

Evaluation Summary

Sustainable Management and Conservation of the Marine Environment in the Southwestern Indian Ocean: Supporting Local Innovations and Partnerships

Countries : **Comoros, Mauritius and Madagascar**

Field : **International waters**

Evaluator : **Vertigo Lab- Biodiversité Conseil- Gilles Moynot (independent expert)**

Evaluation date : **February 2019**

KEY DATA ON FFEM SUPPORT

Project name: GDZCOI

Project number: CZZ 1753

Amount of FFEM funding : EUR 200 000

Project grant date : March 27, 2013

Duration: 4 years (2014 – 2018)

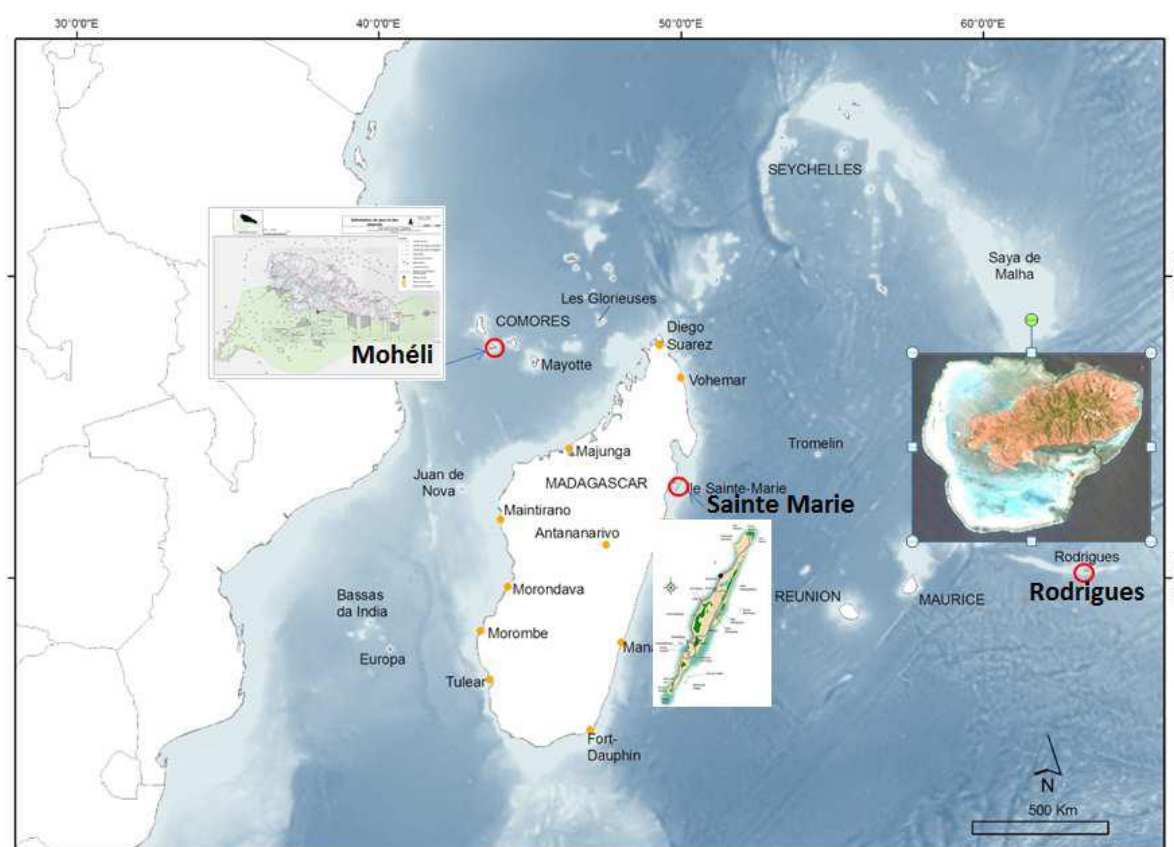
Context

Marine and coastal ecosystems are essential for coastal protection, pollution filtration, tourism, and food security for the poor coastal communities of the southwestern Indian Ocean, which rely heavily on fisheries for their survival. The numerous threats to the region's marine and coastal environments result not only from direct activities affecting the ecosystems but also from activities in the watersheds. Further offshore, pressure is increasing with the large-scale development of oil and gas extraction. Threats related to the greenhouse effect and global climate change are also of great concern, as evidenced by the numerous episodes of severe coral bleaching that the region has experienced.

