



INTERNATIONAL WATERS EXPERIENCE NOTES

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2006-003

Lessons-learned Reporting on Demonstration Site Selection and Design: WIO-Lab



Abstract: The challenge in this is thus to ensure that relevant technical actors are involved in the design and review process, and that where needed capacity at the national level is attracted from supporting institutions. The process for development and selection of demonstration projects, as applied for the WIO-LaB project, applies very much a consultative approach. The note describes both the selection process and criteria for selection. Projects were also ranked and selected through a transparent (non-weighted) multi-criteria analysis, a sample of which is included. The approach is generally applicable in projects applying a similar project management structure.

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Addressing Land Based Activities in the Western Indian Ocean

Lessons Learned Reporting on Demonstration Site Selection and Design: Wio-LAB

Experience of the GEF sponsored

Addressing Land Based Activities in the Western Indian Ocean” (UNEP/GEF WIO-LaB Project)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project entitled “Addressing land-based activities in the Western Indian Ocean” (shortly referred to as “WIO-LaB”) addresses some of the major environmental problems and issues related to the degradation of the marine and coastal environment due to land-based activities in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region. The project is designed to serve as a demonstration project for the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA/LBA).

The project has three main objectives: 1) Improve the knowledge base, and establish regional guidelines for the reduction of stress to the marine and coastal ecosystem by improving water and sediment quality; 2) Strengthen the regional legal basis for preventing land-based sources of pollution; and 3) Develop regional capacity and strengthen institutions for sustainable, less polluting development. The project activities include among others, a regional monitoring programme for water, sediment and biota quality, the implementation of demonstration projects and the development of regional guidelines for the management of municipal wastewater and physical alteration and destruction of habitats, the development of regional guidelines for environmental quality objectives and standards and Environmental Impact Assessment, and a regional Protocol on Land-based Activities to the Nairobi Convention, and various training, educational and stakeholder involvement activities. The final product of the project will be a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and Strategic Action Plan (SAP), as well as related National Programmes of Action (NPA) for abating the impacts of land-based sources activities.

The project involves eight countries in the WIO region (Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and

Seychelles). Its total budget is 11,413,465 USD, of which 4,511,140 USD from GEF, 3,395,650 USD in cash co-financing from the Norwegian Government, and 3,131,675 USD and 375,000 USD in in-kind and cash co-financing from the participating governments and UNEP respectively. The project is executed jointly by the Nairobi Convention Secretariat and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The total duration of the WIO-LaB project is 4 years (2005-2008).

THE EXPERIENCE

(a) TWM Issue: Demonstration Site Selection

The project is implemented under the umbrella of the Nairobi Convention, in that it executes part of the Convention’s Programme of work as agreed by its Conference of Parties. As such, the project is strongly embedded in the political and institutional framework of the Convention, and key stakeholders are those related closely to the Convention. Among others, the national focal points of the Nairobi Convention are at the same time the focal points for the WIO-LaB project.

While this existing political and institutional framework provides a good ground for political embedding of strategy formulation and (political-level) decision-making, the capacity of the focal points (technical, financial and human resources) for coordination of project activities, including the demonstration projects, may in cases be limited. Also, the focal points operating at a more political level, the need existed for a clear separation of technical design activities as well as technical review of proposals, from political-level decision making. The challenge in this is thus to ensure that relevant technical actors are involved in the design and review process, and that were needed capacity at the national level is attracted from supporting institutions.

(b) How was issue addressed

Description of selection process for demonstration projects

The process for development and selection of demonstration projects, as applied for the WIO-LaB project, applies very much a consultative approach. The procedure broadly follows the following steps:

1. **Definition of procedures and selection criteria.** General procedures and criteria for selection of demonstration projects were developed by the WIO-LaB Project Management Unit (PMU), based upon experiences from other projects and programmes. The procedures and criteria were subsequently reviewed by the appropriate regional Task Forces (on municipal wastewater management [MWW] and on physical alteration and destruction of habitats [PADH]) before being proposed to the first meeting of the Project Steering Committee, which officially adopted the criteria. An overview of criteria used is presented below.
2. **Invitation for pre-qualification of proposals:** The WIO-LaB PMU issued an invitation to all National Focal Points (NFPs) to solicit and identify demonstration projects in their respective countries. The invitation was accompanied by detailed instructions for the development of proposals, including conditions for eligibility. The invitation was copied to the members of the appropriate project regional Task Forces. The NFPs and Task Force members subsequently distributed the invitation more widely at the national level. In some cases, specific national stakeholder meetings and Task Force meetings were organized for this purpose.
3. **Submission of proposals:** After screening at the national level, in some (but unfortunately not all) cases after passing through National Project Steering Committees, the NFPs submitted proposals to the WIO-LaB PMU. In total, 23 project proposals were officially received by the WIO-LaB PMU.
4. **Screening of proposals:** On the basis of the submissions, the WIO-LAB PMU screened the demonstration projects, paying special attention to their eligibility and in particular their relevancy to the objectives of the

