UNDP-UNEP Partnership for SAP Implementation in the South China Sea

2011

GEF Small Grants Programme: An Effective Delivery Mechanism for SAP Implementation

In September 2008, UNDP and UNEP entered into a partnership agreement to support the implementation of the Regional Strategic Action Programme (SAP) in the South China Sea, implemented through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP).

This partnership agreement was built upon a Joint Communiqué between the UNEP/GEF South China Sea Project entitled "Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand" (SCS) and the GEF SGP to support SAP implementation in the South China Sea.

It was agreed that the SCS project and SGP would fund an equal number of projects, which would follow the priorities of the SAP, and that training would be provided to the SGP national coordinators regarding TDA and SAP process, as well as the regional priorities for intervention.

The rationale for establishing the Partnership was based on the following considerations:

- It is difficult for full-sized IW projects to deal with all levels of civil society from Central Government down to communities
- SGP has an existing delivery mechanism at the national level to engage communities
- SCS had an inter-governmentally approved SAP with clearly defined targets
- SCS had various regional fora to engage national coordinators with local governments, scientists and regional experts
- SCS had no capacity to work with communities in all appropriate languages

Between May 2009 and May 2011 a total of 31 projects in six countries were executed under the partnership using $554,702 from the SCS Project and $541,574 from the SGP. Average grant amount is $35,364. In addition, SGP raised $808,495 in cofinancing.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

THE STRATEGIC ACTION PROGRAMME

The Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea identifies as the top regional priority the loss and degradation of coastal habitats; primarily mangrove, seagrass and coral reefs but also coastal lagoons, and coastal freshwater swamp forest. The second priority issue is management failures with respect to the linkage between fish stock and critical habitats. Among pollution sources domestic wastes were identified as the top priority; and nutrients as the priority contaminant.

In the habitat component, targets have been set regarding the areas that should be protected and brought under sustainable management by set dates, usually 2015. For seagrass the targets are to ensure that 21 defined areas totalling 26,576 ha will be sustainably managed and that 7 new MPAs will be established in the region with a focus on seagrass. For mangroves 57,361 ha are to be transferred to National Parks and MPAs; 21,000 ha of deforested mangrove land are to be replanted; and 11,200 ha of degraded forest are to be subject to enrichment planting to increase the biodiversity. In the case of coral reefs 53,130 ha in identified sites are to be brought under sustainable management by 2015.

The focus areas of the 31 SGP projects are:

- 12 on mangrove ecosystems
- 6 on coral reefs
- 5 on seagrass
- 3 on coastal lagoons
- 7 have no habitat focus

With a total funding of US$1.1 million, the SGP projects have brought 2,079 hectares of seagrass, 2,388 hectares of coral reef and 12,618 hectares of mangrove under management; which represents 8%, 4.5% and 0.7% of the 2015 SAP targets.

THE IMPACTS OF SGP PROJECTS

Community awareness

All the projects have involved actions designed to strengthen the communities' general awareness of the need to improve the management of the environment and its associated resources, including fisheries at the local level.

Such activities have involved community based meetings and discussions including the presentation of basic ecological information and information regarding the relationships between human actions and the state of the environment.

More significantly all the projects have also involved the creation of community based committees that initially focused on project execution but have assumed permanent responsibilities in mangrove replanting programmes, control of fishing activities in designated zones, among other activities.

All projects that focus on critical habitats are based on some form of community approach to coastal zone management. For example in Indonesia the specific goal of the SCS-SGP programme is "to develop the community based management programme in order to achieve the balance in the ecosystem". It is anticipated that in Indonesia and Viet Nam all future GEF International waters projects of the SGP will address the objectives of the SAP.

Socioeconomic benefits

Most countries bordering the South China Sea designate inshore waters up to 3 or 5 nautical miles from shore as a small scale fishing zone. However, in practice large scale boats frequently intrude inshore using destructive fishing gear including trawls and push nets in sensitive habitats such as seagrass, dramatically impacting the small scale hook-and-line or crab pot fishermen. As a result conflicts frequently arise between the small scale fishermen and commercial boats.

