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CCLME Medium Size Project: “Towards sustainable management of the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME) – initial support to SAP implementation”

1. Under the previous phase (2010–2018), the member countries (Cabo Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, and the Gambia) prepared and endorsed a Strategic Action Programme (SAP) to address the degradation of the Canary Currently Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME) caused by overfishing, habitat modification and changes in water quality. The SAP focuses on solutions and management actions for the CCLME that will result in a healthy ecosystem, sustainably managed, providing services and equitable benefits for human well-being by 2030.
2. To capitalize on momentum and partnerships built during the previous CCLME project, the proposed Medium Size Project (MSP), funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), aims to create enabling conditions for the effective implementation of the CCLME SAP. To achieve this objective, the project will implement a set of activities in the framework of the following three components: (i) strengthening partnerships and fostering investment for CCLME SAP implementation; (ii) strengthening knowledge, management and capacity of fisheries institutions and communities for the sustainable use of transboundary fisheries resources and associated ecosystems; and (iii) communication, monitoring, and evaluation. The expected project duration was 18 months, but it has been extended until December 2023 with FAO serving as the implementing agency for the GEF funds.
3. After a two-year delay related to the recruitment of staff for the Regional Coordination Unit and the Covid-19 pandemic, the CCLME MSP was effectively launched in November 2021. Since then, and in accordance with the 2022 and 2023 annual action plans validated by the project steering committee, several activities have been carried out under the three project components.
4. **Component 1:** Strengthening partnerships and fostering investment for CCLME SAP implementation:
 - The project has finalized CCLME national consultative meetings on proposal recommendations on mechanism for multi-sectoral consortium and partnership agreement for SAP implementation in seven partners countries (Cabo Verde, the

Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Morocco, and Senegal). The draft recommendations from the second consultative meeting on multi-sectoral consortium and partnership agreement were finalized and will be submitted for endorsement in September-October 2023.

- The development of SAP financing strategy is ongoing. This activity was delayed because must be based on the recommendations on the establishment of the consortium partnership agreement, which are now formulated and under consideration by the multi-sectoral consortium.
- The development of the regional operational plan and the National Action Plans (NAPs), in each of the seven countries, based on the priorities identified in the SAP are under finalization and will be submitted for adoption by all stakeholders in July 2023.

5. **Component 2:** Strengthening knowledge, management and capacity of fisheries institutions and communities for the sustainable use of transboundary fisheries resources and associated ecosystems:

- The CCLME Ecosystem Analysis and Planning Working Group has been established and has undertaken an assessment and analysis of available scientific knowledge to identify gaps and /or scientific data and information on status of:
 - o Pelagic and demersal stocks and marine mammals and birds (with other vulnerable species).
 - o Critical habitats and threatened biodiversity.
 - o The quality of marine waters in the CCLME area.
- A roadmap was finalized during the second meeting of CCLME ecosystem Working Group held in Casablanca, Morocco, from 2–5 May 2023. The second meeting discussed the ecosystem characterization and functioning including impacts of climate change in the CCLME region.
- In the context of the strategic collaboration with the EAF-Nansen Programme, a transboundary ecosystem survey was undertaken on demersal species and small pelagic resources exploited in the CCLME.
- The project website regularly disseminates technical and scientific information related to the activities of CCLME and its partners.
- In collaboration with EAF-Nansen Programme, seven scientists (one from each CCLME country) were trained on the use of the ecosystem approach to fisheries implementation monitoring tool. Analysis of existing management plans for coherence with an ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) and sharing of best practices from fisheries management plan implementation is under finalization to support operationalization of the management framework in the seven CCLME countries.
- Draft content of training materials on the EAF is under development in collaboration with EAF-Nansen Programme and the West Africa Coastal Fisheries Initiative for fishing communities in CCLME area.

6. **Component 3:** Communication, monitoring, and evaluation:

- The CCLME project website is functioning, and the knowledge and technical reports related to the project activities are shared regularly (<https://www.fao.org/in-action/canary-current-lme/en/>).

- Communication materials from the main meetings organized by the project are stored and shared.
7. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MSP has been delayed by around two years. This delay was further lengthened due to the late physical set-up of the regional coordination unit and the drastic restriction of field activities in partner countries with very difficult internet access during this period. However, this MSP is contributing to the creation of an enabling environment for the effective implementation of the SAP project through the elaboration of:
 - a. Recommendations for the CCLME partnership consortium agreement;
 - b. CCLME multi-sectoral funding strategy;
 - c. CCLME gender strategy; and
 - d. Establishment of the ecosystem working group for the reinforcement of scientific knowledge on CCLME (v) the CCLME communication strategy.
 8. A concept note is under finalization to be submitted to the GEF for consideration under the framework for the formulation of the Project Identification Form (PIF).
 9. FAO wishes to undertake the SAP implementation project formulation that aims leveraging community-based, national and regional efforts to sustainably utilize fisheries resources, conserve critical habitats and ecosystems and improve water quality consistent with an ecosystem approach to management towards a long-term goal of improved healthy ocean ecosystems and sustainable Blue Transformation.
 10. The SAP project will be implemented through actions that are grouped into four interrelated components, all of which will contribute to maintaining the health of the CCLME and the well-being of the populations of the Northwest Africa region:
 - a. Sustainable management of fisheries through the implementation of an ecosystem approach and protection of vulnerable species;
 - b. Conservation and rehabilitation of critical habitats and biodiversity in the marine and coastal areas of the CCLME;
 - c. Management and policy reforms to improve the quality of water in marine, coastal and estuarine environments of the CCLME; and
 - d. Regional mechanism for effective governance and SAP implementation through cooperative planning, management, communication and monitoring of the CCLME.