in publication or the non-publication of work limits their ability to cite this work in related deliverables, and that the individual contributors' (sometimes voluntary) work remains invisible. One partner expressed concern that their work was being used in an unattributed manner in presentations. One partner noted the difficulties in engaging UNEP's publication pipeline and called for clear guidance in this area. Questions over intellectual property and publication rights delayed negotiation of one contract.

Rating for Communication and Public Awareness: Satisfactory

Rating for Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues: Satisfactory

³³ These observations have not affected the rating under communications and awareness but are highlighted as the basis for a recommendation in this area.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

268. The objective of the MCES project - to incorporate the values of marine and coastal ecosystem services in the development and implementation of coastal and marine policies and decision-making - was supported by two outcomes and five complementary outputs. The project was established as a core or umbrella project under the MTS for 2018-2021. It was adapted through four ProDoc revisions over its six-year span to accommodate new and largely earmarked funding and related activities within the scope of the overall project objective and outcomes. The project has contributed to this objective at a variety of scales through interventions related to ecosystems, best practices, and regional seas supported by work on communications and sustainable financing.

269. Project successes include a delivery of a well-articulated package of work related to coral reefs, with delivery under related to science (Outputs 1) and best practice (Output 2) feeding into communications campaigns (Output 3) and development of funding frameworks (Output 4). Highlights include the 2020 Status of Coral Reefs of the World and UNEP's contribution to the establishment and operation of the Global Fund for coral reefs that has helped paved the way for investment in coral reef management in 23 countries. Partnerships and networks were mobilised toward several other knowledge products with work on gender and on reef restoration building on pilot experience. Green Fins scaled up and replicated its model for promoting best practice amongst SMEs.

270. Pilot projects have also improved the understanding of challenges and opportunities related to blue carbon projects, providing another pathway toward sustainable financing. There would be clear value in further developing and consolidating work related to community-based PES.

271. A substantial volume of work was undertaken towards development of a Transition Framework for Sustainable Blue Economy, but of the completion of framework was delayed in an increasingly crowded space. The project demonstrated promising entry points for this work through RRAs and through policy engagement the ASEAN region, complementing the investment and sector-based approach of UNEP FI.

272. The RSU demonstrated and strengthened its coordination role through development of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions (RSSD) 2022-2025, by engaging RSCAPs in the 2022 outlook report Contributions of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans to a Healthy Ocean, by agenda setting through the Regional Seas Annual Meeting, through conclusion of the Regional Seas Indicator Monitoring Framework, and through engagement in ocean governance activities including publication of 2023 volume on Regional Ocean Governance. Strategic outcomes include the increased recognition of the role of the Regional Seas in delivery of the KM-GBF and the RSCAP's own interest in exploring continuations to UNEP's resolutions paving the way for strong collaboration in the future.

273. The MFWB, MCEU and RSU actively and consistently engaged with international policy processes throughout the project period, using information and knowledge generated by the project to connect to audiences and reinforce messaging. There is a wealth of anecdotal evidence that project deliverables have been taken up by implementation partners and others and that services such as webinars and campaigns have been influential.

274. The efficiency of delivery was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and by delays in issuance of contracts and disbursements to partners. The outputs related to SBE and MPA effectiveness proved difficult to specify and both areas need consolidation. Cost effectiveness was enhanced by UNEP's being able to leverage established partnerships, networks and processes towards delivery of the project outputs related to ecosystems.

275. Work on the principal project workstreams - marine and coastal ecosystems, blue economy, marine protected areas and ocean governance - proceeded in a largely independent manner. There was only limited articulation between the work of the RSU and the MCEU despite the project strategy to promote the adoption and implementation of the ecosystem approach at the level of the regional seas. This echoes a strategic divergence in the project with the work of the MCEU falling under the UNEP Marine and Coastal Strategy for 2020-2030 while the work of the RSU responded to the Regional Seas Strategic Directions papers and to the priorities established at the Regional Seas Annual Meetings.

276. The evaluation terms of reference include three strategic questions:

- *In which ways did the project adapt to changes in the UNEP delivery model during project implementation?* There is no evidence of specific efforts to adapt to the new model, reflecting that the project approach and programming was largely defined by September 2022 when the new management approach started.
- *What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?* The pandemic heavily disrupted project implementation in 2020 with staff working from home for over a year. Ongoing travel restrictions affected organisation of project meetings and scheduling of international events targeted by the project. Incidental cost savings were effectively reprogrammed.
- *In what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of differentiated groups been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project?* The project successfully engaged a broad cross section of stakeholders during implementation. Implementation partners were attentive to the needs of local stakeholders and beneficiaries. Outputs such as MPAtH have a strong user orientation.

277. Further details on the project ratings against each of the project criteria and sub-criteria are provided in Table 6. The weighted rating for the project corresponds to **Satisfactory**. Lessons and recommendations are developed in Sections 0 and 6.3.

Table 6: Summary of project findings and ratings

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
Strategic Relevance		HS
1. Alignment to UNEP MTS, POW and Strategic Priorities	Clear alignment to MTS and PoW with links updated in successive revisions. Alignment and contribution to UNEP's Marine and Coastal Strategy for 2020-2030, adopted in 2019. Responds to UNEA resolutions.	HS
2. Alignment to UNEP Donor /Partner strategic priorities	Alignment and contribution to Regional Seas Strategic Directions. Where needed, contribution to donor priorities establishing in project document and/or reporting. Partners identified based on common interests.	HS
3. Relevance to global, regional, sub-regional and national environmental priorities	Contribution to SDG 14, particular targets 14.2. 14.5 and 14.a. Regional Sea work responds to priorities set out by the member states. Individual activities responded to country interest and needs.	S
4. Complementarity with existing interventions/ Coherence	The work reflects UNEPs established expertise, mandate and comparative advantage	S
Quality of Project Design	Reflecting the balance of ratings in the quality at entry and review during the evaluation inception phase.	S
Nature of External Context	Project implementation was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Pilot interventions experienced a wide range or largely local or short-lived challenges.	MF
Effectiveness		S
1. Availability of outputs	The ratings for availability of Outputs 1, 3, 4, 5 and 5a are satisfactory to highly satisfactory. The rating for Output 2 is moderately satisfactory	S
2. Achievement of project outcomes	The rating for Outcome 1 was moderately satisfactory, while ratings for Outcome 2 and direct Outcome 1a are satisfactory	S
3. Likelihood of impact	Strategic results related to financing provide strong potential for continuation of selected benefits but with some gaps. Deliverables related to knowledge are foundational in nature.	L
Financial Management		S
1. Adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures	There were no major issues in this area.	S
2. Completeness of project financial information	Only one high level budget was produced. Records from Rev 2 onwards are consistent and detailed.	MS
3. Communication between finance and project management staff	There is evidence of regular and constructive communication between finance and project management staff.	S
Efficiency	Cost effectiveness was enhanced by a foundation of experience, partnerships and networks. More than half of the project milestones were attained late and project experienced significant delays in some areas	MS
Monitoring and Reporting		MS

Criterion	Summary assessment	Rating
1. Monitoring design and budgeting	The ProDoc and Revisions included a straightforward monitoring plan with ten indicators, with reference to baselines, targets and timing, data sources, frequency and responsibility. Several indicators lack specificity.	S
2. Monitoring of project implementation	There is evidence of regular monitoring towards indicators targets despite weaknesses in reporting (below). The workplan provide a comprehensive project overview and was periodically updated.	MS
3. Project reporting	Project reporting against outcome and outputs in PIMS was expanded after the MTR but remained weak. The OPCR reporting on outcomes and outputs is not fully substantiated.	MU
Sustainability		ML
1. Socio-political sustainability	Political support for a healthy marine and coastal environment is reflected in the high project rating for relevance, the face of significant global challenges.	L
2. Financial sustainability	There are many areas where needed continued support is to consolidate work and to protect existing investments.	ML
3. Institutional sustainability	Support to the partnerships and processes critical to project success is vulnerable to shifts in institutional priorities. There was no exit strategy. The Regional Seas structure provides a stable base for continuing benefits.	ML
Factors Affecting Performance		S
1. Preparation and readiness	The project benefitted from an extended inception phase and two ProDoc revisions. Many activities started promptly building on existing experience, networks and partnership, but complexity in some areas was underestimated.	MS
2. Quality of project management and supervision		MS
UNEP/Implementing Agency:	Overall project management was fragmented. There is limited evidence of involvement of the project steering committee. Stronger project supervision may have averted delays and fractured relationships in some activities.	MU
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	No major issues identified except in the above context.	S
3. Stakeholders' participation and cooperation	The project involved a wide range of stakeholders with promising approaches to engage and influence the private sector.	S
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality	The project includes some strong deliverables promoting best practice related to gender. The human rights-based approach is explicitly taken up in the Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022-2025	HS
5. Environmental and social safeguards	There was limited consideration of risks in the ProDoc but no evidence of any negative (intended or unintended) environment or social and economic consequences of the project activities	S
6. Country ownership and driven-ness	The project was designed in the context of country needs and work at national and local level and responded to countries needs and interests.	S
7. Communication and public awareness	The project included a dedicated output and cross cutting support to communications. Many of the project deliverables remain unavailable.	S
Overall Project Performance Rating	<i>The rating has been calculated using in the weightings table for evaluation criteria ratings</i>	S

6.2 Lessons learned

Lesson Learned #1:	Where the project involves development of services such as platforms and hubs, long term maintenance needs including curation and costs should be identified and planned for from the outset in order to secure continuity and assure currency of the service.
Context/comment:	The lesson is based on MPAtH experience but has wider application. In the case of MPAtH there was an interruption in service following the migration platform to a new host (UNEP) with an ongoing need for IT support to assure access. There is a strong need to ensure currency of information in the light of continued development in policy, science and practice as well as an opportunity to update the Platform to take advantage of emerging artificial intelligence tools. (Paragraph 230)
Lesson Learned #2:	UNEP's established partnerships and networks contribute strongly to relevance, readiness, efficient delivery, quality, and uptake and scaling of deliverables.
Context/comment:	The ecosystems work benefitted strongly from established know-how, partnerships and networks that allowed targeted actions to start quickly and be delivered in a cost-effective manner. The project also benefitted from engagement with established partners in delivery of pilots. The lesson is highlighted in view of the emphasis placed on <i>new</i> partnerships under Output 1. (Paragraph 200, 202, 233).
Lesson Learned #3:	There should be a clear definition of/and agreement on roles and responsibilities related to project monitoring and reporting where project responsibilities span more than one branch.
Context/comment:	The lesson reflects the limited reporting in PIMS against project indicators and milestones on the Regional Seas activities (Paragraph 213).

6.3 Recommendations

278. Most of the recommendations are at an institutional or strategic level since the MCES Project was completed in April 2024 and the follow-on project under the MFWB started in May 2024. Four recommendations refer to consolidation of activities undertaken during the project.

279. The first recommendation reflects the continued relevance of the intention of the project to the adoption and implementation of the Ecosystem Approach at the level of the regional seas. While there has been collaboration at a strategic level, there is limited evidence of uptake of knowledge and tools and approaches developed under Outputs 1 and 2 with the work of the MCEU and RSU proceeding largely in parallel (Paragraph 168, 170, 234) in response to the separate priorities of the Branch and of the Regional Seas.

Recommendation #1:	Continue to strengthen collaboration between the MFWB and Regional Seas Branch towards adoption and implementation of an ecosystem approach at regional and national level
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The recommendation responds to the opportunity presented by the recognition by CBD parties and by UNEA of the role of regional seas programme in implementing the KM-GBF provides a firm framework for closer collaboration.
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	Project level
Responsibility:	MFWB & RSB
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Ongoing. The management response should include a structured approach for actions during 2025
Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions: Paragraph 165, 166.	

280. The second recommendation recognises that MCEU has been able to magnify its impact related to coral reefs through effective and often long running partnerships with formal and information partners such as ICRI and the Reef-World Foundation, some of whom have received regular support through UNEP through successive projects.

Recommendation #2:	Undertake a review of formal and informal MCEU partnerships with a view to i) protecting the legacy of earlier or ongoing investments in partner- led activities and ii) developing an exit strategy with consideration of financial sustainability where it is no longer possible to guarantee support.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	To ensure the sustainability and scaling of benefits generated through collaboration with partners in a challenging funding environment where support through UNEP may no longer be guaranteed.
Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	Project Level
Responsibility:	MCEU under oversight of MFWB
Proposed implementation time-frame:	End of 2025
Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions: Paragraph 227	

281. Recommendations 3, 4 and 5 address consolidation of the tools and approaches developed under Output 2. Recommendation 3 is concerned with securing support and guidance towards the operationalisation of UNEP's SBE transition framework to develop a streamlined and effective approach that is coherent with other efforts in an increasingly crowded area (Paragraphs 118 & 229). Recommendation 4 is concerned with consolidating the MPATH platform (Paragraph 230). Recommendation 5 addresses the opportunity to generate wide support for community-based blue carbon projects (Paragraph 171).

