

WIOSAP MID-TERM REVIEW REPORT SUMMARY

MTR used a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders were kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. The MTR Consultant maintained during the review process close communication and information exchange with the PMU. A Review Framework was created to serve as a general guide during the review process. The framework, based on the criteria presented below, provided direction for the MTR, particularly for the processing of relevant data:

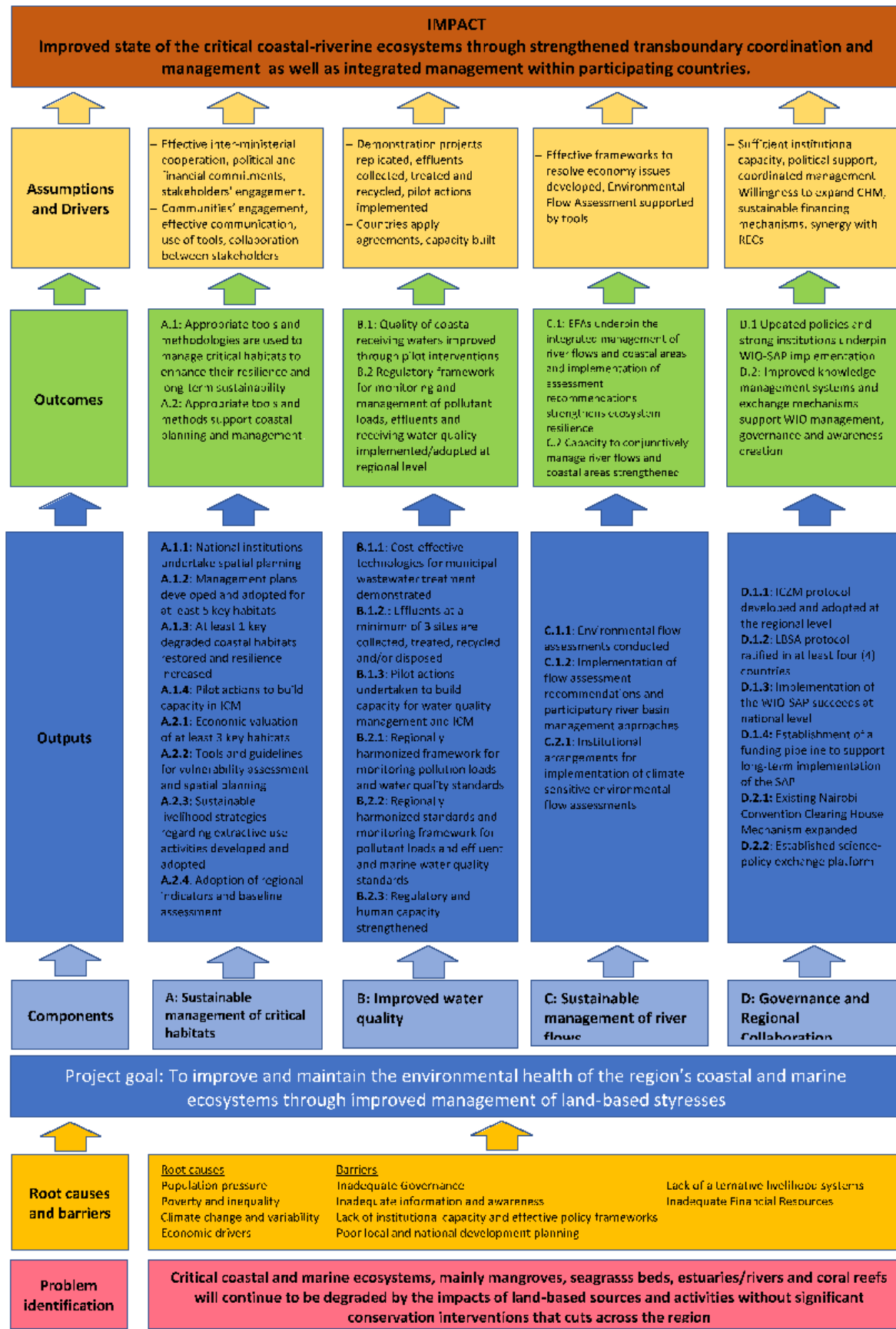
- A. **Strategic Relevance:** How does the project relate to the main objectives of the UNEP MTS, PoW and Strategic Priorities; GEF International Waters (IW) focal area; environment and development priorities at the global, regional, and national levels; and what is the level of complementarity with the existing interventions?
- B. **Effectiveness:** To what extent have the expected outcomes and outputs of the project been achieved? What is the likelihood of impacts the project will achieve in reality? Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward, reduced environmental stress and/or improved ecological status?
- C. **Financial Management:** What is the rate of disbursement of funds relative to the achievement of the project's outcomes and outputs? Were the UNEP's financial management policies followed?
- D. **Efficiency:** Was the project implemented efficiently, in-line with international and national norms and standards? What was the timeliness of the project's execution?
- E. **Monitoring and Reporting:** Was the monitoring plan implemented? Is the monitoring system efficient in tracking of results and progress towards project milestones and targets as indicated in the PRF?
- F. **Sustainability:** To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results? Is there an exit strategy?