In addition, the increased numbers of small scale fishermen has led to a decline in stocks and, as a consequence, small scale fishermen are in need of alternative sources of income, better control over their fishing grounds, and improved fishing techniques that are less environmentally damaging than some currently in use.

Therefore, most of the SCS-SGP projects have included activities designed to enhance household incomes from improved fishing techniques; alternative livelihoods and incomes; sustainable management of crab stocks; and exclusion of commercial (illegal) fishermen from the coastal waters designated as a small scale fishing zone. In some cases local incomes from fishing have been enhanced by adding value to the product as in the case of the Indonesian project on the utilization of marine ornamental fish.

The most widespread source of alternative incomes for coastal communities in the SCS-SGP portfolio has been the establishment and promotion of ecotourism with one project in Cambodia, four in Indonesia, one in Thailand and three in Viet Nam including the establishment or promotion of villaged based ecotourism focusing on mangroves seagrass and lowland rainforest.

Environmental benefits

Measuring the environmental impacts of SCS-SGP projects is perhaps more difficult than evaluating changes in community incomes as a consequence of the greater length of time required for ecosystems to recover from previous stresses and changes in community practices. Nevertheless, in cases where improved fish catches are reported, one may conclude that management actions have been effective and that environmental state has improved.

In some instances community and government monitoring show improved vegetation cover in previously degraded areas of mangrove, and increased biomass in seagrass areas, or in fish stocks. In the case of the restoration of degraded habitat the areas replanted with mangrove or coral transplants can be stated and the impacts of such restoration might be expected to grow with the passage of time.

Replication and Up-scaling

Despite the short time since the inception of the projects there is ample evidence of replication of the SGP models to neighbouring communities which was fostered by exchanges visits between communities in four projects in Cambodia; three projects in Indonesia; one project in Thailand; and three projects in Viet Nam.

In a number of projects, notably in Thailand and Indonesia, practices developed with SCS-SGP projects have been adopted by Provincial Governments for replication outside the project area. Designation of project leaders as resource persons by provincial and national governments has occurred, and in some cases projects have been designated as learning or demonstration centres.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The partnership has been effective and beneficial to both partners specifically: for the implementation of the SAP for the South China Sea in terms of significant contributions towards the achievement of the SAP priorities and targets; and to the national SGP programmes involved, through the provision of an inter-governmentally approved framework for nationally executed international waters projects.

The speed with which funds can be committed through the SGP mechanism strongly supports the contention that a more effective mechanism could not be found.

"92% of the South China Sea grant funds were committed within 9 months of the signature of the agreement"

Partnership between the SGP programme and full-sized GEF international waters projects can be highly effective in mobilizing community involvement in the achievement of SAP targets. The SGP SCS partnership could be used as a model for future partnerships in other regions.

Key lessons learned :

- Strong political and management support from both agencies regarding this inter-agency cooperative programme lays the foundation for the collaboration
- Programmatic and technical collaboration complement each other to utilize and maximize the comparative advantages of full-sized projects and SGP
- SGP can serve as an effective mechanism to translate SAP into local actions, but full-sized projects should take primary technical responsibilities to develop the foundational capacity for SGP national coordinators and NSC members
- Technical training and capacity development activities provided by UNEP/GEF South China Sea Project to SGP networks prepared SGP to implement the regional Strategic Action Programme
- Integrated management of actions at various levels (local to regional) are key to the successful implementation of SAP

Community Action... **Global Impact**

The GEF Small Grants Programme

The GEF Small Grants Programme
220 E 42nd Street, 21st Floor
New York, NY 10017
Phone: +1 (646) 781-4353 I Fax: +1 (212) 906-6568
Email: sgp.info@undp.org I Website: www.sgp.undp.org