Recommendation #3:	Liaise with relevant parties in UNEP to establish an advisory body to guide further development of the organisation wide work on SBE and ensure effective dovetailing of efforts across the organisation and with external actors
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The need to i) consolidate UNEP's approach to SBE and ii) to identify appropriate entry points to influence SBE development at national and regional level, complementing the UNEP FI approach
Priority Level:	Critical
Type of Recommendation	Project Level
Responsibility:	MFWB
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Mid 2025
Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions: Paragraph 118 and 229	

Recommendation #4:	Develop an options paper related to consolidation and future development of MPAtH including consideration for each option of funding and hosting implications
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The need to provide a stable hosting arrangement for the platform and ensure its continued development to remain relevant
Priority Level:	Important
Type of Recommendation	Project Level
Responsibility:	MFWB
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Mid 2025
Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions: Paragraph 230	

Recommendation #5:	Collaborate with relevant partners including KMFRI and ENU to develop an authoritative guide or set of practice notes on community based blue carbon projects
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The recommendation addresses an opportunity rather than a specific challenge to valorise the project (and wider partners' experience) to support scaling up and replication of successful community based blue carbon projects and build confidence in related carbon credits.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	Project Level
Responsibility:	MFWB
Proposed implementation time-frame:	End of 2025
Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions: Paragraph 171	

282. Recommendations 6 and 7 address concerns that emerged during discussion with implementation partners. The aim of the recommendation is to generate a systemic response to pre-empting or resolving issues that arose in a cross section of project activities. The

approaches suggested in the recommendations addressing publications (Paragraph 267) and partnership management (Paragraph 242) are indicative rather than prescriptive.

Recommendation #6:	Develop an information document for external partners that sets out UNEP's policy and practice related to reports and publications including information on the publication pipeline (steps and timelines), intellectual property, acknowledgements, use and citation of pre-publications or grey literature and conditions for release of materials as partners publications.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The recommendation addresses a need to manage partners expectations and provide clarity over the extended publication and the status of unpublished reports.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	UNEP Wide
Responsibility:	MFWD to raise the issue with Communications Division
Proposed implementation time-frame:	End of 2025
Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions: Paragraphs 267	

Recommendation #7:	Initiate a dialogue with relevant parties in UNEP towards developing guidelines or a code of conduct on partnership management including supervision, conflict resolution and appropriate approaches for flexible engagement on emerging topics.
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	The recommendation reflects challenges that arose in management of complex multi-partner projects.
Priority Level:	Opportunity for improvement
Type of Recommendation	Project Level
Responsibility:	MFWD
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Mid 2025
Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions: Paragraphs 242	

Annex I. Response to stakeholder comments

Response to stakeholder comments received but not (fully) accepted by the evaluator(s), where appropriate

Page Ref./ Para. No.	Stakeholder Comment	Evaluator(s) Response	UNEP Evaluation Office Response
Lesson 2	One reviewer noted that the lesson is not correct in all cases and that established partners struggled to deliver relevant technical expertise and innovation in an emerging field. New technical partners were engaged to deliver the SBE Transition Framework.	The lessons focussed on the importance of established partnerships and networks for effective delivery of work on ecosystems and was included because of the focus on new partners in the related output. While new partners clearly brought value to the project this was not the topic of Lesson 2.	The Evaluation Office is satisfied with the response provided by the Evaluation Consultant.

Annex II. Evaluation Framework / Matrix

The strategic questions set out in the evaluation TOR are highlighted in yellow under i) external context, ii) monitoring and reporting and iii) stakeholder participation and cooperation.

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Indicators	Information Source	Data Collection Method
Criterion A: Strategic Relevance			
1. To what extent was the project aligned with the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and UNEP Strategic Priorities (Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC))	Evidence of alignment between the project and the MTS, the POW and the UNEP strategic priorities.	- ProDoc and project planning documents - UNEP MTS, POW - UNEP staff	- Desk review - Interviews
2. To what extent was the project suited to, or responding Donor/Partner Strategic Priorities	Evidence of alignment between the project and Donor Strategic Priorities?	- Project documents prepared for individual donors - Donor agreements to identify earmarking - Donor reporting where applicable	- Desk review - Interviews
3. To what extent was the project aligned to Global, Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities	Evidence of alignment between the project and Global (SDGs, UNEA, MEAs), Regional (Regional Seas, regional economic bodies where involved) and National Environmental Priorities (Pilot interventions)	- Project document and activities reporting - Pilot project proposals	- Desk review - Interviews
4. To what extent was the project complementarity and coherent with Relevant Existing Interventions	Evidence of efforts to ensure complementarity and coherence	- Project document – situation analysis - Documented actions (discussions, adaptation of strategies, collaboration etc)	- Desk review - Interviews
Criterion B. Quality of Project Design	See assessment of the Project Design Quality attached as Annex C		
Criterion C. Nature of External Context	See assessment of the Project Design Quality attached as Annex C		
1. What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?	- Effects of COVID.19 pandemic on project operations - Evidence of adaptation	- Project reporting including donor reporting - Project revisions/extensions - PM, Implementation partners	- Desk review - Interviews
Criterion D. Effectiveness			

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Indicators	Information Source	Data Collection Method
1. <i>Availability of Outputs: was the project successful in producing and making available its outputs and achieving milestones as set out in the ProDoc?</i>	- Number and type of outputs delivered against logframe targets - Timeliness of output delivery against the work plan and milestones - Quality of outputs delivered: level of alignment with plan and with needs - Availability of outputs to external parties	- Project planning documents (annual work plans) - Progress reports and monitoring reports - UNEP staff & partners	- Desk review with Reference to the latest (Rev 4) - Interviews - Field visit
2. <i>Achievement of direct outcomes: Did the outputs achieve its direct outcomes as set out the reconstructed theory of change and as specified in the project logframe</i>	- Number and extent of achievement of milestones toward meeting direct outcome indicators - Evidence of attribution of direct outcomes to the project / or contribution of the project	- Monitoring and reporting documents - UNEP staff & partners	- Desk review - Interviews - Field visit
3. <i>Likelihood of impact: What is the likelihood of intended long-term impacts materializing as a result of the projects outcomes? Did the project generate adverse environmental, social and economic effects?</i>	- Achievement of outcomes - Whether assumptions hold - Progress towards intermediate outcomes - Evidence of drivers	- Achievement of outcomes (Criterion D2) - Progress reporting related to assumptions - Interviews related to intermediate outcomes	- Desk review - Interviews - Field visit - Application of the likelihood of impact template
4. <i>Catalytic role: Has the project has played a catalytic role or promoted scaling up and/or replication</i>	Evidence of institutional changes, policy changes, follow-on financing, uptake of tools and guidance, generation of ownership beyond that anticipated in the outcomes	- Progress reporting - Project team, partners, direct beneficiaries	- Desk review - Interviews
Criterion E. Financial Management			
1. <i>Was the rate of disbursement consistent with the work plan, the length of implementation to date and the outputs delivered?</i>	Budget execution per year, component and output, against planned expenditure and total budget	- Project budgets and expenditure reports - Monitoring and reporting documents - UNEP PM, FMO	- Interviews - Desk review
2. <i>Did the project comply with financial reporting and/or auditing requirements including quality and timeliness of reports?</i>	- Proportion and types of financial reporting and/or auditing materials submitted a) correctly and b) on time - Quality of financial reporting/auditing materials	- Financial reporting - Auditing documents - UNEP PM, FMO	- Interviews - Desk review

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Indicators	Information Source	Data Collection Method
3. Were there any aspects of financial management that affected project performance?	• Timeliness of income • Timeliness of contracting • Timeliness of disbursements • Availability to PM of budget information	• Financial reporting • Project team, FMO, contractors • Recipients of PCAs / SSFAs	• Interviews • Desk review • Field visit
Criterion F. Efficiency			
1. To what extent were outputs achieved in a cost-effective and timely manner	• Timing and sequence of outputs against work plan • Level of alignment between planned and incurred implementation costs and nature of divergences • Cost-effectiveness of human resources arrangements	• Project planning (workplan, output delivery dates, milestones) and reporting • Financial reporting and budget(s) • Staffing arrangements and recruitment • Project team including supervisor(s)	• Interviews • Desk review
2. To what extent did the project build on pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects?	• Qualitative review of project context and existing foundations (e.g. institutions, networks and partnerships, knowledge)	• Project document and revisions • Partners	• Desk Review • Partner interviews
3. What have been the main reasons for any project delays or extensions? To what extent did the delays have an impact on the delivery of project outcomes?	• Delivery times for outputs milestones • Evidence of impacts - qualitative / descriptive •	• Review of delivery against milestones and original deadlines • Review of documentation related to project extensions • Project team and partners	• Desk Review • Interviews • Field visit
4. Were any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results?	• Evidence of measures - qualitative / descriptive	• Project reporting • Project team • Project partners	• Interviews • Desk review • Field visit
5. In which ways did the project adapt to changes in the UNEP delivery model during project implementation	• Evidence of adaptive measures - qualitative / descriptive	• ProDoc revisions from Jan 2023 • Project reporting • Project team, subprogramme coordinator, regional office (e.g. ROA)	• Desk Review • Interviews
G. Monitoring and Reporting			

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Indicators	Information Source	Data Collection Method
1. <i>Monitoring design and implementation:</i> Was the monitoring plan well-conceived, and sufficient to monitor results and track progress toward achieving project outputs and direct outcomes?	• Use of SMART indicators • Existence and quality of: • Baseline • Performance measurement framework/ logframe • Monitoring plan • Definition of roles & responsibilities • Budget and timeframe/ work plan	• ProDoc revision logframe • ProDoc revision monitoring plan • Reporting structure in PIMS/ Integrated Planning, Management, and Reporting (IPMR)	• Desk review • Interviews
2. Monitoring Implementation: Was the monitoring plan operational and effective in tracking results and progress towards objectives?	• Availability of monitoring results • Frequency of updates • Scope of monitoring compared to logframe / workplan	• Review of monitoring practice • Review of oversight arrangements • Detail and appropriateness of available data	• Desk review • Interviews • Minutes of PSC
3. Project reporting: To what extent have UN Environment and donor reporting requirements been fulfilled	• Availability of reporting • Availability of donor reports where required • Adequacy of reporting	• UNEP IPMR (dated from EM) • Earlier data on UNEP PIMS if not migrated	
Criterion H. Sustainability (Socio-political, Financial resources, Institutional framework)			
1. Did the project design and implement any measures to promote sustainability and mitigate risks to sustainability?	• Identification of measures put in place at global, regional and local levels during the project timeframe (Qualitative) • Verification and review of an exit strategy	• Analysis of project strategy and measures including i) cross reference to strategic outputs; ii) exit strategy and ii) follow on projects by UNEP and by implementation partners • Project team and partners • Subprogramme coordinator	• Desk review • Interviews •
2. What factors in place at the close of the project have enabled or hindered the persistence of achieved direct outcomes?		• Brief situation analysis based on interests and concerns of partners	• Interviews
H. Factors Affecting Project Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues			
i. Preparation and Readiness			

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Indicators	Information Source	Data Collection Method
1. Were appropriate measures were taken to address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation?	- Number, appropriateness and timeliness of adjustments made - Extent of stakeholder engagement during the project inception phase	- Documentation on project design - Project stakeholders / key players in project delivery	- Desk review - Interviews
ii. Quality of Project Management and Supervision			
1. Were management, supervision and governance arrangements sufficient to keep the project on track to and adapt to emerging issues and opportunities?	- Evidence of overall supervision arrangements - Evidence of day-to-day supervision - Evidence of adaptive management	- Review of oversight and support modalities - Minutes of PSC meeting	- Desk review - Interviews
2. Was support and guidance to implementing partners appropriate and timely?	- Evidence of supervision arrangements in agreements with implementing partners - Evidence of day-to-day engagement with partners	- Review of oversight and support modalities - Perception and satisfaction of project partners / contractors	- Desk review - Interviews - Field visits
iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation			
1. Were the stakeholder communication and consultation mechanisms effective and inclusive of differentiated groups?	- Number and type of stakeholder engagement activities at each stage of the project - Evidence of participation from a stakeholder groups, including differentiated groups - Proportion of male/female implementing partners, and participants of workshops, trainings or knowledge exchange - Evidence that issues and feedback provided by stakeholders were taken into consideration in project implementation	- Report on project design process - Project reporting - Activity reports - Project team, Partners, stakeholders in pilot projects	- Desk review - Interviews - Field visits
2. To what extent were effective partnerships arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders	Number and types of partnerships developed between project and local bodies/organisations	- Project reporting - Activity reports - Project team, Partners, stakeholders in pilot projects	- Desk review - Interviews - Field visits

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Indicators	Information Source	Data Collection Method
	Extent and quality of interaction/ exchange between project implementers and local partners		
3. In what ways, and to what extent, have the needs and interests of differentiated groups been considered in the implementation and monitoring of the project?	- Evidence of consideration of differentiated groups in implementation: engagement in activities, consideration in outputs - Evidence of consideration of differentiated groups in monitoring	- Review of activity reports - Review of outputs - Monitoring plan - Monitoring and reporting - Reporting by partners	- Desk review - Interviews - Field visit
iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equality			
1. To what extent did the project apply the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (DRIP) and adhere to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender equality and the Environment?	Level of alignment between project design and implementation and the UN HRBA, the UN DRIP and UNEP Policy and Strategy for gender Equality and the Environment	- ProDoc and Revisions - Monitoring data on PRMS? - Pilot project proposals and reporting - Project outputs (guidelines)	- Desk review - Interviews
2. To what extent did the project design, implementation and monitoring take into account gender inequalities and differentiation?	- Number and quality of measures in project design, implementation and monitoring, respectively, that address: - Possible gender inequalities in access to and control over natural resources / ecosystem services. - Specific inequalities in access to and control over natural resources; - The role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes, and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation	- ProDoc and Revisions - Monitoring data on PRMS? - Pilot project proposals and reporting - Project outputs (guidelines)	- Desk review - Interviews - Field Visits
iv. Environmental and Social Safeguards			
1. Did the project meet UNEP requirements <i>review</i> risk ratings on a regular basis; <i>monitor</i> project implementation for possible safeguard	- Evidence of review of risk ratings - Evidence of consideration in pilot projects	- ProDoc Revisions - Monitoring data on PRMS? - Pilot project proposals and reporting	- Desk review - Interviews