GEF six-point scale for performance

GEF Performance Description	Alternative description on the same scale
HS = Highly Satisfactory	<i>Excellent.</i> The project had no shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency
S = Satisfactory	<i>Well above average.</i> The project had minor shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency
MS = Moderately Satisfactory	<i>Average.</i> The project had moderate shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency
MU = Moderately Unsatisfactory	<i>Below Average.</i> The project had significant shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency
U = Unsatisfactory	<i>Poor.</i> The project had major shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency
HU = Highly Unsatisfactory	<i>Very poor.</i> The project had severe shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency
Note: Sustainability is rated according to likelihood (Highly Unlikely to Highly Likely); External context is rated as Favourable or Unfavourable	

THEORY OF CHANGE

The TOC depicts the causal pathways from project's root causes and barriers towards outputs (goods and services delivered by the project), outcomes (changes resulting from the use made by key stakeholders of project outputs) and finally leading to impact (long-term changes in environmental benefits and living conditions). The ToC further defines the external factors that influence change along the major pathways; i.e. factors that affect whether one result can lead to the next. These external factors are either drivers (when the project has a certain level of control/influence) or assumptions (when the project has no control).



Indicator Ratings

Criterion	Summary comments	Rating
Strategic relevance	The WIO-SAP project is highly relevant for the Western Indian Ocean Region in view of increasing threats to its coastal and marine ecosystems . The project is fully aligned with the relevant focal areas of UNEP, its Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work, as well as with the GEF International Waters Focal Area . The project is fully aligned to global environmental priorities, in particular the 2030 Agenda's SDGs 13 (Climate Change) and 14 (Life below Water).	HS
Quality of project design	Overall, the project design is robust, albeit quite ambitious for some outputs and activities . Even if Theory of Change has not been developed during the project design phase, causal pathways from project outputs through outcomes towards impacts are clear. The project incorporates 26 local and national demonstration projects, contributing to the countries' ownership. Some weaknesses in the PRF are observed including discrepancies in the end-of-project targets. No mid-term targets were provided in the PRF.	S
Effectiveness	Project is behind schedule due to a number of factors such as delay in staffing, the impacts of COVID-19 and over ambitiousness of some project outputs , such as A.1.1 (Spatial planning in coastal and marine areas) and D.1.1 (development and adoption of the ICZM Protocol). However, the pace of the implementation of the project has been improving recently.	MS
Financial management	The expenditure rate of 70.1% (December 2021) and is roughly commensurate with the rate of implementation progress. It indicates satisfactory overall execution in terms of spending. The budget has been successfully revised to accommodate unspent funds from one year to another. Financial reporting is timely and regular . In early years, actual expenditures were behind revised approved annual budgets, but since 2018 this has significantly improved. COVID-19 temporarily affected the implementation and disbursement but it has been improving in the second half of 2021. Co-financing is an area of financial management which will have to be significantly improved .	S
Efficiency	Overall efficiency has been negatively affected by the long delay between project design, approval, inception and establishing the functional PMU . One "no-cost" extension was granted	MS
Monitoring and reporting	A comprehensive M&E plan, which follows standard GEF and UNEP's procedures, along with roles and responsibilities, is included in the ProDoc and being implemented with oversight of the Task Manager. However, the ProDoc's PRF does not have mid-term targets, while the end-of-project targets in several instances, in particular the quantitative ones, are not the same as those mentioned in the description of the project's activities . The PMU has complied with monitoring and reporting requirements, but the reporting on co-financing obligations has been late.	S
Sustainability	Given as HL, L, LL, UL, HL	
<i>Socio-political</i>	The WIO-SAP project has been building a strong foundation for socio-political sustainability, in particular through implementation of a large number of nationally-based demonstration projects . Although the projects are currently are at different stages of implementation, they have managed to stimulate national and local support for the intervention as they are producing tangible results ranging from creating enabling environment that will support future	L

