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SUPPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A POLICY AND STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE FISHERIES SECTOR IN MAURITIUS

July 2024

SDGs:



Country:

Mauritius

Project Code:

TCP/MAR/3801

FAO Contribution:

USD 261 000

Duration:

1 August 2021–31 December 2023

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Implementing Partner

Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (MoBEMRFS).

Beneficiaries

Fishers in rural areas and their communities; whole population of Mauritius.

Country Programming Framework (CPF) Outputs

CPF Output 3.1: An efficient and effective administration and support services that responds to the aspirations for the development of the blue Economy are set up.



BACKGROUND

Since 2014, the MoBEMRFS (formerly known as the Ministry of Ocean Economy) in Mauritius, has unified various ocean-related departments to maximize the ocean's potential. By 2019, recognizing the efficiency challenges of this multi-sector ministry, the Mauritian Government sought support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). With its technical support, the ministry led a participatory review process, culminating in a multi-government stakeholder workshop, which identified institutional gaps and capacity constraints hindering progress in fulfilling the ocean/blue mandate.

The review concluded that while substantial economic benefits from the ocean would take decades, immediate steps could set the right course. An action plan and recommendations were made, focusing on the ministry, the broader ocean economy and capacity development. A major gap identified was the absence of an Ocean Economy Policy and Strategy.

It was anticipated that a successful policy development process and the adoption of an Ocean Economy Policy would allow for the sustainable growth of the ocean economy through improved governance, enhancing the social and economic well-being of the people of Mauritius.

As a Small Island Developing State, Mauritius is heavily influenced by the ocean and despite numerous opportunities in this sector, competition for access and control of nearshore resources is intense. These factors, along with the complexities of developing an ocean economy, made it challenging to establish a comprehensive policy for sector growth, and further delays in policy formulation could jeopardize the goal of doubling the ocean economy's contribution to Gross Domestic Product by 2025 and harm ocean health and the sustainability of vital natural resources.

Subsequently, FAO was requested to provide technical support through a Technical Cooperation Programme to facilitate the development of this policy by assisting the government in implementing a participatory policy development process, including related capacity building.

IMPACT

The successful development of a national ocean economy policy through this project, enhancing governance of the sector, will eventually contribute to its sustainable development also contributing to greater social and economic well-being for the people of Mauritius.

Furthermore, the policy's vision focuses on enhancing the country's Blue Economy activities within the Western Indian Ocean region, setting a global example for a resilient future. It aims to achieve the following objectives: sustainable expansion of fisheries production; promotion of advanced and inclusive mariculture; fostering innovation; building coastal climate adaptation capabilities; enhancing port infrastructure and shipping; improving ocean-based tourism; protecting marine habitats; and sustainably exploiting ocean renewable energy sources. Successfully implementing these goals will generate inclusive socioeconomic progress and improved livelihoods while safeguarding marine and coastal ecosystems for future generations.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

The proposed outputs and activities were meticulously designed to achieve the expected outcome of implementing a national Blue Economy Policy. Mauritius previously benefited from various technical assistance programmes from United Nations organizations and the World Bank. However, few recommendations from these programmes had been implemented, and there had been no assessment of the implementation levels by the Government of Mauritius. As a result, several fundamental recommendations for developing the blue economy had to be reiterated.

The project introduced several new recommendations, including:

- Policy Statement 1: Establish Cross-sectoral and Inclusive Governance Frameworks.
- Policy Statement 4: Adopt Information Communication Technology-driven Innovation and Research.
- Policy Statement 11: Commit to a Resilient Blue Economy in the Face of Climate Change.
- For Rodrigues: Policy Statement 3: Develop a Sustainable and Certified Seafood Processing Sector.

These new policy statements are crucial for advancing the blue economy in Mauritius, addressing gaps in governance, innovation, climate resilience and sustainable seafood processing.

The primary outcome of the project was the development and submission of a national Blue Economy Policy, the “Policy for Blue Economy in Mauritius”, which was achieved successfully. The policy document, produced in consultation with stakeholders in Mauritius and Rodrigues, was submitted to the Mauritian Government for cabinet approval and subsequent implementation. This policy presents a series of statements and measures designed to guide the development and advancement of the Blue Economy in Mauritius. Serving as a strategic document, it outlines the vision and key principles for the sustainable growth of ocean-related economic activities and the responsible development of priority sectors. It designates fisher’ and seafarers’ welfare funds and the fisher investment trust as the primary parastatal bodies. Additionally, it focuses on the following Blue Economy sectors and specifies their related challenges and opportunities: fisheries; aquaculture; seafood processing; tourism; ports and shipping; offshore extractive industry; deep-sea water for air conditioning; offshore renewable energy use; and marine biotechnology. The policy statements cover several topics: establishing a cross sectoral and inclusive governance framework; ensuring sustainable capture fisheries; promoting environmentally responsible aquaculture; advancing education, sensitization and public awareness for developing the future Blue Economy workforce; improving maritime transport, trade and infrastructure; promoting renewable energy development; encouraging sustainable, diverse and inclusive tourism; establishing coastal conservation and protection programmes; committing to a resilient Blue Economy that can cope with the impacts of climate change; unlocking the potential of off-lagoon fisheries; improving fisheries management; developing a certified seafood processing sector; and developing sustainable and climate-resilient water infrastructure.