Main Evaluation Criteria / Questions	Indicators	Information Source	Data Collection Method
issues; <i>and</i> (where relevant) to safeguard issues?			
v. Country Ownership and Driven-ness			
1. To what extent and how well did the project engage with government / public sector agencies in the project.		<i>Cross reference to i) relevance and ii) reporting on project Outcome 1</i>	
vi. Communication and Public Awareness			
1. Did the project effectively communicate lessons and experience with project partners and interested groups?	- Number and quality of public awareness activities undertaken - Changes in awareness of target audiences as a result of outreach/ communication by project (if feasible).	- Communications strategy if available - Communications output - Data on access to / reach of communications outputs - Cross reference to reporting on project Output 3	- Desk review - Interviews
2. Did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?	- Number and scope of outreach activities - Number and type of public reached	As above	- Desk review - Interviews

Annex III. People Consulted during the Evaluation

Organisation	Role in the Project	Gender
Project Team (12)		
UNEP	Project Manager 2022 to 2024	F
	Project Supervisor 2018 - 2019	M
	Project Manager 2022	
	Project Manager 2018-2022	M
	Project Officer Ecosystems 2018 -2022 & 2024	
	Financial Management Officer	M
	Project Officer – SBE, MPAs	M
	Project Officer – Regional Seas	F
	Project Officer Communications	F
	Associate expert (JPO)	F
	UNV then Project Officer	M
	UNV then NOB-Kenya	F
	UNV then Finance Assistant	M
Independent	Long Term Consultant - MPAs	F
UNEP Other (3)		
UNEP	Ecosystem Division - Project Design Support	F
	Partner UNEP FI (Output 4)	F
	Partner & Beneficiary – Nairobi Convention Secretariat	M
Pilot Projects (9)		
KMFRI	Vanga Pilot Project	F
CORDIO-EA	Mama karanga women's groups	F
FFI Kenya	Lamu Pilot Project	F
Edinburgh Napier University	Vanga Seagrasses Pilot Project	
	Blue Carbon	M
Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association	Belize Pilot Project	F
Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)	Fiji Pilot Project	F
The Nature Conservancy	Reef Restoration Guidelines	F
	Haiti Pilot Project	M
	Haiti Pilot Project (Finance)	M
Other Partners (12)		
WCMC	Technical Partner Outputs 1-2-5a	M
GRID Arendal	Technical Partner Output 1	M
	Technical Partner Output 2 - SBE	M
ICRI	Technical Partner Outputs 1 & 2	M
OCTO	Technical Partner Output 2 - MPAs	M
Sound Seas	Technical Partner Output 2 - MPAs	F
University of Girona	Technical Partner Output 2 - MPAs	M
University of Portsmouth	Technical Partner Output 2 - SBE	M
Howell Consulting (HMC)	Technical Partner Output 2 - SBE	M
HMC	Technical Partner Output 2 - SBE	F
Wollongong University - ANCORS	Technical Partner Output 2 - SBE	F
The World Reef Foundation	Technical Partner Outputs 2 & 3	
	Green Fins, Communications, ICRI Support	F
Donors (2)		
Government of Monaco	Donor Outputs 1 & 2	M
United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)	Partner & Donor, GFCR Secretariat (Output 1 & 4)	M

Six people (four UNEP, two External) provided feedback by email.

Note: For confidentiality of the informants, their names and contact addresses are not presented in the table.

Summary of the Respondents and Field Visits

Column C responses do not include twelve people who responded with referrals and / or were not available in the data collection period. Four of these provided information and feedback by email

Target Respondents - Individuals			A.# people involved in project Total (M/F)	B.# people contacted Total (M/F)	Sample size (% B/A) ³⁴	C. # people responded Total (M/F)	Response rate (% C/B) ³⁵
Project Team	Project Team (those with management responsibilities e.g. Project Management Unit)	Implementing agency	Unknown	21		15	
		Executing agency/ies		See Partners Below			
Beneficiaries	Direct Beneficiaries: (e.g. duty bearers, gatekeepers, training participants, etc.)		Unknown	Pilot Projects Visits: Approx 30 persons		Pilot Projects Visits: Approx 30 persons	
	Indirect Beneficiaries: (e.g. household members, civil society representatives, group members, etc.)						
Target Respondents - Entities			A. # Entities Involved in Project	B.# entities contacted	Sample size (% B/A) ³⁶	C. # entities responded	Response rate (% C/B) ³⁷
Partners	Project implementing/ executing partners (receiving project funds)		23 SSFAs / PCAs available	30		21	
	Project collaborating/ contributing partners ³⁸ (not receiving project fund)		Unknown	6		2	
Field Visits	Region / country / locality ³⁹		A. # of Countries Involved	B.# Countries visited	Sample Size (%B/A) ⁴⁰		
	Pilot Projects						
	Africa		4	1	25%		
	Asia and the Pacific		3	0			
	Latin America and the Caribbean		5	0			

³⁴ Calculated as the percentage of people who were contacted out of the total number of people involved in the project.

³⁵ Calculated as the percentage of people who responded out of the total number of people contacted.

³⁶ Calculated as the percentage of entities who were contacted out of the total number of entities involved in the project.

³⁷ Calculated as the percentage of entities who responded out of the total number of entities contacted.

³⁸ Contributing partners may be providing resources as either cash or in-kind inputs (e.g. staff time, office space etc.).

³⁹ In case of a global project, the unit of analysis is 'region'. In case of a regional or multi-country project, the unit of analysis is 'country'. In case of a single country project, the unit of analysis is 'locality', which could refer to a city, town, village, etc.

⁴⁰ Calculated as the percentage of project sites in each region, country or locality that were visited out of the total number of project sites in those regions, countries, or localities.

Annex IV. Key documents consulted

Project planning and reporting documents

- UNEP Project Document: “Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services (A3)”, August 2018
- Project Review Committee report for project 316.1 “Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services”, June 2018 with Project Manager’s responses
- UNEP Project Document: “Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services (A3)”, Revision 1, April 2020
- UNEP Project Document: “Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services (A3)”, Revision 2, March 2022
- UNEP Project Document: “Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services (A3)”, Revision 3, July 2023
- UNEP Project Document: “Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services (A3)”, Revision 4, April 2024
- Project Budget of March 2022 (Rev 2)
- Project Workplan of March 2022 (Rev 2)
- Decision Support for Realising the opportunities of a Sustainable Blue Economy: Pathways to delivering climate resilient sustainable development - Proposed outline. (Project Outline and workplan covering 2020 & 2021)
- Rapporteurs report of the March 2022 Meetings of the Project Steering Committee
- Operational Project Closure Report for Project 316.1 Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services, dated 13/08/2024 (last signature)
- Extract from PIMS showing project reporting (six monthly) in PIMS to Dec 2022
- Extract from IPMR showing project reporting from 2023

Outgoing Partner Agreements

- Small scale funding agreements (SSFAs) and PCAs with external organisations (44 agreements covering 25 organisations)
- Technical and financial reporting on SSFAs and PCAs, including technical annexes and deliverables
- Audit records for PCAs

Donor Agreements

- ProDoc: Effective MPA Development and Implementation for Achievement of SDG 14.5 (Revision No 2 with tracked changes)
- Progress Report, Effective MPA Development & Implementation for Achievement of SDG 14.5 implemented by UNEP with financial support from AICS [Italy], November 2022
- ProDoc: Regional Seas Biodiversity under the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework UNEP DG ENV GPGC PCA (Revision 1 with tracked changes)

- Final report: Regional Seas Biodiversity under the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework, Dec 2021
- ProDoc: Implementing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Global Fund for Coral Reefs - UNEP Project Document 2023-2025
- UNEP Report on Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy for the GFCR 2021.
- UNEP Annual Narrative Reports on Implementing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, 2022 & 2023
- Project Concept: Supporting the certification and implementation of blue carbon credits in Bouche du Roy, Benin
- Donor report on the Framework Agreement on Strategic Cooperation 2017/2020 with the Principauté de Monaco, August 2023
- Donor report to the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation covering funding received in 2017 and 2020, undated
- Donor report on France funding that contributed to UNEA Resolution 2/12. August 2023
- Donor report to Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, August 2023
- Selected contracts and agreements related to the grants listed in Table 4
- Selected financial reports related to the grants listed in Table 4.

Earlier evaluations

- Mid Term Review of the Project 316.1: Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services (PIMS ID: 02019). July 2021.

Predecessor and Successor Projects

- Global Coral Reef Partnership: Towards an Ecosystem Approach to Coral Reef Management. Project Operational Completion Report Reporting period: January 2015–December 2019.
- ProDoc: Sustainable Management, Conservation and Restoration of Freshwater, Coastal and Marine Ecosystems and Resources, May 2025

Outputs and Deliverables

Project output 1: Science

- Status of Coral Reefs of the World 2020: <https://www.unep.org/resources/status-coral-reefs-world-2020>
- Decades of Mangrove forest change: What does it mean for nature, people and the climate: <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/decades-mangrove-forest-change-what-does-it-mean-nature-people-and-climate>
- Out of the Blue: The Value of Seagrasses to the Environment and to people. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/out-bluevalue-seagrasses-environment-and-people>

- Into the Blue: Securing a Sustainable Future for Kelp Forests: <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/blue-securing-sustainable-future-kelp-forests>
- Seaweed Farming: Assessment on the Potential of Sustainable Upscaling for Climate, Communities and the Planet: <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/seaweed-farming-assessment-sustainable-upscaling>

Project output 2: Best Practices

Ecosystems:

- ICRI Plan of Action for 2021-2024, Turning the Tide for Coral Reefs <https://icriforum.org/documents/plan-of-action-2021-2024/>
- Coral Reef Restoration: A guide to coral restoration method. 2020. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/coral-reef-restoration-guide-coral-restoration-method>
- A Guide to Coral Reef Restoration for the Tourism Sector: Partnering with Caribbean Tourism Leaders to Accelerate Coral Restoration. 2020 <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/coral-reef-restoration-guidelines-tourism-sector>
- Protecting Seagrass Through Payments for Ecosystem Services: A Community Guide. 2020 <https://www.unep.org/resources/toolkits-manuals-and-guides/protecting-seagrass-through-payments-ecosystem-services>
- Opportunities and Challenges for Community-Based Seagrass Conservation. 2020 <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/opportunities-and-challenges-community-based-seagrass-conservation>

Marine Protected Areas

- MPATH Marine Solutions Hub <https://mpath.unep.org/> (Last visited 6 March 2025)

Sustainable Blue Economy

- Website: <https://www.unep.org/topics/ocean-seas-and-coasts/ecosystem-based-approaches/sustainable-blue-economy>
- Brochure: How to deliver a sustainable blue economy? UNEP, University of Portsmouth, WCMC, TEEB, UNEP Finance Initiative (*Undated brochure c2018*)
- TEEB for Coasts Report: A proposal for an inclusive and comprehensive assessment and evaluation framework to improve decision making and achieve sustainability and equity in coastal areas. 2021. <https://teebweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/TEEB-for-Coasts-Report-01JUN21.pdf>
- Sustainable Blue Economy Decision Support Framework: Needs Assessment Summary. (*Undated*). UNEP, University of Portsmouth, WCMC. Working Paper.
- Accelerating the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the implementation of a Sustainable Blue Economy. Final Draft. April 2021. UNEP, University of Portsmouth, WCMC. Working Paper.
- Vision and Pathways for a Sustainable Blue Economy. Final Draft. April 2021. UNEP, University of Portsmouth, WCMC. Working Paper.