project. Despite the fact that many of the 23 proposals had issues/concerns, 22 proposals were eventually found to be at least partly eligible and were therefore put forward to the pre-selection stage.

5. **Review and pre-selection of proposals:** Pre-selection of project proposals was undertaken jointly by the regional Task Forces on MWW and PADH. The two Task Forces each ranked and selected 5 priority projects, based upon the agreed criteria. A multi-criteria analysis was used to score the proposals and come up with a top 10 of demonstration projects. The two Task Forces reviewed and provided detailed comments on each of the demonstration project proposals.
6. **Detailing of proposals:** Based on the review of the demonstration project proposals by the two Task Forces, as well as detailed reviews by the WIO-LaB PMU and UNEP/GPA, detailed comments on the pre-selected demonstration project proposals were sent to the project proponents, with clear instructions on how the selected projects were to be updated before being re-submitted to the WIO-LaB PMU..
7. **Updating of proposals:** The proponents of the selected demonstration projects updated their proposals according to the recommendations sent out by the PMU. The updated versions of the projects were received by the WIO-LaB PMU and were subjected to discussion by the Project Steering Committee.
8. **Final selection:** The detailed project proposals were submitted to the Project Steering Committee for approval. Following discussions, 7 out of the total 10 projects were prioritized, based mainly on criteria of equal regional and thematic distribution.
9. **Detailed review:** Following the approval and prioritization by the Project Steering Committee, the project proposals were subjected to a detailed review by experts from within and beyond the project region. Based upon this review, proponents have been supplied with feedback on any outstanding issues and concerns, as well as a way forward to bring the project documentation up to the required standard and level of detail.
10. **Final design:** Based upon the feedback from experts, the first phase of project

implementation will be started (present stage). Proponents may request support from the project to complete their project design, feasibility study and develop a detailed project document including Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan, and sustainability and replicability strategy. Such support may be financial (up to 5% of the requested budget) or technical (expertise). Support packages will be developed on a case-by-case basis in interaction with the project stakeholders.

11. **Final go-ahead:** The detailed project documents will be circulated to the members of the Project Steering Committee for final endorsement (or no-objection) before start of implementation of phase 2: the actual project execution.

12. **Preparation and signing of MOUs:** MOUs will be signed between the WIO-LaB PMU and the individual project proponents. The agreement for implementation of approved demonstration projects would clearly state the modalities for monitoring and evaluation of activities that would be undertaken by the demonstration projects. Supervision and monitoring of implementation of demonstration will in first instance be with the respective Project Steering Committee to be established for each project, and secondly by the National WIO-LaB Steering Committee, under the direction of the NFP.

Criteria for selection

The selection of the WIO-LaB Demonstration Projects was guided, *inter alia*, by the following criteria:

1. **Global, regional, sub-regional and multinational nature of projects:** The Demonstration Projects should clearly respond to the environmental benefits in the region and contribute to overall global environmental benefits. In this respect Projects developed and selected should have a sub-regional or regional outlook or involve several countries.
2. **Specificity:** The Demonstrations projects must target the hot spots and sensitive areas identified by the countries during the Sub Saharan Medium Size Project and new hot spots and sensitive areas identified during the project implementation.