Criterion	Summary comments	Rating
	<i>initiatives and actions to undertaking concrete interventions on-the-ground</i> which will produce tangible and visible results in improving the state of coastal and marine ecosystems in the region. Building capacity at professional levels and among local communities for sustainable marine and coastal ecosystems management will sustain professional capacity building after the project ends.	
<i>Financial</i>	The WIO-SAP project received a considerable level of pledged co-financing, both at national and regional level, but a large portion of it has yet to be reported. The project has managed to create several streams of potential co-financing for future activities.	L
<i>Institutional</i>	<i>The basic premise of the WIO-SAP project is that it is a process that would be sustained beyond the life of the project through the Nairobi Convention mechanisms.</i> Two pivotal activities of the project are development and adoption of the ICZM Protocol and the support to the ratification of the LBSA Protocol, which involved participating governments and other regional and national stakeholders in an extensive negotiation process which has secured their long-term support of the process and commitment to the successful implementation of those agreements. This will also ensure the continuation of project activities beyond its lifespan. <i>The project has mobilised various institutional partnerships focused on providing support to the governance and management of coastal and marine ecosystems in the WIO region.</i>	HL
Factors affecting performance		
<i>Preparation and readiness</i>	Project took some time to take off the ground, first between initiation, approval and start of the implementation and then time was lost to fully set up the PMU. This delay has resulted in some momentum lost.	MU
<i>Quality of project management and supervision</i>	<i>Overall, the quality of project management and supervision has been of a good standard by the EA.</i> The PMU is effectively coordinating this complex project and is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing circumstances at the regional and national levels.	HS
<i>Stakeholder participation and cooperation</i>	<i>The ProDoc describes a wide range of potential partners. Many of these stakeholders were involved during the project design phase. During the implementation of the project there has been a lot of stakeholders' support at different levels, and in particular through National Implementation Committees (NIC), and regional thematic Task Forces.</i> Linkages to poverty alleviation or impact on economic livelihoods have been considered and addressed in the project, in particular in the demonstration projects.	HS
<i>Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality</i>	<i>Human rights are not explicitly addressed in the project document, but its outcomes are implicitly and directly relevant to universally recognised human rights, such as the right to livelihoods, food, clean water and sanitation, and a clean and safe environment.</i> Gender considerations are explicitly addressed in the project design at the regional and national levels, with provisions for advancing gender mainstreaming within policy and capacity building in support of all the project components	HS
<i>Environmental, social and</i>	<i>The WIO-SAP project is in its nature a project that aims at improving the livelihoods of the local population, which is primarily achieved through implementation of large number of local demonstration</i>	HS

Criterion	Summary comments	Rating
<i>economic safeguards</i>	<i>projects that are involving local communities in governance of these projects securing, thus, the achievement of results that will benefit their well-being. Furthermore, the WIO-SAP project's objective is to improve the state of marine and coastal ecosystems in the WIO region and its activities are not producing negative impacts on the state of these ecosystems.</i>	
<i>Communication and public awareness</i>	<i>Very good progress has been made in communication and public awareness at the regional, national and local levels (where demonstration projects were implemented). Communication and experience sharing between project partners and with participating countries has been undertaken with two activities: Clearing House Mechanisms and the Science to Policy Exchange Platform, both of which have been implemented in the context of the Nairobi Convention. Efforts to enhance visibility and publicity of the WIOSAP Project have also been geared up resulting in extensive media coverage of project outputs and demonstration projects at various levels: national, regional and global media platforms.</i>	HS
Overall project rating		Satisfactory