- Sustainable Blue Economy Transition Framework. Prototype. May 2021. UNEP, University of Portsmouth, WCMC, GRID. Working Paper.
- Sustainable Blue Economy Transition Framework: Implementation Guide. Prototype. June 2021. UNEP, University of Portsmouth, WCMC, GRID. Working Paper.
- An ASEAN approach to the Blue Economy. Discussion paper. ANCORS, University of Wollongong. October 2021. Working Paper.
- Croft F., Breakey H., Voyer, M., Cisneros-Montemayor A., Issifu I., Benzaken D., Bodwitch H., Campbell B., Clark T., Fusco L., Garcia Lozana A, Hirsch S., Ota Y. Pauwelussen A, Popuponneau A., Polagye B., Rambourg C., Schutter M., Goodman C. (2023) Social and Equity Considerations in the Sustainable Blue Economy: A Background Report. UNEP. Working Paper.
- Croft F., Breakey H., Voyer M., Moyle C., Solitei M., Cisneros-Montemayor A., Issifu I., Benzaken D., Bodwitch H., Campbell B., Fusco L., Ota Y., Pauwelussen A., Schutter M., Pouponnea A., Barclay K., Van Leeuwen J. (2023). Developing an equitable Blue Economy: a guide to embedding equity in governance frameworks. UNEP. Working Paper.
- Rapid Readiness Assessment for the Transition to a Sustainable Blue Economy. Pilot project in Antigua and Barbuda. March 2023. The Commonwealth Blue Charter, Howell Marine Consulting, UNEP. Published by Commonwealth Blue Charter.
<https://thecommonwealth.org/publications/rapid-readiness-assessment-transition-sustainable-blue-economy-pilot-project-antigua>
- Rapid Readiness Assessment for the Transition to a Sustainable Blue Economy. Pilot project in Trinidad and Tobago. March 2023. The Commonwealth Blue Charter, Howell Marine Consulting, UNEP. Published by Commonwealth Blue Charter.
<https://thecommonwealth.org/publications/rapid-readiness-assessment-transition-sustainable-blue-economy-pilot-project-trinidad>

Project output 3: Communications and Awareness

- 2019 Glowing Glowing Gone Campaign. <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/unep-launches-glowing-glowing-gone-campaign-loss-coral-due-climate-change>
- 2020 Wild for life Campaign - 'Reef Rider' Journey. <https://wildfor.life/journeys>
- 2023: Interactive internet feature on Saving the Worlds Vital Ecosystems covering kelp forests, mangroves, seagrasses and coral reefs with reference to Output 1 deliverables <https://www.unep.org/interactives/why-blue-ecosystems-matter/>
- Regional Seas webpage - <https://www.unep.org/topics/ocean-seas-and-coasts/regional-seas-programme>
- MPAth Launch Event: Empowering Marine Conservation <https://www.unep.org/events/unep-event/mpath-launch-event-empowering-marine-conservation>

Project output 4: Funding Frameworks

- UNEP FI: 2021 Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Principles: Diving Deep - addressing coastal resilience (infrastructure and nature-based solutions), and waste prevention and management <https://www.unepfi.org/publications/harmful-marineextractives-deep-sea-mining/>
- UNEP FI: 2022 Turning the Tide: How to Finance a Sustainable Ocean Recovery - addressing seafood, shipping, ports, coastal and marine tourism and marine renewable energy <https://www.unepfi.org/publications/turning-the-tide/>
- UNEP FI: 2024 Setting Sail: Target setting in the Sustainable Blue Economy – providing guidance on target setting and on implementing the above guides <https://www.unepfi.org/publications/setting-sail-target-setting-in-the-sustainable-blue-economy/>
- UNEP & WCS Guidance on Global Fund for Coral Reefs: Monitoring and Evaluation as input to leading to GFCR Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit- November 2024 [8b9592a34d5b7e0b73bf3fb0ce7f4658e8f23734.pdf](https://www.unepfi.org/publications/global-fund-for-coral-reefs-monitoring-and-evaluation-toolkit-november-2024-8b9592a34d5b7e0b73bf3fb0ce7f4658e8f23734.pdf)

Project Output 5: Regional Seas

- UNEP 2021. Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022-2025. Guiding the Regional Seas towards global ocean-related goals for the period 2022-2025. May 2021
- Leone, G. 2023. Strategic Guide on Sustainable Blue Economy for the Regional Seas Programme. Report to UNEP, August 2023. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/43814/Guide_on_sustainable_blue_economy_RegionalSeas.pdf
- United Nations Environment Programme (2023). Regional Ocean Governance: A review of existing formalised cooperation between Regional Seas Organisations and other intergovernmental organisations. Nairobi. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/42656/Regional_ocean_governance.pdf

Output 5a: Regional Seas Biodiversity

- UNEP (SeaScape Consultants). 2022 Regional Seas Biodiversity under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
- UNEP (SeaScape Consultants) 2022. A Role for Regional Seas Programme under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity. <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/35102> .
- UNEP 2023. Harmonized the Regional Seas Programmes National Reporting and the Convention on Biological Diversity National Reporting (NBSAP) (2021). Released as a UNEP publication in 2023.
- UNEP (WCMC) 2022. Ecosystem Approach Towards a practical Application across Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans with practical examples from the different regional seas. *Unpublished*

- UNEP (WCMC) 2022. Applying spatial planning approaches to support achievement of selected goals and targets of the draft post-2020 global biodiversity framework Conceptual Guidelines.⁴¹.

Reference documents

- UNEP Marine and Coastal Strategy 2020-2030
- UNEA Resolutions
- Regional Seas Annual Meetings
- CBD & SBBSTA Meetings

Selected partner websites

- GFCR Action Reports 2021-2023 <https://globalfundcoralreefs.org/>
- Coral Reef Breakthrough <https://globalfundcoralreefs.org/news/breakthrough/>
- ICRI <https://icriforum.org/>
- The Reef-World Foundation <https://reef-world.org/> and <https://reef-world.org/green-fins>

Published Articles

- Ferreira et al. 2022. A role for UNEP's Regional Seas Programme under the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Marine Policy Volume 136, February 2022. (Seascope Consultants)
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308597X21005418>
- Wuwung, L., Croft, F., Benzaken, D., Azmi, K., Goodman, C., Rambourg, C., & Voyer, M. (2022). Global blue economy governance – A methodological approach to investigating blue economy implementation. Frontiers in Marine Science. (ANCORS)
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2022.1043881/full>
- Croft et al. 2024. Rethinking blue economy governance – A blue economy equity model as an approach to operationalise equity. Environmental Science and Policy 155, May 2024. (ANCORS)
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1462901124000443>

⁴¹ Published in 2024 as United Nations Environment Programme (2024). Planning action on nature: Using spatial planning approaches to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework - Conceptual Guidelines. Nairobi. <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/44914>.

Annex V. Evaluation Itinerary

Date	Location	
25 November 2024	Kwale	• CORDIO East Africa - Empowering women in community based natural resource management • Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) - Managing mangroves for climate change regulation and other ecosystem services in Kenya
27 November 2024	Lamu	• Fauna and Flora International (FFI), Kenya - Healthy seagrass ecosystems for sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity in Lamu County, Kenya • Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) - Ocean Climate Solution: Promoting use of Blue Carbon Ecosystems in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in Lamu
28 November 2024	Nairobi	• Meetings with UNEP Project Team and Evaluation Office
29 November 2024		

Annex VI. Justification for Reformulation of Results Statements

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RToC)	Justification for Reformulation
IMPACT		
Coastal and marine ecosystem services are maintained, enhanced and contribute to societal and where appropriate, economic benefits		
Coastal and marine ecosystems and habitats are sustainably utilized and rates of degradation are reduced		
INTERMEDIATE STATES		
IS 1: Ecosystem health and sharing of ecosystem services and goods is enhanced through sectoral implementation of the ecosystem approach		
IS 2: Underlying causes of decline in ecosystem health and resources supply is mitigated through the implementation of governmental and private sector policies and initiatives		
IS 3: Public and private economic decision-making increasingly aligns with ecosystem health and productivity objectives and targets		
IS 4: Policies governing private and public economic decision-making promote and include safeguards for healthy and productive ecosystems	Policies governing private and public economic decision-making promote and include safeguards for healthy and productive ecosystems <u>and wellbeing of coastal populations.</u>	
	IS 5 (New): <u>Regional Seas Programmes facilitate the use of EBM, SBE & MPA tools and approaches to incorporate the value of ecosystem services in marine and coastal decision-making in their regions</u>	The RToC includes an extra intermediate state that i) reflects the project approach, to work through Regional Offices and Regional Seas Programmes to promote the ecosystem-based approach to management of marine and coastal ecosystems ii) highlights the potential role of the RSCAPs in uptake and scaling.
OUTCOMES		
Outcome 1: Governments, Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, and partners use data and		

Formulation in original project document(s)	Formulation for Reconstructed ToC at Evaluation Inception (RToC)	Justification for Reformulation
information on marine and coastal ecosystem services to implement actions for more sustainable coastal and marine ecosystem management. (Rev 2)		
Outcome 1B (Direct Outcome): The post 2020 Biodiversity Framework reflects the regional seas programmes and conventions roles in achieving the global biodiversity goals and targets (Rev 1)		
Outcome 2: Increased investments in the sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems (Rev 2)	Outcome 2: Increased investments in the sustainable <u>and equitable</u> management of marine and coastal ecosystems	
OUTPUTS		
Output 1. Partnerships established and policy relevant scientific knowledge, data and analysis produced and disseminated on globally critical marine ecosystems (Rev 1)	Output 1. Better data available for decision-making for sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems	The project Outputs set out in Rev 1 were well defined and strategic in nature but were formulated as approaches or strategies rather than outputs. The Rev 2 ToC was improved through inclusion of a set of five 'intermediate pathways of products and services leading to outcomes', that clarify how the project approaches will contribute to the outcomes. These better meet the UNEP definition of outputs are used as such in the RToC.
Output 2. Customized tools and approaches for ecosystem-based management and sustainable blue economy are developed, tested and made available to support sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystem services (Rev 1)	Output 2. Best practice, guidance and tools available for governments to implement sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems	
Output 3. Communication made available on the value of ecosystem services, supported by operational knowledge platform and outreach (Rev 1)	Output 3. Awareness raised across broad section of stakeholders on importance of marine & coastal ecosystem services	
Output 4. Guidance disseminated and technical support provided for the development of innovative financing projects (Rev 1)	Output 4. Wider range of frameworks available for fund-raising for sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems	
Output 5. Services and guidance made available to strengthen Regional Ocean Governance (Rev 1)	Output 5. Regional Seas Programmes strengthened to support governments in implementation of sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems	

Annex VII. Project Delivery Against Outcomes and Milestones

Project Objective			Relevant Programme of Work Outcomes (2022-2023)	
To incorporate the values of marine and coastal ecosystem services in the development and implementation of coastal and marine policies and decision-making			2A An economically and socially sustainable pathway for halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity is established. 2B Sustainable management of nature is adopted and implemented in development frameworks. 2C Nature conservation and restoration are enhanced.	
Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
Outcome 1: Governments and partners use data and information on marine and coastal ecosystem services and implement actions for more sustainable coastal and marine ecosystem management (Revised at Rev 2 when the Outcome was split into two Outcomes)				
1. Number of regions and countries that have adopted ecosystem-based management measures which increase the area of their Exclusive Economic Zones under ecosystem-based management (SDG14.2)	6	10 12 at Rev 2	Partially achieved	The OPCR reports on formal adoption of legally binding instruments such as protocols, or of action plans and strategies by the RSCAPs. There was progress towards adoption of such instruments by the parties of the Cartagena, Barcelona and the Abidjan Conventions (covering the Caribbean, Mediterranean and West and Central Africa) during the period covered by the project. It is unclear to what extent this result is attributable to the project.
2. Number of partners and countries that are implementing ecosystem-based approaches/integrated ocean management for management of coastal and/or marine environments	3	7 10 at Rev 2 12 at Rev 3	Achieved	See Output 2 Indicator 6. The project supported 13 small-to medium scale pilot interventions led by 13 implementing partners in 12 countries.
3. Number of regions that are implementing coordinated actions under agreements between Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, Regional Fisheries Management Organizations, regional economic commissions and/or regional environmental conventions, to support ocean governance.	1	3	Achieved	Three RSCAPs reinforced collaboration with regional fisheries management bodies (RFMOs) with two signing new agreement in the project period. The RSU contributed both during and through this project through its co-hosting of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI). See <i>Output 5 Indicator 1</i> below - Nairobi Convention and the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) - Cartagena Convention and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) - MAP/Barcelona Convention and the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM)
4. Number of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans that are implementing priority	0	5	Achieved	- The Regional Seas Strategic Directions 2022-2025 was launched in 2022. - The project supported priority actions by five regional seas secretariats covering the Abidjan, Nairobi and Cartagena Conventions, the Mediterranean Action Plan and COBSEA.

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
actions identified in the strategic document influenced and supported by UNEP and sharing good practices through knowledge exchange.				The OPCR reports that the Nairobi Convention, Abidjan Convention, Barcelona Convention, Cartagena Convention, and COBSEA are working closely with contracting parties on the sustainable management and conservation of large marine ecosystems through various projects. It is unclear to what extent this result is attributable to the MCES project.
5. Number of Regional Seas Programmes and countries, in liaison with the UNCT office, adopt sustainable blue economy approaches and gender mainstreaming principles in their strategic plans.	0	2 regional seas 4 countries	Partially achieved	The Project supported Rapid Readiness Assessment (RRAS) related to the UNEP transition framework for SBE in 3 countries: • In Vietnam led by ANCORS and in collaboration with ROAP and COBSEA • In Trinidad & Tobago and Antigua & Barbuda led by the Commonwealth Blue Charter with Howell Marine Consulting. Beyond this project, the UNEP Go Blue project in Kenya has applied the RRA framework at County level in Kenya working with some of the same partners. Further RRAs are being considered as part of UNEP's SIDS Project UNEP (through ANCORS, ROAP, and later HMC) engaged in SBE development in the ASEAN region in support of the 2021 ASEAN Policy Declaration on SBE including through organisation of two webinars for country officials. The ASEAN Blue Economy Framework substantially addresses environmental concerns but does not explicitly acknowledge UNEP. • UNEP engaged in the deliberations on the ocean's agenda in the context of Indonesia's G20 Presidency, contributing to a Ministerial G20 Side Event entitled, "The Development of Indonesia's Blue Economy Roadmap", in September 2022 and to the development of a National Blue Agenda Actions • UNEP was represented at the launch of the Roadmap in at a G20 Summit side event. Blue Economy is mentioned in the outcome document of the G20 meeting. UNEP support is acknowledged in the Indonesia Blue Economy Roadmap (BAPPABAS, 2023) https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/ins227320.pdf Several RSCAPs are pursuing SBE independently of MCEU support. The RSU commissioned a <i>Strategic Guide on Sustainable Blue Economy for the Regional Seas Programme</i> that was released in August 2023
6. Number of global ocean-related political fora whose outcome documents make	0	4	Achieved	Project activities and results were represented at a wide range of international policy fora and at related side events. It has not been possible to verify whether the outcome statements/ political declarations of the following meetings to knowledge generated by this project.