3. **Multi-focus:** Projects should aim as far as possible at integrating the thematic coverage within LBA concept.
4. **Participatory nature:** Projects should demonstrate development and implementation through a participatory approach with strong ownership with all partners including the government, the private sector, civil society including NGOs and the Scientific community, the projects should also have a gender balance;
5. **Programmatic approach:** Projects should be integrated in a comprehensive, programmatic and, as far as possible, strategic approach;
6. **Sustainable Development Perspective:** Projects should be designed taking into account the need to alleviate poverty and promote economic growth;
7. **Capacity Building:** Projects should integrate capacity development needs as part of their planned activities
8. **Maximize utilization of Regional expertise:** Projects should aim at maximizing the utilization of local experts and institutions;
9. **High rate of replication:** Projects should be designed to ensure replication and dissemination of good practices and experiences.
10. **Sustainability of activities:** Projects should have activities whose benefits are sustainable beyond the life cycle of the interventions;
11. **Promote sharing of experiences and learning:** Projects should aim at promoting sharing of experiences, enhancing regional co-operation and collective learning;
12. **Performance criteria:** Projects should contain clear objectives, performance indicators and monitoring mechanisms;
13. **Funding and Co-Financing:** Only projects likely to attract adequate domestic funding and/or external support shall be considered.

Projects demonstrating strong co-financing shall be given priority.

Projects were ranked and selected through a transparent (non-weighted) multi-criteria analysis, a sample of which is presented below.

Sample multi-criteria analysis

Project	Criteria													Overall score
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Project 1														
Project 2														
Project 3														
Project 4														
Project 5														

In selecting projects, the Project Coordination Unit furthermore considered the need to provide an appropriate balance, in:

- **Thematic balance:** Balance between the thematic areas will be sought;
- **Geographical balance:** Balance between the 8 GEF-eligible WIO Countries.

It should, however, be noted, that the demonstration nature of the projects, based upon the thirteen criteria listed above, provided the first basis for selection, while the 'balance' criteria was only used in second instance.

Rationale for approach taken

The process as designed is based upon a number of considerations:

- The WIO-LaB Project management structure, consisting of a network of NFPs, national and regional Task Forces and Working Groups, and a project Steering Committee. The roles attributed to each of these entities are based upon their respective mandates within the general project management structure.
- The common approach for tenders of this nature, which generally includes the same steps: (i) definition of criteria and procedures, (ii) invitation, (iii) pre-selection (short-listing), (iv) detailing of

proposals, (v) final selection and (vi) implementation.

- A conscious decision was taken to ensure wide stakeholder involvement in the identification and selection process. While this approach is lengthier and does entail the risk of political bias, it does on the other hand ensure the necessary level of buy-in from all key project stakeholders.

Pros and cons of adopted approach

The following advantages may be formulated:

- The approach followed is very much based upon engagement of the regional stakeholders in each step of project development. This ensures an adequate level of ownership: i.e. projects are regarded as projects for the region, not only to the benefit of the individual proponents.
- The process is very transparent and therewith prevents later doubts on bias by the WIO-LaB PMU. Decisions are very much made by institutional structures in which regional stakeholders are represented.
- Projects are developed step-wise. This ensures that the project design can be influenced and proponents can be adequately guided and assisted in preparing sound project documents. In a region where experience is relatively

limited, this is not an unimportant benefit.

- The procedure foresees both in expert-level project evaluation (Task Forces and individual experts) as well as policy-level engagement (through the NFPIs and National Project Steering Committees). The latter ensures that the projects are indeed regarded as national priorities.

Nevertheless, there are also a few weaknesses to be marked:

- The process is quite elaborate and therefore time-consuming. From the time of the initial call-of-proposals up to the first stage of project implementation the process has taken nearly one year.
- The selection of proposals is not only based upon technical level review, but does consider political level considerations. This automatically implies that good projects may drop out as a result of considerations such as 'equal distribution between countries'.
- The identification of projects was done by means of distribution through NFPs and Task Forces, rather than advertisement of tenders in the media. Although some countries have managed the distribution of the invitation for proposals quite widely, in other cases the dissemination of information was rather limited. In many cases, consequently, proposals were submitted by institutions that were already closely connected to the project.
- The process of screening and pre-selection of projects on the national level was not always adequately done. Partly this may be attributed to a general weakness of the NFPIs, but in some cases also through bias from the NFPI for certain projects.

REPLICATION

The approach is generally applicable in projects applying a similar project management structure. What may be defined as a pre-condition to application of the approach is the availability of a structure for technical review and discussion of projects, such as a Task Force, as well as a structure for political decision making on the regional level, such as a Project Steering Committee.

REFERENCES

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KEYWORDS

- ◆ Demonstration project
- ◆ Project preparation

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