More in detail, under Output 1, and despite the Ocean Economy Unit (OEU) not being established by the ministry at the time of writing, the project effectively built capacity by working with 18 senior officials from the ministry to facilitate policy development and implementation.

Under Output 2, the project successfully prioritized policy options by applying tools and analysis to multi-sector information, ensuring a comprehensive and informed approach.

Under Output 3, although the recruitment of the communication staff was hindered by delays, including those caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, the team of consultants managed to carry out the awareness programme, engaging key stakeholders and fostering a sense of ownership in the policy process.

Under Output 4, the “Policy for Blue Economy in Mauritius” was formulated through two consultative meetings in Mauritius and Rodrigues, and the final document was submitted to the Government of Mauritius before the project’s closure.

Overall, the project met its key objectives, producing a robust policy document and building significant capacity within the ministry, despite some implementation challenges. The successful formulation and submission of the Blue Economy Policy represent a critical step towards sustainable ocean governance in Mauritius.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

There was a considerable delay in the implementation of project activities due to human resources-related challenges leading to the replacement of the first consultant recruited. Additionally, the ministry’s own procedures and timelines for managing projects involving intergovernmental organizations, necessitating modifications to the project timelines as it progressed, impacted negatively on the timeline. Activities were executed within budget, except for those related to outreach and the recruitment of the communication staff, which were affected by the project’s implementation delays. For these reasons, a rephasing and a no-cost extension were requested and approved, eventually expanding the project’s timeline until December 2023.

As a result, the project was completed within the newly agreed timeframe and budget, indicating effective risk management. A replacement was promptly recruited, and delays from mandatory administrative procedures (such as advertisement periods, interviews, and Letter of Agreement preparation) were mitigated to minimize impact.

Anticipated delays due to government procedures were built into the project timeline during the planning phase. The project's performance in managing environmental and social risks was notable. For instance, the environmental impacts of industrial fishing were carefully considered and mitigated during the policy formulation stage. For small-scale and artisanal fishing, the policy focused on creating positive social impacts, recognizing the vulnerability of artisanal fishermen to adverse social conditions. This balanced approach ensured that the project promoted both environmental sustainability and social well-being.

FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

At present, the Government of Mauritius does not have an ongoing policy for the development of the Blue Economy. It is recommended to use the policy developed by FAO in consultation with senior officers of the MoBEMRFS and senior representatives of stakeholders, to further enhance the development of the Blue Economy in Mauritius.

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Capacity development

The Blue Economy Policy was developed in close consultation with officers from the MoBEMRFS and various stakeholders, with sustainability being the core principle guiding its formulation. However, some challenges were posed by internal recruitment and organizational policies, evidenced by delays in setting up the OEU and two unsuccessful recruitment attempts for the Head of the Unit, which could lead to potential setbacks in ensuring the project's sustainability.

The project was designed with the current organizational structure of the MoBEMRFS in mind, aiming to integrate seamlessly into existing activities. Despite this integration, the aforementioned delays in establishing the OEU highlight potential obstacles to the project's long-term sustainability. The proposed policies aim to foster better synergy between different departments within the ministry and among various stakeholders in the Blue Economy. Effective implementation of these policies is expected to enhance collaboration and coordination.

Given the project's integration within the ministry's existing structure and mandate, the need for a formal exit strategy is minimal. The project is inherently designed to continue as part of the ministry's ongoing activities, ensuring continuity and sustained capacity development.



2. Gender equality

Both women and men actively participated in the consultative process, ensuring diverse perspectives and inclusive decision-making. Gender equality and gender equity were cross-cutting priorities throughout the policy development process, aligned with the FAO Policy on Gender Equality. This commitment to gender sustainability ensured that the needs, contributions and potentials of all genders were recognized and addressed, fostering an environment where everyone can benefit equally from the opportunities within the ocean economy. By promoting gender-balanced participation and equity, the project aimed to create a more inclusive and fair blue economy, enhancing social cohesion and empowering all community members.