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
reference to knowledge generated by this project.				- UN Ocean Conference (UNOC) held in June 2022. Data and information products from the project were used at the side event. - One Ocean Summit meetings in France 4th Ocean Forum on trade-related aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14 UNCTAD - Annual Regional Seas Meetings (Global and Regional) See also Outcome 1b.
Outcome 2: Increased investments in the sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems (Outcome introduced in Rev 2 by splitting the themes in the original output 1)				
1. Number of projects by partners that are approved by financial institutions incorporating innovative financing or blue economy financing principles for sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems.	0	2 4 at Rev 2	Achieved	GFCR had approved 14 programmes for funding by mid-2024.
2. Number of global Funds launched to support SDG 14 (New in REV 2)	0	1 2 at Rev 3	Partially achieved (1/2)	The Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR), co-founded by the United National Capital Development Fund, (UNCDF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNEP, was launched in 2021
Outcome 1B (Direct Outcome): The post 2020 Biodiversity Framework reflects the regional seas programmes and conventions roles in achieving the global biodiversity goals and targets (Outcome Introduced in Rev 1)				
1. The post 2020 Global Biodiversity framework reflects the roles of regional seas programmes and conventions and other regional marine organisations in achieving the global biodiversity goals and targets.	0	1	Achieved	- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework CBD/COP/15/4) does not directly refer to the role of regional seas. - CBD Parties adopted Decision CBD/COP/15/24 at the same meeting on Conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity that recognises the importance of marine and coastal biodiversity as one of the key cross-cutting elements of the KM-GBF. https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/COP-15/cop-15-dec-24-en.pdf - The 2024 UNEA resolution 6/15. Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution similarly highlights the role of RSP in implementing the KM-GBF and aligning with SDGs. https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/k24/008/25/pdf/k2400825.pdf
Output 1. Partnerships established and policy relevant scientific knowledge, data and analysis produced and disseminated on globally critical marine ecosystems.				

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
1. Number of new or updated functioning partnerships and expert networks, ensuring gender balance, established and operational for knowledge products and dissemination.	1	5	Achieved	The project mobilised networks and supported creation of new networks towards the five products listed under Indicator 2, mobilising a substantial voluntary effort by relevant scientists and experts. (e.g. Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, International Seagrass Experts Network, Norwegian Blue Forests Network)
2. Number of policy-relevant knowledge products on the status of coral reefs, mangroves, kelp and seagrass ecosystems prepared and disseminated, including chapters on gender.	0	4	Achieved	Five relevant knowledge products were published: • Status of Coral Reefs of the World 2020: https://www.unep.org/resources/status-coral-reefs-world-2020 • 2023: Decades of mangrove forest change: What does it mean for nature, people and the climate? https://www.unep.org/resources/report/decadesmangrove-forest-change-what-does-it-mean-naturepeople-and-climate • Into the blue: securing a sustainable future for kelp forests https://www.unep.org/resources/report/bluese-securing-sustainable-future-kelp-forests • UNEP 2020. Out of the Blue: The Value of Seagrasses to the Environment and to People https://www.unep.org/resources/report/out-bluevalue-seagrasses-environment-and-people • UNEP 2023. Seaweed Farming: Assessment on the Potential of Sustainable Upscaling for Climate, Communities and the Planet: https://www.unep.org/resources/report/seaweedfarming-assessment-sustainable-upscaling See also Output 2 Indicator 5 – Restoration Guidelines
Output 2. Customized tools and approaches for ecosystem-based management and sustainable blue economy are developed, tested, and made available to support sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystem services.				
1. Number of Marine Protected Area toolboxes developed and made available within an online platform	0	1 2 at REV 3	Partially Achieved (1/2)	• The Beta-version of the online MPA Toolbox & Learning Platform (MPAth) MPA practitioners is available at https://mpath.unep.org/. The Platform was presented at the fifth meetings of the International Marine Protected Areas Congress (MPAC5) in February 2023. It was launched online on 8 June 2024.
2. Number of training workshops on implementation of MPA tools, ensuring gender balance NEW in REV 2	0	1	Not achieved	No related activities or deliverables
3. Number of decision-support frameworks with associated guidance documents describing potential pathways for a	0	1 2 at REV 3	Partially achieved	The project collaborated with WCMC, GRID, the University of Portsmouth, ANCORS, and Howell Marine Consulting to develop a series of background documents related to sustainable blue economy • RRAs for two countries were completed and published in 2023.

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
sustainable blue economy approach, prepared and made available.				- The Sustainable Blue Economy Transition Framework was being finalised for publication at the start of 2025. Unpublished reports: - TEEB for Coasts Report: A proposal for an inclusive and comprehensive assessment and evaluation framework to improve decision making and achieve sustainability and equity in coastal areas. 2021. - Sustainable Blue Economy Decision Support Framework: Needs Assessment Summary. (Undated). - Accelerating the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the implementation of a Sustainable Blue Economy. Final Draft. April 2021. - Vision and Pathways for a Sustainable Blue Economy. Final Draft. April 2021. - Sustainable Blue Economy Transition Framework. Prototype. May 2021. - Sustainable Blue Economy Transition Framework: Implementation Guide. Prototype. June 2021. UNEP, University of Portsmouth, WCMC, GRID. Unpublished. - An ASEAN approach to the Blue Economy. Discussion paper. ANCORS, University of Wollongong. October 2021. Unpublished. - Social and Equity Considerations in the Sustainable Blue Economy: A Background Report. UNEP /ANCORS 2023. - Developing an equitable Blue Economy: a guide to embedding equity in governance frameworks. UNEP / ANCORS 2023
4. Number of Regional Seas reports on existing tools, methodologies and knowledge sharing mechanisms prepared and made available.	0	1	Partially achieved	An internal stocktaking exercise of RS tools, methodologies and knowledge was conducted in 2020 (Report not seen)-. The Regional Seas Indicator Monitoring Framework (RSIMF) - building on a list of the 22 Regional Seas Indicators agreed in 2015 - was finalised in 2022 through a series working group meetings <i>The Regional Seas Global Outlook Report (Output 5 indicator 4) is included under Output 2 in the project workplans.</i>

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
5. Number of guidance documents for good practices for coral reef restoration as well as climate modelling within the context of ecosystem-based management prepared and made available.	0	2	Achieved	Three relevant reports were completed: • 2021 Guidelines on best practices for coral restoration https://www.unep.org/resources/report/coral-reef-restoration-guide-coral-restoration-method • A Guide to Coral Reef Restoration for the Tourism Sector Partnering with Caribbean Tourism Leaders to Accelerate Coral Restoration https://www.unep.org/resources/report/coral-reef-restoration-guidelines-tourism-sector • 2020. Projections of future coral bleaching conditions using IPCC CMIP6 Models; the sequel to a 2017 report https://www.unep.org/resources/report/projections-future-coral-bleaching-conditions-using-ipcc-cmip6-models
6. Number of small grants for supporting sustainable coral reef management implemented, including payments for ecosystem services schemes and support to women's conservation groups. The Output was revised at Rev 3 to include support to women's conservation groups	0	5 10 at Rev 2	Achieved	10 small grant projects were granted through a second call of proposals under ICRI; with work in nine countries commencing in 2021 and 2022. • Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association (TASA) - Upscaling restoration and protection of the critically endangered acroporid corals using proven techniques, continued local capacity building, and mapping in Belize, delivered by Fragments of Hope • Blue Ventures Conservation - Restoring seagrass habitats through participatory mapping, community-based seagrass monitoring, and sea cucumber farming in the Velondriake, Manjaboake, and Teariake LMAs of southwest Madagascar • Community Centered Conservation (C3), the Philippines -Piloting an Effective and Equitable Marine Protected Areas Governance in the Green Island Bay, Roxas, Palawan, Philippines • Department of Parks & Wildlife Management (DPWM), the Gambia -Ba Nyamo Tanko -conserving seagrasses in the Gambia • Fauna and Flora International (FFI), Kenya -Healthy seagrass ecosystems for sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity in Lamu County, Kenya • Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) - Ocean Climate Solution: Promoting use of Blue Carbon Ecosystems in Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in Lamu, Kenya • Mision Tiburon - Strengthening the Hammerhead Shark Sanctuary Golfo Dulce: community-based project for protect and restore blue carbon habitats, Costa Rica • Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)- Expanding community-based management in Vonavona Lagoon, Solomon Islands, for food security, livelihoods and climate adaptation • Corals for Conservation (C4C), Fiji -Establishing Coral Restoration for Climate Change Adaptation: Building Capacity and Support for Community-based MPAs and Resorts in Fiji • The Nature Conservancy (TNC) - Mangrove Rehabilitation at Baraderes-Cayemites Marine Protected Areas and Global Capacity Building on Coral Reef Restoration in Southern Haiti.

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
				The project provided direct support to three further pilots in 2022 and 2023, with the work in Benin extended for second phase in 2024. - Edinburgh Napier University (ENU), UK - Incorporating seagrass conservation and restoration into community-based Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) projects, Kenya - Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Netherlands and EcoBenin-- Supporting the certification and implementation of blue carbon credits in Bouche du Roy, Benin - CORDIO EA – Kenya: See Indicator 8 <i>Allotments under Output 5 to the secretariat of Nairobi Convention and Abidjan Convention supported pilot interventions respectively in Comoros and in Côte d'Ivoire.</i>
7. Number of reports on good practices and key elements regarding the role of gender in management of coastal ecosystems and blue economy prepared and made available.	1	2	Achieved	2019 Report. UNEP & Gender and Water Alliance. Gender Mainstreaming in the Management of the Marine and Coastal Ecosystems. Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 212. https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27633/Gender_MarEco.pdf 2020 Report Gender Mainstreaming in Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management: Principles, Case studies and lessons learned https://www.unep.org/resources/report/gender-mainstreaming-coastal-and-marine-ecosystems-management-principles-case - Webinar based on the 2020 Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines above https://www.unep.org/events/webinar/gender-mainstreaming-coastal-and-marine-ecosystem-management-facilitated-unep-and <i>The ANCORS reports on Social and Equity Consideration in SBE and embedding equity in SBE Governance also contribute to this milestone</i>
8. Number of approaches on gender mainstreaming for marine and coastal ecosystems management tested and disseminated.	0	1	Achieved	The project supported a two-year pilot project in Kenya implemented by CORDIO EA entitled, Empowering women in community based natural resource management. CORDIO has continued to support women's groups through other donor-supported project, and it is integrating the approach into its wider work The project results have been widely shared in the region and the work is featured in a CORDIO- produced video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6l9SmlfXr8
9. Number of online platforms for Green Fins sustainable tourism developed and made accessible	0	1	Achieved	The Reef-World Foundation launched the Green Fins Hub for staff working at dive centres, snorkelling centres, or liveaboards that are, or would like to become a Green Fins Member. Historic assessment data was migrated from a previous platform in April 2023. https://hub.greenfins.net/login

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
Output 3: Communication made available on the value of ecosystem services, supported by operational knowledge platform and outreach				
1. Number of campaigns launched, and special events organized aimed at policy changes and increased investment in marine and coastal ecosystems.	0	1 campaign 3 special events	Achieved	2019 Campaign: Launch of Glowing Glowing Gone Campaign, generating over 90 media articles in 22 countries 2020 Campaign: Wild for life campaign on illegal trade in wildlife features oceans through the 'Reef Rider' Journey in collaboration with Glowing Glowing Gone. https://wildfor.life/journeys 2023: Interactive internet feature on Saving the Worlds Vital Ecosystems covering kelp forests, mangroves, seagrasses and coral reefs with reference to Output 1 deliverables https://www.unep.org/interactives/why-blue-ecosystems-matter/ Project activities and products were presented and made available at a wide range of policy and technical event. Specific events include: 2024: The Sink/Rise exhibition on the impact of climate change on Small Island Developing States, with the Government of Barbados, at UNEA 5.2 https://www.facebook.com/barbadosinkenya/posts/421843830352340/ 2024: UNEA 6 Side event: UNEP Regional Seas Programme at 50 – Trailblazing Ocean Governance for five decades https://www.unep.org/events/unea/unea-6-side-event-unep-regional-seas-programme-50-trailblazing-ocean-governance-five - Launch of the Regional Seas Strategic Direction document at UNEA 5.2
2. Regional Seas knowledge management and information sharing platform established, operational and disseminating good practices.	0	1	Partially Achieved	The revamped Regional Seas webpage - https://www.unep.org/topics/ocean-seas-and-coasts/regional-seas-programme was established with support of the UNEP Communications Division The webpages replaced an earlier initiative to develop a knowledge management platform that was developed to a prototype stage.
3. Number of policy briefs prepared and disseminated through Regional Seas mechanisms and UNEP political mechanisms.	0	10	Partially achieved	- Regional Seas Strategic Directions (RSSD) 2022-2025, <i>Policy Brief</i>. (14pp) May 2021 - a succinct summary full Strategic Directions Document which is 33pp. Other Contributions 2022 Press release to mark publication of the report, Contributions of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans to a Healthy Ocean https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/regional-policies-critical-linchpin-marine-protection-new-report 2022 UNEP at 50 Series: How the world is helping to safeguard its oceans and seas, linked to publication of the Regional Seas Outlook report (Output 5, Indicator 4). https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/how-world-helping-safeguard-its-oceans-and-seas See also, Output 5b for Regional Seas /GBF Reports