CONCLUSIONS

1. **The WIO-SAP project's strategy, through implementation of SAP, is consistent with major objectives of GEF International Waters Focal Area aiming at pollution reduction** through enhancing institutions for improved ecosystem management and coastal and marine spatial planning based on ICZM principles. It is also consistent with UNEP priorities, embodied in its Mid-term Strategy and Programme of Work. Results in the first 5 years of the project show contribution to achievement of those objectives.
2. **The strong point of the project is integration of a large group of stakeholders in its implementation, thus raising the opportunities for the project's long-term sustainability. Local communities have a strong say in the management of the demonstration projects.** The PMU is efficiently managing this complex project. Following a very slow start, the project has gained traction.
3. **The project is overly ambitious in some components. For example, the development and adoption of the marine and coastal spatial plans (Component A) can turn into a slow process that can take more time than has been envisaged.** The PMU understood this shortcoming and has adopted a flexible and adaptive approach of creating an enabling environment by focusing on capacity building and developing regional MSP strategy, instead of local spatial coastal and marine plans. This will create an enabling environment for an effective MSP and coastal spatial planning process in the region that will facilitate development and adoption of the local MSP and coastal plans in a longer term
4. **Progress achieved by 31 December 2021 has been variable among the four technical components of the project. Components A and D have advanced the most in terms of percentage of planned implementation achieved (73.5% and 71.5% respectively)**
5. **Component B is somehow less advanced and the average rate of progress is 59.4%.** The implementation has been somewhat delayed due to the *complexity of interventions as well as COVID-19.*
6. **Component C (Sustainable management of river flows) has exhibited slower progress than other three components (55%).** This was caused by COVID-19. However, a number of activities have been undertaken including assessment of river flows quality and quantity, biodiversity assessment in the

priority basins, ecosystem services assessment, communication with the local communities resulting in their raised awareness.

7. **In Component D, the focus has been on adoption and ratification of two landmark regional protocols: ICZM and LBSA.** This outcome is perhaps one that best integrates all the other outcomes. For this reason, the process of their finalisation, adoption and ratification can be slow and extend beyond the duration of the project. There has been good progress in achieving this outcome with the revitalisation of the **NC Clearing House Mechanism (CHM)**, in particular by adding **functions related to the MPAs**. The **Science-to-Policy Platform** has been established and a number of important regional meetings organised. **Development of pipeline funding initiatives has also remained a key area of focus for sustainability.**
8. **Implementation of the WIO-SAP project, after initial delay, has been largely on track since. It is important that national project coordination structures have been in place as they largely facilitate implementation of the project at national and local level.**

LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Long period of project design and delay between CEO's approval of the project and start of the project implementation, as well as delays in early stages of the project's implementation put the project and the implementing and executing agencies at significant reputational risk.** The delay may have repercussions on the project design, because during the longer periods of time some starting premises for the project's strategy may change and this may require change in the project's design, which may additionally extend the delay.
2. **Good coordination is essential for successful implementation of complex projects.** Projects which are implemented simultaneously at regional and national/local levels have to be supported by a dedicated, highly professional and well supported project management unit. Existing and, if necessary, new institutional mechanisms should be used or established. Local and national stakeholders, ranging from the government, scientific institutions, professional organisations and associations and others should be involved in the national and local actions. International organisations operating in the project area involved in similar projects should also be involved.
3. **Support to local communities is the best buy in for the project and a guarantee for long-term sustainability of the project results.** Planning demonstration projects that engage local communities is critical for the success of the project. The project's design should aim at producing tangible results early in the project to stimulate continued interest of the local communities.
4. **Create synergy with complementary projects in the region.** The synergy can be formal, like sharing staffing and organising joint meetings, as well as technical when projects are dealing with the same or similar technical subjects and produce outputs that are used by both.
5. **Establish an effective implementation monitoring system.** The system should be able to monitor with a high level of precision the **actual implementation of project activities** and **link with the disbursement** as well as **reported co-financing**. All three should be interlinked and at any moment the project management should be able to assess the actual status of implementation.
6. **Gender mainstreaming should be one of the most important features of the project.** Demonstration projects are pivotal elements of the project to achieve this objective. It is at the local level where women can best see the benefits of the project's interventions and their involvement in the execution of the local demonstration projects is critical.

7. **Outputs related to capacity building, institutional strengthening and communication and public awareness are more likely to be completed by mid-term and/or end-of-project than actual change in the state of the environment.** Project design should be careful in establishing the change in the environmental status because very often these changes take much longer than the lifespan of the project. The project can only initiate the course and create conditions that will ensure respective activities are implemented beyond the project's life.
8. **It is absolutely necessary to define the mid-term targets.** In the absence of these it is difficult to monitor the implementation of the project and assess the rate of its success at mid-term.
9. **Planning the time for implementation of the project's activities should be realistic.** Overly ambitious projects may result in low assessment rate. Planning adoption and ratification of regional legal documents within the project's lifespan can be risky because these initiatives can take a very long time to negotiate among parties.
10. **Overall conclusion:** The MTR rating for the WIO-SAP project's overall performance is **Satisfactory**, indicating that the project has achieved most of its objectives by mid-term, albeit with some delays that have affected its efficiency and effectiveness. There are high prospects that it will at least keep this rating by the end of the project, if not raise to Highly satisfactory, if corrective actions will be taken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. **Recommendation 1: Revise the WIO-SAP Project Results Framework (PRF). There are inconsistencies between the description of the outputs and activities in the Project Document and the quantitative end-of-project targets in the PRF.** The changed targets reflect the current implementation status of the demonstration projects. The overall number of outputs, activities and deliverables will not be reduced.