3. Environmental sustainability

Both the consultants and the participants of the consultative meeting placed the highest importance on mainstreaming environmental sustainability within the project. This commitment ensured that environmental considerations were given top priority in all aspects of the project's design and implementation. By integrating sustainable practices and principles, the project aimed to protect and preserve the ocean's ecosystems, support biodiversity and promote long-term ecological balance. This approach not only safeguards the natural resources that the ocean economy depends on but also ensures that economic activities do not compromise environmental health, paving the way for a resilient and sustainable Blue Economy.



4. Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) – in particular Right to Food and Decent Work

The project promoted human rights principles, including the Right to Food Guidelines adopted by FAO in 2004, and provided employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young fishers, seafood processing professionals and artisanal fishers. By focusing on artisanal fishers in rural areas, the project opened up new opportunities for these communities, enhancing their livelihoods and economic stability. Overall, the project's initiatives were aligned with human rights standards, fostering a sustainable and equitable development of the ocean economy.

5. Technological sustainability

The consultants recruited through the project ensured that all the technologies proposed were adapted to the local context and were flexible enough to meet local conditions. This included advancements in seafood processing, climate-resilient water infrastructure, renewable ocean energy and low-input sustainable aquaculture. Although Fisheries Management was implemented decades ago through a FAO project, it is currently non-existent in Mauritius. To address this, the project proposed to train the staff of the MoBEMRFS in modern fisheries management techniques, as well as in the areas of seafood processing, climate resilience and low-input aquaculture.

Furthermore, the project provided a comprehensive Blue Economy Policy document and training in policy implementation. However, a leadership and planning gap underscores the need for not only technological adaptation and training but also strong governance and strategic oversight to ensure the sustainable development of the ocean economy.



6. Economic sustainability

Economic sustainability is a critical focus for the development of the ocean economy in Mauritius. Despite the submission of the project document in December 2023, no new financial proposals have been introduced, as the next country budget was only to be proposed in May 2024. This gap highlights the importance of strategic financial planning and resource allocation to ensure that the initiatives outlined can be effectively implemented. Establishing a robust Ocean Economy Policy requires not only comprehensive planning but also the timely availability of financial resources to support sustainable growth and governance of the ocean sector. Ensuring economic sustainability will depend on coordinated efforts to secure funding and efficiently manage resources as the policy development progresses. However, recent budget proposals for the Blue Economy focused primarily on social measures for fisher and financial incentives for purchasing small and medium-sized fishing vessels. These proposals were not explicitly linked to a broader strategy for the development of the Blue Economy or to a long-term vision for the country.



DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

- ❑ **FAO.** 2023. *Policy for Blue Economy in Mauritius.* <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEXFAOC224355/>.
- ❑ **SAUER W.** 2023. *FAO Blue Economy.mp4 – A Capacity Building video on Blue Economy Policy Implementation for Mauritius and Rodrigues.*

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected Impact	The national ocean economy is sustainably developed through improved governance of the ocean sector leading to greater social and economic wellbeing for the people of Mauritius		
Outcome	The National Ocean Economy Policy and Strategy implemented		
	Indicator	Ocean Economy Policy adopted by Government.	
	Baseline	0	
	End Target	Ocean Economy Policy adopted by end of 2022.	
Comments and follow-up action to be taken	The Ocean Economy Policy was developed by a team of FAO consultants in close collaboration with the MoBEMRFS and stakeholders through a participatory process including meetings in Mauritius and Rodrigues. The document was submitted to the Government of Mauritius before the end of the project and was pending approval by the Cabinet at the time of writing.		
Output 1	Ocean Economy Unit (OEU) in Ministry capacitated to facilitate policy development and implementation		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of OEU personnel have capacity to facilitate the ocean policy process and be the Secretariat of the NOC.	At least 25 OEU personnel.	Partially
Baseline	0		
Comments	In February 2018 and again in February 2023, the post of Head of the Blue Economy Unit was advertised by the Government of Mauritius. However, at the time of project completion, the incumbent had not been recruited and the unit had not yet been set up. Despite this challenge, the MoBEMRFS made 18 of its senior staff available for participation in the Ocean Policy development process and it is expected that their participation will help the implementation of the policy that was developed during the project.		
Activity 1.1	Develop and implement a capacity building plan (CBP) for personnel of the OEU /NOC Secretariat		
	Achieved	Partially	
	Comments	FAO recruited a Lead national consultant, a national economist, an International fisheries and aquaculture consultant and an International policy-implementation trainer. They were supported by the Lead technical officer of the project from the FAO Subregional Office for Southern Africa, the FAO Coordinator in Mauritius and the office personnel. Administrative support was also provided by the FAO Madagascar Office The launch of the project was done by the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the MoBEMRFS on 10 July 2023 at the Caudan Arts Centre in Port Louis. The final report includes a CBP for the OEU. Since the Unit had not yet been formed at the end of the project and the personnel was thus not available for training, a training video was produced as part of the project. Furthermore, a video on policy Implementation was prepared as part of the project.	
Activity 1.2	Provide technical assistance/support to OEU		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Terms of Reference were developed for the recruitment of the Lead national consultant, the International fisheries and aquaculture consultants, and the National economist. Personnel were recruited and provided technical assistance to the policy development process.	
Activity 1.3	Develop Ocean Economy Policy monitoring system		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	Since the Blue Economy Unit of the ministry was not created, the structure for the monitoring system was also not established by the ministry.	
Activity 1.4	Final project event		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	The MoBEMRFS did not give its approval for the organisation of the final project event.	