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
4. Number of communications products on Sustainable Blue Economy and Marine Protected Areas produced and disseminated (NEW in Rev 2)	0	2	Partially Achieved	A brochure (<i>An introduction to the UNEP Sustainable Blue Economy Framework</i>) and PowerPoint on the SBE Transition approach were produced in 2022. A series of three webinars on SBE for the ASEAN Region in was organised in 2022. https://www.unep.org/events/webinar/financing-sustainable-blue-economy-asean-region-opportunities-and-lessons-learned 2024: Expanded UNEP Webpage of SBE: https://www.unep.org/topics/ocean-seas-and-coasts/ecosystem-based-approaches/sustainable-blue-economy See Output 4 Indicators 1 & 3.
Output 4: Guidance disseminated, and technical support provided for the development of innovative financing projects.				
1. Number of guidance documents prepared and disseminated on sustainable blue economy financing principles.	0	1	Achieved	The project provided funds to UNEP FI led initiative and participated in the project team leading to the following reports: 2021 Sustainable Blue Economy Financing Principles: Diving Deep - addressing coastal resilience (infrastructure and nature-based solutions), and waste prevention and management https://www.unepfi.org/publications/harmful-marineextractives-deep-sea-mining/ 2022 Turning the Tide: How to Finance a Sustainable Ocean Recovery - addressing seafood, shipping, ports, coastal and marine tourism and marine renewable energy https://www.unepfi.org/publications/turning-the-tide/ 2024 Setting Sail: Target setting in the Sustainable Blue Economy – providing guidance on target setting and on implementing the above guides https://www.unepfi.org/publications/setting-sail-target-setting-in-the-sustainable-blue-economy/
2. Number of partners supported to develop new financing models.	0	3	Achieved	The GFCR was launched in 2020. GFCR programmes cover 23 countries. Four pilot projects explored and supported further development of blue carbon (3 ICRI pilot projects in Kenya plus pilot project in Benin)
3. Guidance document disseminated on marine protected area business planning.	0	1	Partially achieved	The University of Queensland was commissioned to develop a module on business planning as part of its contributions to the MPA Toolbox (Module delivered but not seen). MPAth includes sections on business planning and on MPA financing.
4. Technical workshop held to share experiences and prepare recommendations on sustainable blue economy financing principles and MPA business planning.	0	1	Partially achieved	A workshop to discuss MPA Business planning and sustainable financing was organised amongst the project team preparing the MPA toolkit in July 2021.

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
Output 5. Services and guidance made available to strengthen Regional Ocean Governance				
1. Number of partnerships established between the Regional Seas conventions and action plans and the Regional Fisheries bodies and/or regional economic commissions.	0	2	Achieved	Collaboration with RFMOs has been ongoing focus of the ocean governance work: - RSCAPs have participated since 2016 in the meetings of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) co-hosted by UNEP Regional Seas Programme, the CBD Secretariat and FAO. The third Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fishery Bodies was held in October 2022 - The initial focus of the governance review completed in 2023 (Output 5, Indicator 2) was on RFMOs. - Funding was provided in 2020 to the Abidjan Convention to initiate dialogue with the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (SEAFO) and the Fishery Committee for West and Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC). Two RSCAPs signed or updated agreements during the project period: - Collaboration between the Nairobi Convention and the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC). A first MOU for a five-year project supported by Sida was signed in 2019. A follow-on project was agreed in 2022 - MOU between Cartagena Convention and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) to support development and implementation on of precautionary approach and ecosystem-based approaches for sustainable use, management and conservation of marine living resources, development of sustainable aquaculture and protection of the marine environment and its ecosystems. A first MOU was signed in 2017, and a new MOU negotiated in 2020. There has been ongoing collaboration between the MAP/Barcelona Convention and the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM) to promote ecosystem-based approaches for conservation of marine and coastal environment of the Mediterranean, based on an MOU first signed in 2012.
2. Number of strategy papers, technical reports and guidance documents produced and disseminated on integrated ocean governance.	0	2 5 at Rev 2	Partially achieved	United Nations Environment Programme (2023). Regional Ocean Governance: A review of existing formalised cooperation between Regional Seas Organisations and other intergovernmental organisations. Nairobi Regional_ocean_governance.pdf Strategic Guide on Sustainable Blue Economy for the Regional Seas Programme (G Leone, 2023). Guide_on_sustainable_blue_economy_RegionalSeas.pdf Regional Seas work related to Ocean Governance is featured at https://www.unep.org/topics/ocean-seas-and-coasts/regional-seas-programme/ocean-governance
3. Number of annual Regional Seas meetings convened, and meeting outcomes disseminated to stakeholders.	20	23	Achieved	Three further global Regional Seas meetings convened, and meeting reports and documentation for the later meetings available online: The 21st Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, Berlin, Germany. 3- 5 October 2019 https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/39738/UNEP_RS21.pdf

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
				Twenty-Second Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Programme, 25 - 28 May 2022, Mahe, Seychelles https://www.unep.org/events/conference/twenty-second-global-meeting-regional-seas-programme Twenty-Third Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Programme, 20 - 23 November 2023, Barbados https://www.unep.org/events/conference/twenty-third-global-meeting-regional-seas-programme
4. Number of global outlook reports prepared on SDG targets 14.2 and 14.5 and made available to UN Ocean Conference.	0	1	Achieved	The global outlook report was developed through WCMC building on an extended consultative process: 2019. Organisation of 1st Global Technical Workshop on the preparation of the Regional Seas Programme SDG 14 Outlook report 25 - 27 November 2019 Helsinki, Finland. https://www.unep.org/events/un-environment-event/1st-global-technical-workshop-preparation-regional-seas-programme-sdg Background documentation including summary outline addressing SDG Target 14.2 (Indicator 14.2.1: Proportion of national exclusive economic zones managed using ecosystem-based approaches) and Target 14.5 (Indicator 14.5.1: Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas) UNEP Reg Seas SD14 Outlook draft outline_30.10.19.pdf 2022: The report, <i>Contributions of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans to a Healthy Ocean. Nairobi</i>, prepared with WCMC reviews contributions by the different regional sea programmes to all 10 SDG 14 Targets. The site includes a related story and video. https://www.unep.org/resources/report/contributions-regional-seas-conventions-and-action-plans-healthy-ocean 2023: UNEP Reporting on Indicator 14.2.1 Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to managing marine areas, with reference to data collected through regional seas programmes https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/extended-report/Extended-Report_Goal-14.pdf
Output 5a: Mechanisms for the regional seas programmes to contribute to achieving biodiversity related objectives and targets are elaborated and proposed by UNEP and the regional seas secretariats and CBD Parties are informed of the proposed roles of regional seas programmes and conventions in the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework				
1. Number of case study and gap analysis documents prepared in collaboration with regional seas secretariats and disseminated as background information for establishing a mechanism for the regional seas programme contribution to achieving biodiversity related objectives and targets in the post 2020 GBF	0	1	Achieved	The UNEP report, Regional Seas Biodiversity under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, was formally submitted as an information paper to CBD SBSTTA in February 2021. (Output 5 Indicator 3). The report synthesis, A Role for Regional Seas Programme under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, with case studies from the Regional Seas, was published in February 2021 (https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/35102). The authors (SeaScape Consultants) contributed a related paper to the Marine Policy journal in 2022. Three further papers were developed using savings generated under this EU supported sub-project, of which the first is available online Harmonized the Regional Seas Programmes National Reporting and the Convention on Biological Diversity National Reporting (NBSAP) (2021), was released as a UNEP publication in 2023. https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/regional-seas-biodiversity-harmonized-reporting-between-regional-seas

Indicators	Baseline	Target	Status	Details and Comments
				Ecosystem Approach Towards a practical Application across Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (UNEP, 2022), with practical examples from the different regional seas. (Unpublished)
2. Consultative meeting held with the regional seas secretariats to discuss and agree on future roles of the regional seas in the post 2020 GBF	0	1	Achieved	It was not possible to organise a face-to-face consultative meeting due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. A CBD Webinar on Regional Seas Programmes and the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and a virtual workshop on the same topic was organised with the regional seas secretariats were organised in 2020 with participation of SCBD, the European Commission and partners. COBSEA and the Cartagena Convention secretariat hosted webinars on the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
3. A proposal document for the roles of the regional seas programmes is formulated through a consultative process with the regional seas programmes and submitted to the Parties of the CBD Convention to the process of developing the post 2020 GBF	0	1	Achieved	The UNEP report, A role for the Regional Seas Programme under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, was formally submitted as an information paper to CBD SBSTTA in February 2021. (CBD/SBSTTA/24/INF/24) https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/0c09/8814/cc8c0cd04f77b9a61240a33c/sbstta-24-inf-24-en.pdf

Annex VIII. EU Grant Contribution to UNEP POW Project

THE EU GRANT:	
Give the title, ID reference, value and start/end dates of the EU grant received by the PRC-approved project. Specify which partnership agreement the grant was provided by (e.g. PCA I, PCA II etc)	
Title:	Regional Seas Biodiversity under the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework
Date:	Jan 2020 – Mar 2022 (27 months) including one extension of 13 months
Agreement	PCA I
Budget	EUR 214,000
Expenditure	EUR 184,666
THE RESULTS:	
Give the output(s) in the evaluand (i.e. PRC-approved project) to which the EU grant contributed and explain how. Please note if the expenditure of the grant was ring-fenced in any way (e.g. for use in one country etc)	
The work under the EU Grant project was integrated into the results framework of the PRC-approved UNEP Programme of Work Project: <i>Sustainable Management of Marine & Coastal Ecosystem Services</i> (2018 to 2024) as a sub-Output 5b) and direct outcome (1b). The ProDoc revision (Rev 1 approved in April 2020) which followed the project inception phase also incorporated a broader output (5) on Regional Seas Coordination. <u>Direct Outcome 1b:</u> <i>The post 2020 Biodiversity Framework reflects the regional seas programmes and conventions roles in achieving the global biodiversity goals and targets-</i> <u>Output 5a:</u> <i>Mechanisms for the regional seas programmes to contribute to achieving biodiversity related objectives and targets are elaborated and proposed by UNEP and the regional seas secretariats and CBD Parties are informed of the proposed roles of regional seas programmes and conventions in the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework.</i> The work was also expected to support project Outcome 1, governments use data and information on marine and coastal ecosystem services for more sustainable coastal ecosystem management, by supporting Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs) - and subsequently national governments - in their understanding of data related to progress against CBD targets. The work was global in nature and engaged 14 RSCAPs, including seven whose Secretariats are administered by UNEP, as well as a wide range of technical partners. UNEP WCMC was engaged as an implementing partner.	
THE LEVERAGE GAINED:	
Did the EU grant enable UNEP to drive efficiency and effectiveness at the levels of: • The evaluand's outcomes, intermediate states and/or long-lasting impact. • A POW Output (for grants approved before 2022)/Direct Outcome.	
The objective of the EU grant project was to convince the CBD Parties to include the roles of the regional seas programmes in the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The original project proposal envisaged development of a set of recommendations on possible future roles of the regional seas programmes in the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework towards the outcome, the post 2020 Biodiversity Framework reflects the regional seas programmes and conventions roles in achieving the global biodiversity goals and targets. A report on <i>Regional Seas Biodiversity under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework</i> report was developed through a consultative process in collaboration with Seascope Consultants as principal authors. It was submitted to CBD's SBSTTA 24 as an <u>information document</u> (CBD/SBSTTA/24/INF/24) in February 2021. A synthesis report, <i>A Role for the Regional Seas Programme under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework</i> authored by SeaScape Consultants was published in the same year (UNEP, 2021). The	

authors independently prepared a related peer-reviewed journal article published in [Marine Policy in February 2022](#).

The project was granted a no-cost extension based on submission of a project document revision in view of financial savings. These were generated by convening the 2020 consultative meetings involving the CBD Secretariat, the European Commission, RSCAPs and partners in virtual rather than face-to-face format due to the COVID-19 pandemic: a significant if unintended efficiency gain.

Savings were used to develop three further reports and outputs thus exceeded the targets set out in the PCA project document.

- Production of a *Draft Report on Harmonized the Regional Seas Programmes National Reporting and the Convention on Biological Diversity National Reporting (NBSAP)*, with input from each of the RS Secretariats. (2021). The [report](#) was published in 2023, after the project was completed and was discussed at the [23rd Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Meeting in 2023](#).
- *Ecosystem Approach Towards a Practical Application across Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans* with practical examples from the different regional seas. The 2022 report by WCMC is fully laid out but has not been published.
- *Applying spatial planning approaches to support achievement of selected goals and targets of the draft post-2020 global biodiversity framework Conceptual Guidelines*. Prepared by WCMC, the [report](#) was published in 2024 after completion of the Grant

Reported strategic results include stronger collaboration and close engagement between the contracting parties to the CBD and the RSCAPs. The results fall short of a direct reference to Regional Seas in the Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at COP 15 in May 2022.