Action: *Align inconsistencies between the description of the outputs and activities in the Project Document and the quantitative end-of-project targets in the PRF*

Status: *Revised PRF is ready for presentation during PSC for approval*

When: At the 6th PSC

12. **Recommendation 2: Develop indicators on gender mainstreaming and integrate them into the PRF and the monitoring system.** The PRF does not contain disaggregated indicators showing participation of women in the project's activities. The PRF should develop quantitative end-of-project targets within the existing indicators.

Action: *Provide for gender disaggregation in the revised PRF*

Status: *Incorporated into the PRF*

When: At the 6th PSC

13. **Recommendation 3: Review all pending activities and outputs and decide on how best to implement them, and which institutions could assist them.** Although the PMU is fully staffed, it should be considered to hire additional assistance to secure the full implementation of the planned activities.

Action: *1. Prepare a matrix of pending activities, 2. determine resource requirements, timelines and*

3. *ensure appropriate capacitation for effective delivery*

Status: *Workplan for 2022 and 2023 already revised/developed and budget revision to be presented to the PSC for consideration*

When: At the 6th PSC

14. **Recommendation 4: Improve reporting on co-financing. Prepare annual co-financing reports containing, as a minimum, the information on the amount of annual co-financing provided by each partner; distribution of co-financing per component/outcome/output/activity.** The current system of co-financing reporting is very basic and it contains only the figure of reported co-financing by the implementing partner with no further analysis.

Strategy: *Direct engagement with FPs and assigning a team of two colleagues internally to follow up on this and offer FPs any necessary support*

Action: *Several reminders already sent to Focal Points. Only 2 FPs have provided their co-financing commitments. Reminders will go to the rest of the FPs.*

When: Within 3 months and more follow ups thereafter

15. **Recommendation 5: Step up efforts towards implementing partners to provide co-financing in accordance with their pledges.** Current level of co-financing is below expectation, and a large number of implementing partners has reported no co-financing at all.

Strategy: *Direct engagement with partners and assigning a team of two colleagues internally to follow up on this and offer partners any necessary support*

Action: *Several reminders already sent to partners.*

When: Within 3 months and more follow ups thereafter

16. **Recommendation 6: Prepare exit/sustainability strategy for WIO-SAP. This should include a strategy for sustaining all the WIO-SAP partnerships, as well as national implementation committees and local communities that have participated in demonstration projects.** Important to facilitate uptake and sustainability of the project results. The strategy should consider the post-WIO-SAP activities and consider new financing in addition to those already secured.

Action: *1. Developing more pipeline funding opportunities (GEF, GCF); 2. Hire a consultant to work with IPs and partners to develop exit/sustainability*

Status: *1. GEF 7 PIF already developed and submitted for the Kenya-Tanzania TBCA; 2. GEF 8 submission under consideration; and 3. GCF project under development; 4. Should explore more bilateral funding from Public sector to complement SIDA*

When: 12 months

17. **Recommendation 7: Raise awareness on the value of demonstration projects for the local communities.** The project has integrated many local communities in implementation of local demonstration projects, with tangible results achieved. The project's communications products do not specifically target the local population and explain the value added of the initiatives that they participate in. This recommendation is important for the local buy-in for the future initiatives as well.

Action: 1. Hire a comms consultant to develop human stories on project success targeting local communities in beneficiary countries

When: 4 months

18. **Recommendation 8: Accelerate efforts towards Nairobi Convention Contracting Parties to adopt/sign the ICZM protocol and target several countries that might ratify it.** This activity has been delayed, partly because of the complexity of a negotiation and development process and impacts of COVID-19.