Output 2	Policy options prioritised by applying tools and analysis to multi-sector information		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Recommendations for policy options with prioritisation publicly available.	Comprehensive policy options with prioritisation made publicly available.	Yes
Baseline	Outdated		
Comments	The policy options were developed by two national and two international consultants who provided the necessary information and the internationally available options and tools required for the assignment. The process was informed by two meetings in Mauritius and Rodrigues, with participation and inputs received by the key stakeholders concerned by the ocean economy sector.		
Activity 2.1	Confirm key policy sectors and issues relevant for policy analysis		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	All information was compiled by the consultants and key policy sectors were identified with stakeholder participation.	
Activity 2.2	Update, and compile relevant information and tools for policy analysis		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Prior to the development of the policy, all relevant information was compiled and discussed during online meetings with the consulting team (key stakeholders concerned by the ocean economy policy).	
Activity 2.3	Assess the feasibility and options/predications for development of the ocean economy		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Feasibility and options were discussed and assessed with stakeholders during the consultative meetings.	
Output 3	Awareness, engagement and ownership of the policy process by key stakeholders		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Ocean stakeholders engaged in the policy dialogue through appropriate mechanisms.	At least three public events/initiatives for stakeholder engagement.	Partially
Baseline	Limited		
Comments	The project communication staff was not recruited. This limited the level of awareness creation. In spite of this, the team of consultants created awareness, engagement and ownership of the project with the staff of the MoBEMRFS and with the stakeholders present during the two full-day consultative meetings.		
Activity 3.1	Design and use brand for ocean economy policy process		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	Since the communications staff was not recruited, this activity was not implemented.	
Activity 3.2	Revitalise Ministry website to be the place to go for ocean economy information and engagement		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Since the communications staff was not recruited, this activity was not implemented.	
Activity 3.3	Prepare and organise different mechanisms for stakeholder engagement in the policy process		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	Since the communications staff was not recruited, this activity was not implemented.	
Activity 3.4	Prepare publications and media on policy options to spur wide engagement		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	Since the communications staff was not recruited, this activity was not implemented.	

Output 4	Ocean Economy Policy and Strategy formulated		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Policy and Strategy for implementation of Ocean Economy Policy formulated.	Policy and Strategy formulated.	Yes
Baseline	0		
Comments	The Policy for the Blue Economy for Mauritius and Rodrigues was formulated and submitted to the Government of Mauritius.		
Activity 4.1	Elaborate a National Ocean Economy Policy		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The following actions were completed by a project team consisting of two national and two international consultants: (i) review lessons learned from other ocean policy processes; (ii) review national policies to identify inconsistencies and recommend alignment; (iii) prepare draft national Ocean Economy Policy with prioritized policy measures (sent to Deputy Permanent Secretary of the MoBEMRFS who was also the chairperson of the Project Steering Committee); (vi) consult with ministry and public on policy recommendations (one to one consultations and one consulting workshop; additionally, one consultative meeting was held with senior staff of the MoBEMRFS and with stakeholders); (v) prepare the final version of Ocean Economy Policy (submitted to government).	
Activity 4.2	Prepare a national implementation Strategy for the Ocean Economy Policy		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	The implementation strategy was included in the national policy document and underwent the same process as the policy document.	
Output 5	National legal framework to support implementation of the Ocean Economy Policy		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Amendments to legal framework and mechanisms prepared.	Legal framework taken to account the implementation of the Ocean Economy Policy.	No
Baseline	Legal framework not ready		
Comments	The national legal framework to support the implementation of the Ocean Economy Policy was not developed as no legal person was recruited because of the delay in the implementation of the project.		
Activity 5.1	Develop an overview of legislation related to the ocean with gaps and inconsistencies		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	This activity was not implemented due to the non-recruitment of the legal consultant.	
Activity 5.2	Recommend alignments and/or new mechanisms to support a comprehensive legal framework		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	This activity was not implemented due to the non-recruitment of the legal consultant.	

Partnerships and Outreach

For more information, please contact: Reporting@fao.org

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