However the CBD Parties separately adopted [Decision CBD/COP/15/24](#) on *Conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity* that recognises the importance of marine and coastal biodiversity as one of the key cross-cutting elements of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF). The decision notes the role of relevant global and regional bodies and initiatives, including, the RSCAPs, in the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity, and invites them to support the implementation of the KM-GBF with respect to marine and coastal biodiversity and to contribute to monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the framework.

The March 2024 UNEA [resolution 6/15](#) *Strengthening ocean efforts to tackle climate change, marine biodiversity loss and pollution* similarly highlights the role of RSP in implementing the KM-GBF and aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The EU grant project was implemented as part of the UNEP Programme of Work Project 316.1 (PIMS ID 02019) entitled *Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services* that was designed to contribute to the 2018-2019 PoW SP3- EAa - Output 6, Development and dissemination of tools and methodologies for integrated ecosystem management. The project made a direct contribution to this output through the reports on application of the ecosystem approach and applying spatial planning approaches.

The PoW project had a secondary contribution to Output 7: *Support to cross-sectoral institutional frameworks and agreements for ecosystem management* which better matches the original aims of the PCA project.

The EU Grant project document refers to contributing to the 2021- 2022 PoW SP 3 Output 1, but this reference is unclear since there are two outputs 1 (one per expected accomplishment), neither of which has a good match to this project.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE EU PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT OBJECTIVE:

State the partnership objective and describe how the EU grant, used in the context of the PRC-approved project, contributed to the achievement of that objective.

The PCA was expected to contribute to the implementation of the 4th component of the GPGC Environment and climate change policy areas, international environment and climate governance, through i) strengthened international environment governance as well as international partnerships

and alliances on environment; ii) strengthened knowledge and capacities and iii) improved synergies within and amongst UNEP sub-programmes and MEAs

This project contributed in general terms to results i) & iii), including notably through the strategic results mentioned above.

In 2018, the EU and UNEP signed a Roadmap on Healthy, Productive and Resilient Oceans sees a strengthened EC-UN Environment Partnership which encourages working through existing governance structures to share best practices and lessons learned, an approach that is apparent in this project.

The project was funded through reprogrammed savings across earlier projects in the PCA I portfolio, contributing to greater overall effectiveness at the agreement level.

Were EU grant objectives complementary to the objectives of the PRC approved project?

The project was complementary to but not essential for achievement of the original PoW /umbrella project outcomes. It was integrated into the project through a project document revision as a stand-alone output and objective, complementing other work on Regional Seas under the same umbrella project. It delivered useful products through a consultative process towards achievement of its direct outcome. It contributes to the PRC-approved project objective, *to incorporate the values of marine and coastal ecosystem services in the development and implementation of coastal and marine policies and decision-making*.

Sources:

- Report on RS Biodiversity <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/regional-seas-biodiversity-under-post-2020-global-biodiversity-framework-unep> (180pp)
- Related SBBTA Submission: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/0c09/8814/cc8c0cd04f77b9a61240a33c/sbstta-24-inf-24-en.pdf> /
- Synthesis Report on, A role for the Regional Seas Programme under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (30pp) [A role for the Regional Seas Programme under the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework](#)
- Report on Harmonised Reporting <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/regional-seas-biodiversity-harmonized-reporting-between-regional-seas> -
- Marine Policy paper <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308597X21005418>
- CBD Decision <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/COP-15/cop-15-dec-24-en.pdf>
- UNEA Resolution <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/k24/008/25/pdf/k2400825.pdf>
- Signature of EU UNEP Roadmap [Roadmap to healthier, cleaner oceans adopted by UN Environment and European Commission](#)

Annex IX. Financial Management Table

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
1. Adherence to UNEP's policies and procedures:		M	There is no evidence of any major shortcomings in this area.
Any evidence that indicates shortcomings in the project's adherence to UNEP or donor policies, procedures or rules		No	- A significant minority of partners referred to delays in issuance of contracts, in receipt of cash advances and /or in receipt of final payments. Final payments were delayed in the last year of the project. - Budget information was clear and coherent from March 2022 when a detailed budget was produced. Tracking of expenditure was a continuous activity There is evidence of detailed planning (including budget links in workplans) but not of periodic (6-monthly) expenditure reports being produced. - Expenditure at overall project level fell within the approved funding on the Project Document or Revision and secured funding (based in annual figures in Rev 4). - The first three project revisions were timely and submitted in line with the need to approve new income. - The final project revision was submitted retroactively (at the end of the requested extension period). The final project phase had not been anticipated but was necessary in view of the later-than-expected approval of the successor project.
Was first disbursement carried out within 9 months of UNEP's project approval date.		Yes	The project start date was backdated from the approval date to the date on the project document
2. Completeness of project financial information:		MS	A broad cross section of documents was made available to the evaluator.
<i>Provision of key documents to the evaluator (based on the responses to A-H below)</i>			
A	Co-financing and Project Cost's tables at design (by budget lines)	No	- Only a budget summary table was available in the original ProDoc provided for the evaluation - The project expanded significantly. Rev 2 includes a detailed overview of income and expenditure by year - Rev 2 includes a detailed mapping by activity/output of expected expenditure in 2022 and 2023 corresponding to income anticipated for those years (and accounting for 28% of cash expenditure at completion)
B	Revisions to the budget	Yes	- Each of the 4 Revisions included an updated budget summary table according to the prevailing template. - Rev 2 includes a detailed budget showing the annual allocations up to 2023 of XB, EF and in-kind funding (with cash representing 85% of secured cash funding at Rev 4). - Revs 3 & 4 show allocation of cash for 2023/2024 with Rev 4 data corresponding to the completion report.
C	All relevant project legal agreements (e.g. SSFA, PCA, ICA)	No	- Information from PIMS on 44 Agreements (SSFA/ PCA) with partner organisations totalling just over US \$4.5 million was made available covering Outputs 1-5. This is only part of the total agreements to implementing partners (IPs) that represented of US \$6.6 million in expenditure. Agreements for Output 5 were not available. - A further US \$4.3 million was spent on consultants. Examples of Task Orders were available.
D	Proof of fund transfers	Yes	Not requested as there is sufficient indirect proof through partners' technical and financial reporting on SSFAs /PCAs and availability of related products

Financial management components:		Rating	Evidence/ Comments
E	Proof of co-financing (cash and in-kind)	Yes	- There was no overall requirement for cofinancing. Some partner project reports (e.g. ICRI small grants) and acknowledgments on deliverables indicate cofinancing from partners - In kind finance from UNEP is clearly associated with staffing with reference to staff numbers and grade in the Rev 2 budget; the figure is considered conservative.
F	A summary report on the project's expenditures during the life of the project (by budget lines, project components and/or annual level)	Yes	The operational project closure report signed by the project manager/ head of branch in August 2024 includes a breakdown of expenditure by output. This is supported by a detailed excel sheet with expenditure codes but cannot be linked to specific activities.
G	Copies of any completed audits and management responses (where applicable)	Yes	Audits for three of the four PCAs under Outputs 1-4 were available; an interviewee confirmed the fourth audit.
H	Any other financial information that was required for this project (list):	Yes	- Costed Workplans (2021,2022 & 2023) - SSFAs /PCAs and IP reporting - Incoming grant documents and related expenditure statements - Project Completion Report supported by Sponsored Class and Outputs summary
3. Communication between finance and project management staff		S	Overall satisfactory but the rating is compromised by the inconsistent information regarding available funding up to March 2022
Project Manager and/or Task Manager's level of awareness of the project's financial status.		MS	- Awareness was compromised by the inconsistent information regarding available funding in the ProDoc and Rev 1. Some major funding lines identified as 'secured' in the ProDoc and Rev 1 were estimates. Presentation of the overall funding situation was consistent from Rev 2 (March 2022) onwards. - The sources of funding in the operational completion report (Aug 2024) differ slightly to those at Rev 4 (April 2024). - PIMS reporting in December 2021 indicates that more regular financial reports were now being produced by the finance team to streamline and create more efficient financial management of the project. - While the evaluation did not see any evidence of such reporting at overall project level, there is evidence budgeting and expenditure was matched appropriately to individual grants including through reporting to donors. - Most of the project funding was earmarked at the grant level or – in more general terms - at the time it was allocated to the Branch. - The project workplans map many but not all activities to specific budget sources. - Unspent balances were anticipated from Rev 3 onwards and carried forward to the successor project. - The project was able to adapt to accommodate the late approval of the successor project.
Fund Management Officer's knowledge of project progress/status when disbursements are done.		S	Disbursements were made based on signature of legal agreements and on submission by partners of financial reports

Financial management components:	Rating	Evidence/ Comments
Level of addressing and resolving financial management issues among Fund Management Officer and Project Manager/Task Manager.	S	- Regular and constructive correspondence between the project manager and finance assistant or FMO related to timing of incoming and outgoing grants and any required extensions. - PIMS reporting reflects an active dialogue between finance and technical staff to address issues that arose where partners had overlapping contracts or wished to amend standard contract clauses.
Contact/communication between Fund Management Officer, Project Manager/Task Manager during the preparation of financial and progress reports.	S	- There is evidence of discussions related to completion and reporting of individual grants. - Reports to donors are appropriately certified, cleared and approved
Project Manager, Task Manager and Fund Management Officer responsiveness to financial requests during the evaluation process	HS	The FMO and Finance Assistant were available for a face-to-face interview and the finance assistant was responsive to all follow-on requests
Overall rating	S	

Annex X. Brief CV of the Evaluator

Name	Sarah Humphrey
Profession	Consultant in Environment and Sustainable Development
Nationality	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) and Switzerland
Country Experience	• Europe: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Lichtenstein, Montenegro, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, UK • Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia • Asia: Cambodia, China, India
Education	• King's College, University of London, UK - BSc. (Hons Class I): Human Environmental Science • Department of Marine Sciences and Coastal Management, University of Newcastle, UK - PhD: Analysis of Approaches for Evaluating the Success of Coastal Management in Europe • Open University Business School, UK - MBA

Selected assignments relevant to this assignment

- Review of MASMA Phase V and Three Decades of Sida Support to Coastal & Marine Science in the WIO Region (Sida/WIOMSA, 2022)
- Review of the CGIAR Research Program: Water, Land and Ecosystems (CGIAR, 2020)
- Terminal Evaluation – Managing Harmful Substances and Hazardous Wastes through the Global Programme of Action in Support of Regional Seas Agreements (UNEP, 2016)
- Outcome Evaluation of Barcelona Convention/ United Nations Environment Programme - Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP - MAP) Five Year Programme of Work 2010-2014 (UNEP, 2015)
- Evaluation of UNEP's Ecosystem Management Sub-Programme (UNEP, 2014)
- Review of EU & GEF supported Cambodia Climate Change Alliance (CCCA) Pilot Projects (UNDP, 2013)
- Mid-term Evaluation of the UNEP GEF Project: Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem (MedPartnership)(UNEP, 2013)
- Terminal Evaluation of the UNDP/UNEP GEF project: Combating Living Resources Depletion and Coastal Area Degradation in the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (UNEP, 2012)
- Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP GEF project: Development of the Methodology and Arrangements for the GEF Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme (UNEP, 2011)
- Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP GEF project: Addressing Land-Based Activities in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO-LaB)(UNEP, 2010)
- Evaluation of the EU Coastal Management Coordination Action (ENCORA) (RWS Waterdienst NL, 2010)

Annex XI. Quality Assessment of the Evaluation Report

Evaluand Title: Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP Project “Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystem Services”, PIMS ID: 02019 (2018-2024)

All UNEP evaluations are subject to a quality assessment by the Evaluation Office. This is an assessment of the quality of the evaluation product (i.e. evaluation report) and is dependent on more than just the consultant’s efforts and skills.

