

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SUSTAINABLE OCEANS

19-20 JULY 2016 | THE CAPITOL HOTEL TOKYU | TOKYO, JAPAN

SESSION FOUR: BUILDING RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

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Seychelles Marine Spatial Planning Initiative: Conservation, Climate Adaptation & Sustainable Financing

Victoria, Mahe, Seychelles

1) What is the focus of this project?

The Seychelles Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Initiative is a 6-year process which started in 2014, focused on planning for and the management of the sustainable and long-term use and health of the Seychelles' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In accordance with a sustainable financing initiative to fund activities for conservation and climate change adaptation through the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust, the MSP Initiative will develop a marine plan to identify and propose areas to meet a 30% marine protection goal for the EEZ by 2020. This is part of Seychelles' Blue Economy initiatives to increase the country's resilience and environmental protection, financed in part by a national debt restructuring scheme to support the new Trust.

2) Which organizations and other partners are involved?

The MSP Initiative is an initiative of the Seychelles Government, with planning and facilitation managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and TNC Canada in partnership with the UNDP GEF Programme Coordinating Unit. The Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC) is the government authority that leads the project, working closely with all relevant ministries and authorities in the country. The development of the MSP Initiative requires full stakeholder input from all relevant sectors, including representative from commercial fishing, tourism and marine charters, biodiversity conservation, renewable energy, port authority, maritime safety, and non-renewable resources.

3) What activities or tools have proven successful in building capacity?

Marine spatial planning is new to Seychelles, however the country has much experience in sector by sector planning in marine and coastal waters, and the MSP is building from this foundation of expertise and knowledge. Capacity building includes training local project managers in the MSP process and increasing the number of people that know and understand how to develop and implement marine spatial plans, especially related to effective adaptation planning. For example, the MSP governance framework details the capacity needed to develop a marine plan in Seychelles, including an Executive Team, Steering Committee, three Technical Working Groups, and more than 75 other marine stakeholders. The framework includes 19 members on the Steering Committee and 40 members on the Technical Working Groups, with individuals from Government and Parastatal agencies, Non-Government Organizations, the private sector and the marine community. Since February 2014, there have been over 15 stakeholder meetings and more than 100 participants have been invited to the meetings in Seychelles. Additional capacity has been built at the MEECC in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to create and maintain a spatial database for all information used to develop the marine plan.

4) What challenges have been experienced, specifically related to maintaining a focus on capacity building and/or replicating the project in other areas?

Challenges in capacity building in Seychelles include consistency of members from all sectors to engage in the process. Members of the Steering Committee and Technical Working Groups are sometimes unavailable and the MSP has created both member and alternate positions to accommodate schedules, however, this can result in a lack of continuity in the decision-making processes and delays in receiving stakeholder comments on all technical products. As in other MSP processes, some stakeholder capacity funding has been provided to assist with participation and review. The sustainability of this approach is a challenge, however, especially as the zoning will be further refined in the second phase and decisions need to be made efficiently and with full stakeholder buy-in.

Challenges to focusing on capacity building in this project arise because there is limited capacity on the MSP Initiative Core Team, thus most of the effort is focused on developing the marine plan and implementation tools. Efforts are being made to document and publish the process, zoning methodologies and technical planning tools used in the Seychelles MSP so that they can be replicated in other Small Island Developing States however the Core Team's time is limited here also. There is a need for learning exchanges with other island states both in terms of climate adaptation planning for marine and coastal resources and for ensuring effective financial management for related activities through mechanisms such as trust funds. It is challenging to find the time and resources necessary to focus at a national level across such a substantial marine area while also increasing capacity for long-term project management.

5) What are the next steps for the project?

The next steps of the project are to complete technical products and tools to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change and increase effective environmental management. These products will include an MSP Atlas, and a marine plan in Phase 1, and then begin the process of refining the design in Phase 2. Phase 1 began in February 2014 and lays the foundation of the marine plan by developing a coarse scale zoning design and draft management considerations with stakeholders. Phase 2 will begin in 2017 and will refine the zoning design and management considerations, in particular for the Territorial Sea (12 nautical miles). Next steps in Phase 2 also include an implementation plan, monitoring and review plan, and finalizing budgets and costs. To support improved marine management, Seychelles is also working to increase its capacity in government and civil society to effectively manage the new Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust, with financial workshops and diplomatic engagement with multilateral and bilateral funding sources.

Website: www.seymsp.com