Action: Convening a physical meeting of Plenipotentiaries by Q2/Q3 for adoption and thereafter work with countries in ratification thereof

When: Until the closure of the project

19. **Recommendation 9: Implementation of the Water Quality Monitoring Framework/Guidelines and associated capacity building at national level.** This should be ramped up in the remaining period in order to achieve this outcome's major end-of-project target.

Action: Contracting CSIR in the next 2 months as key partner to: 1. Support development of national WQ monitoring frameworks barring country requests/engagements, 2. then national level capacity building

Status: Regional WQ workshop on the framework and guidelines held in Nov last year focusing on RTF on WQ and regional WQ experts, some countries requested for national level support

When: Until the closure of the project

20. **Recommendation 10: Accelerate efforts towards all Nairobi Convention Contracting Parties that have not signed the LBSA Protocol yet to sign it, and towards 2 countries to ratify it.** Full implementation of the LBSA Protocol will be possible when the majority of Contracting Parties ratify the protocol.

Action: Actively engage South Africa, France, Kenya and Madagascar to track progress and any support for ratification

Status: Four countries have already ratified and 2 more to ratify for the Protocol to become operational

When: Until the closure of the project

21. **Recommendation 11: Implementing partners should begin consolidating and documenting lessons, good practices, and experiences, and increasing interaction with each other. The WIO-SAP PMU should promote opportunities for systematic sharing of knowledge and experiences through Clearing House Mechanism, for example, regular webinars and workshops and exchange visits of project participants.** Lessons, good practices, and experiences are already being generated, particularly by some of the national and local demonstration projects. Implementing partners can benefit from sharing of these outputs during ongoing project execution.

Actions: Three actions proposed: 1. Hiring MEL expert to capture lessons learnt and ensure uploading to the CHM; 2. Organising thematic webinars with relevant partners to promote project success and share lessons learnt; and 3. Organize targeted exchange visits e.g. between WQ projects, EFAs, restoration and community livelihoods; 4. Promotion of project activities at the 12th WIOMSA Symposium

Immediate actions: 1. Regional Marine Litter Workshop with WIOMSA, UNEP GPA; 2. Special session at 12th WIOMSA Symposium (FARI and WIOMSA); 3. Mini-symposium at 12th WIOMSA Symposium on S2S with

SwAM, Republic of South Africa Government, SUA, Southern Waters; 4. MPA capacity building with SwAM and WIOMSA

When: Until the closure of the project

22. **Recommendation 12:** The countries should consider further actions to accelerate implementation of the MSP projects in the region, possibly by developing a project proposal to be financed by GEF. The MSP projects should be implemented nationally or in the transboundary context. Under the assumption that an enabling environment was created with the implementation of the MSP Strategy, capacity building, management plans and mapping of resources, the desirable future step would be to develop concrete planning projects that will include all relevant stakeholders and will consider, among other, Marine Protected Areas and the accelerating action towards integration of the Blue Economy in the WIO Region.

Action: 1. Considering GEF 8 proposal focusing on MSP, MPAs, LLMA, Ocean Governance (Combining targets in ASCLME and WIOSAP SAPs); 2. Engage GEF International Waters for advice on concurrent submissions considering the TBCA submission under GEF 7

When: 12 months

23. **Recommendation 13:** Develop a proposal for a “no-cost” extension of the project for 12 months until December 2023 to allow sufficient time to achieve outcomes that have been delayed. The project had a slow start and was affected by the COVID-19 pandemics. In addition, some activities have been over ambitiously planned.

Action: Convening of urgent PSC and present on project progress and MTR report for consideration and approval

NB: Current demos SSFAs to expire by June 2022 and thus timeliness will be key

Actions: PSC documentation ready: 1. Technical progress report; 2. Expenditure report; 3. Concept for the meeting; 4. 2022/23 workplans; 5. MTR Report; 6. MTR Recommendations Action Plan; 7. Revised Budget revision for 2022/2023

When: 6th PSC in the 1st Week of June 2022; physical meeting

24. **Recommendation 14:** Expedite disbursement of additional support approved by PSC to qualified IPs: Eleven IPs qualified to receive additional having successfully met the PSC approved criteria to enhance success/impact of respective demo projects. Project extension is critical for successful utilization of the additional support

Action: Convening of PSC for extension as already advised by Implementing Agency (IA). Preliminary consultations on this extension already held with IA for concurrence but PSC action required for formal request to IA and GEF

Status: SSFAs amendments in drafts already awaiting extension approval

When: Immediately extension is secured