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
Report Quality Criteria		
Quality of the Executive Summary <u>Purpose:</u> acts as a stand-alone and accurate <u>summary</u> of the main evaluation product, especially for senior management. To include: • concise overview of the evaluation object • clear summary of the evaluation objectives and scope • overall evaluation rating of the project and key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) against exceptional criteria • reference to where the evaluation ratings table can be found within the report • summary response to key strategic evaluation questions • summary of the main findings of the exercise/synthesis of main conclusions • summary of lessons learned and recommendations.	Final report (coverage/omissions): The executive summary includes all the expected sections. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The executive summary presents a concise summary of the evaluation report and includes a concise description of the evaluand, evaluation objectives, scope, a summary of the findings, recommendations, lessons learned and the overall rating.	6
Quality of the ‘Introduction’ Section <u>Purpose:</u> introduces/<u>situates</u> the evaluand in its institutional context, establishes its main parameters (time, value, results, geography) and the purpose of the evaluation itself. To include: • institutional context of the project (sub-programme, Division, Branch etc) • date of PRC approval, project duration and start/end dates • number of project phases (where appropriate) • results frameworks to which it contributes (e.g. POW Direct Outcome) • coverage of the evaluation (regions/countries where implemented) • implementing and funding partners • total secured budget • whether the project has been evaluated in the past (e.g. mid-term, external agency etc.) • concise statement of the purpose of the evaluation and the key intended audience for the findings.	Final report (coverage/omissions): The introduction section includes all the required sections. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The introduction section situates the evaluand within the UNEP institutional framework and succinctly defines the parameters (time, value, results, geography).	6
Quality of the ‘Evaluation Methods’ Section <u>Purpose:</u> provides reader with clear and comprehensive description of evaluation methods, demonstrates the <u>credibility</u> of the findings and performance ratings. To include: • description of evaluation data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/ quantitative; electronic/face-to-face)	Final report (coverage/omissions): The evaluation methods section presents a detailed description of the evaluation process. All expected elements are included. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The evaluation methods section passes the reproducibility test. It explains in sufficient detail how the	6

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
- number and type of respondents (see <i>table template</i>) - selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited - strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation - methods to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc) - details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.) - methods used to analyse data (scoring, coding, thematic analysis etc) - evaluation limitations (e.g. low/ imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; language barriers etc) - ethics and human rights issues should be highlighted including: how anonymity and confidentiality were protected. Is there an ethics statement? E.g. <i>'Throughout the evaluation process and in the compilation of the Final Evaluation Report efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. All efforts to provide respondents with anonymity have been made.'</i>	evaluation was conducted while highlighting ethical considerations, challenges encountered and mitigation measures.	
Quality of the 'Project' Section <u>Purpose:</u> describes and <u>verifies</u> key dimensions of the evaluand relevant to assessing its performance. To include: <i>Context:</i> overview of the main issue that the project is trying to address, its root causes and consequences on the environment and human well-being (i.e. synopsis of the problem and situational analyses) <i>Results framework:</i> summary of the project's results hierarchy as stated in the ProDoc (or as officially revised) <i>Stakeholders:</i> description of groups of targeted stakeholders organised according to relevant common characteristics <i>Project implementation structure and partners:</i> description of the implementation structure with diagram and a list of key project partners <i>Changes in design during implementation:</i> any key events that affected the project's scope or parameters should be described in brief in chronological order <i>Project financing:</i> completed tables of: (a) budget at design and expenditure by components (b) planned and actual sources of funding/co-financing	Final report (coverage/omissions): The report covers all the key dimensions of the evaluand as expected. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The project section describes in good detail the context, results framework, stakeholders, project implementation structure, changes in project design and project financing.	6
Quality of the Theory of Change <u>Purpose:</u> to set out the TOC at Evaluation in diagrammatic and narrative forms to support consistent project performance; to articulate the causal pathways with drivers and assumptions and justify any reconstruction necessary to assess the project's performance. To include:	Final report (coverage/omissions): All expected sections are included in the section on the project theory of change. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): This section of the report presents a reconstructed theory of change (TOC at evaluation) in both diagrammatic and text form. The	6

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
- description of how the <i>TOC at Evaluation</i>⁴² was designed (who was involved etc) - confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions - articulation of causal pathways - identification of drivers and assumptions - identification of key actors in the change process - summary of the reconstruction/results re-formulation in tabular form. <i>The two results hierarchies (original/formal revision and reconstructed) should be presented as a two-column table to show clearly that, although wording and placement may have changed, the results 'goal posts' have not been 'moved'. This table may have initially been presented in the Inception Report and should appear somewhere in the Main Evaluation report.</i>	section also presents reconstruction of results in the prescribed format while providing justification for the reconstruction. The ToC also articulates the causal pathways and identifies the key assumptions, drivers and actors involved in the change process.	
Quality of Key Findings within the Report <u>Presentation of evidence:</u> nature of evidence should be clear (interview, document, survey, observation, online resources etc) and evidence should be explicitly triangulated unless noted as having a single source. <u>Consistency within the report:</u> all parts of the report should form consistent support for findings and performance ratings, which should be in line with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix. <u>Findings Statements (where applicable):</u> The frame of reference for a finding should be an individual evaluation criterion or a strategic question from the TOR. A finding should go beyond description and uses analysis to provide insights that aid learning specific to the evaluand. In some cases a findings statement may articulate a key element that has determined the performance rating of a criterion. Findings will frequently provide insight into 'how' and/or 'why' questions.	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The findings presented are evidence based and consistent throughout the report. The findings presented in the report provide deeper analysis and go beyond describing the "what" and tackle the "why" and "how".	6
Quality of 'Strategic Relevance' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present evidence and analysis of project strategic relevance with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval. To include: Assessment of the evaluand's relevance vis-à-vis: - Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities - Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities - Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities - Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or	Final report (coverage/omissions): This section of the report tackles all the dimensions of strategic relevance as expected. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The evaluation report presents a good analysis of the relevance of the evaluand to the strategic priorities of UNEP, GEF and the Global, Regional, Sub-regional and national priorities of the target countries.	6

⁴² During the Inception Phase of the evaluation process a *TOC at Evaluation Inception* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the evaluation process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Evaluation*.

	UNEP Evaluation Office Comments	Final Report Rating
during inception/mobilisation ⁴³), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.		
Quality of the 'Quality of Project Design' Section Purpose: to present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the project design, on the basis that the detailed assessment was presented in the Inception Report.	Final report (coverage/omissions): The evaluation report includes a section on Quality of Project Design as expected. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The quality of project design section presents a balanced critique of both the strengths and weaknesses in project design.	5
Quality of the 'Nature of the External Context' Section Purpose: to describe and recognise, when appropriate, key <u>external</u> features of the project's implementing context that limited the project's performance (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval ⁴⁴), and how they affected performance. While additional details of the implementing context may be informative, this section should clearly record whether or not a major and unexpected disrupting event took place during the project's life in the implementing sites.	Final report (coverage/omissions): The evaluation report includes a section on that analyses the nature of the external context. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report presents an excellent analysis of the project implementation context that covers the negative externalities that affected project implementation. The analysis also includes an analysis of the effects of these negative externalities and mitigations measures put in place by the project.	6
Quality of 'Effectiveness' Section (i) Availability of Outputs: Purpose: to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the outputs made available to the intended beneficiaries. To include: - a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget - assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets - assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries - identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Final report (coverage/omissions): The report presents a section that analyses the availability of all planned project outputs. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report presents an evidence-based and detailed analysis of the availability of outputs by comparing achievement with targets. Also included is the analysis of the quality, timeliness of the delivery of the outputs and effects on disadvantaged groups.	6
ii) Achievement of Project Outcomes: Purpose: to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries. This may include behaviour changes at	Final report (coverage/omissions): The report presents a section that analyses the achievement of project outcomes.	6

⁴³ A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

⁴⁴ Note that 'political upheaval' does not include regular national election cycles, but unanticipated unrest or prolonged disruption. The potential delays or changes in political support that are often associated with the regular national election cycle should be part of the project's design and addressed through adaptive management of the project team.

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an individual or collective level. To include: - a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries - assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets - discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself - any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work - identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The evaluation presents a well-reasoned analysis on the achievement of project outcomes. The analysis also includes evidence of uptake of project outputs by the target beneficiaries and effects of project outcomes on disadvantaged groups. The report also compares the level of achievement with project targets.	
(iii) Likelihood of Impact: <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to likelihood of impact, including an assessment of the extent to which drivers and assumptions necessary for change to happen, were seen to be holding. To include: - an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and change processes can be shown - an explanation of the roles played by key actors and change agents - explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out - identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Final report (coverage/omissions): The evaluation report includes a section on the analysis of the likelihood of impact. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report includes a good analysis of the likelihood of impact. The analysis also includes the actors involved the change process, an analysis of the drivers and assumptions.	5
Quality of 'Financial Management' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under financial management and include a completed 'financial management' table (may be annexed). Consider how well the report addresses the following: <i>adherence</i> to UNEP's financial policies and procedures <i>completeness</i> of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used <i>communication</i> between financial and project management staff	Final report (coverage/omissions): The report includes a section that assesses quality of project financial management. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The evaluation report presents an analysis of the project financial management. The analysis adequately covers adherence to UNEP's financial policies and procedures, completeness of financial information, and communication between financial and project management staff.	6
Quality of 'Efficiency' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under efficiency (i.e. the primary categories of cost-effectiveness and timeliness). To include: time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe	Final report (coverage/omissions): The report includes a section on measures by the project to ensure efficiency. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): This section of the report presents an analysis of the two dimensions of efficiency i.e. time and cost	6

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- discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. - implications of any delays and no cost extensions - the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	effectiveness. The analysis includes the cost effectiveness measures put in place by the project key of which include leveraging pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships for synergy. Also included in the analysis are the effects of the project extensions on project performance and the project's carbon footprint.	
Quality of 'Monitoring and Reporting' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the evaluand's monitoring and reporting. Consider how well the report addresses the following: - quality of the monitoring design and budgeting (<i>including SMART results with measurable indicators, resources for MTE/R etc.</i>) - quality of monitoring of project implementation (<i>including use of monitoring data for adaptive management</i>) - quality of project reporting (e.g. <i>PIMS and donor reports</i>) \	Final report (coverage/omissions): A section of the quality pf monitoring and reporting is included in the evaluation report. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The evaluation report presents a detailed analysis of the performance of the project in relation to the three dimensions of monitoring and reporting i.e. quality of the monitoring design and budgeting, quality of monitoring of project implementation and quality of project reporting. The report analyses the project's monitoring plan, suitability of project indicators, availability of baseline values and ongoing data collection. The report also provides a balanced critique of the project reporting arrangements.	6
Quality of 'Sustainability' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under sustainability (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level). Consider how well the report addresses the following: - socio-political sustainability - financial sustainability - institutional sustainability	Final report (coverage/omissions): The report includes a section on the tree dimensions of sustainability. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report presents a well reason and detailed analysis of the three dimensions of sustainability i.e. socio-political, financial and institutional sustainability.	6
Quality of Factors Affecting Performance Section <u>Purpose:</u> These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors. Consider how well the evaluation report, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections, covers the following cross-cutting themes: - preparation and readiness - quality of project management and supervision⁴⁵	Final report (coverage/omissions): The evaluation report includes a section that analyses each of the factors affecting project performance. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The evaluation report includes an excellent analysis of the factors affecting project performance. These include: preparation and readiness, quality of project management and supervision,	6

⁴⁵ In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project

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- stakeholder participation and co-operation - responsiveness to human rights and gender equality - environmental and social safeguards - country ownership and driven-ness - communication and public awareness	stakeholder participation and co-operation, responsiveness to human rights and gender equality, environmental and social safeguards, country ownership and driven-ness, communication and public awareness.	
Quality of the Conclusions Section (i) Conclusions Narrative: <u>Purpose:</u> to present summative statements reflecting on prominent aspects of the <u>performance of the evaluand as a whole</u>, they should be derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the evaluation process. To include: - compelling narrative providing an integrated summary of the strengths and weakness in overall performance (achievements and limitations) of the project - clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions - human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention should be discussed explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions were considered, addressed or impacted on)	Final report (coverage/omissions): The evaluation report includes a conclusions section which includes summative statements on the performance of the evaluand. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The report presents concise summative statements on the performance of the evaluand as a whole. The report also includes human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention and clear and succinct response to the key strategic questions.	6
ii) Utility of the Lessons: <u>Purpose:</u> to present both positive and negative lessons that have potential for wider application and use (replication and generalization) Consider how well the lessons achieve the following: - are rooted in real project experiences (i.e. derived from explicit evaluation findings or from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future) - briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful - do not duplicate recommendations	Final report (coverage/omissions): The report presents lessons learned in the prescribed format. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The lessons learned section presents lessons derived from real project implementation experiences and have wide application in similar interventions / contexts.	6
(iii) Utility and Actionability of the Recommendations: <u>Purpose:</u> to present proposals for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results. Consider how well the lessons achieve the following: - are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when - include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions - represent a measurable performance target in order that the Evaluation Office can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations. NOTES:	Final report (coverage/omissions): The report includes recommendations aimed at addressing problems in project execution and proposed actions to ensure sustainability of project results. The recommendations are also presented in the prescribed format. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The recommendations presented are actionable and are derived from actual project implementation challenges and desire to increase likelihood of sustainability of project results.	5

management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP. This includes providing the answers to the questions on Core Indicator Targets, stakeholder engagement, gender responsiveness, safeguards and knowledge management, required for the GEF portal.

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(i) In cases where the recommendation is addressed to a third party, compliance can only be monitored and assessed where a contractual/legal agreement remains in place. Without such an agreement, the recommendation should be formulated to say that UNEP project staff should pass on the recommendation to the relevant third party in an effective or substantive manner. The effective transmission by UNEP of the recommendation will then be monitored for compliance. (ii) Where a new project phase is already under discussion or in preparation with the same third party, a recommendation can be made to address the issue in the next phase.		
Quality of Report Structure and Presentation (i) Structure and completeness of the report: To what extent does the report follow the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete?	Final report (coverage/omissions): The report is complete and follows the Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines.	6
(ii) Writing and formatting: Consider whether the report is well written (clear English language and grammar) with language that is adequate in quality and tone for an official document? Do visual aids, such as maps and graphs convey key information?	Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The evaluation report is written in clear English language and uses visual aids (figures and tables) appropriately.	6
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING	Highly Satisfactory	5.9