Participants and operating procedures

The project was managed by the Secretariat of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). Project management was carried out by a small project coordination unit based at the IOC, and a delegated project management team—a body responsible for facilitating and coordinating local consultation and supporting the implementation of actions—was established at the three pilot sites where the actions were carried out by local operators:

- Mohéli : Marine Park
- Rodrigues : SHOALS (local ONG)
- Sainte Marie : GRET (International NGO incorporated under French law)



Objectives

To consolidate, build upon, and disseminate approaches validated by field experience in the areas of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and the protection of marine and coastal biodiversity, drawing on active partnerships with local and regional stakeholders.

Specific objectives:

- Capitalize on and disseminate ICZM experiences and tools at the regional level.
- Develop best practices in Integrated Zonal Coastal Zone Management (GIZC) in the areas of governance, resource and watershed management, economic development, and value creation at three pilot sites: Sainte-Marie (Madagascar), Rodrigues (Mauritius), and Mohéli (Comoros).

Performance Evaluation

Relevance

GDZCOI follows on from two projects: one focused on implementing the Nairobi Convention's ICZM protocol, and the other on formalizing a network of Marine Protected Areas in the Indian Ocean. An evaluation of these projects revealed that capacity-building needs within ICZM committees had been underestimated and highlighted the insufficient consideration given to country-specific contexts—issues that this project addresses. Its underlying objectives were to promote capacity building, support appropriate governance, and strengthen local ICZM structures. Furthermore, it was led by the IOC, the primary actor in environmental protection in the region, which brings together all the states of the southwestern Indian Ocean.

Coherence

The project's consistency was deemed satisfactory due to:

- Coordination with existing ICZM initiatives,
- Complementarity with other IOC projects,
- Operational partnerships that are committed but remain limited,
- A focus on the local context and challenges, despite the difficulty of aligning national ICZM policies across countries

Effectiveness

The project's performance was generally satisfactory due to:

- The identification of 75 best practices already developed in the region and the creation of an online platform for best practices;
- Capacity building for project leaders as well as organizations responsible for coastal zone management through exchanges that were unanimously welcomed;
- The success of consultation platforms and action plans developed and validated at the three pilot sites.

Efficiency

The project's efficiency was deemed good despite the low level of co-financing from other donors already supporting IOC projects.

Impact

The impact on the populations at the pilot sites was deemed to be real, although still limited. Its extent depends on the continuation of activities over the longer term. At the project level, the most significant impacts were:

- Regional exchanges that reached a large audience (more than 250 people, including experts and applicants)
- 200 direct beneficiaries across all pilot projects, comprising 27 medium-sized grants and 12 microprojects.
- The launch of the PCADDISM consultation platform, a participatory tool with a very significant impact.

Viability/sustainability

The sustainability of the three pilot sites varies from one to another. The most interesting case is that of Sainte Marie, where the process was conducted in an inclusive and consultative manner at every stage. This resulted in the consultation platform taking ownership of the project to a degree that exceeded initial expectations. Because the platform is led by the municipality and includes local residents, it has also made it possible to adapt to the local context and go beyond the framework proposed by the project while still meeting its objectives. The implementation of a Dina (traditional code of conduct) throughout Sainte Marie has galvanized the community and strengthened the platform's position as a central actor in the island's development.

Added value of the FFEM

The main aspect of the FFEM's added value was its flexibility in implementation; the project demonstrated a high degree of adaptability throughout its execution—particularly in terms of the budget—which enabled it to achieve concrete results.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

The evaluation of the GDZCOI project is generally positive. The majority of the objectives outlined in the logical framework have been achieved. The project's intervention logic is particularly noteworthy, as several activities within the logical framework reinforce one another. Both the geographic scope and the stated thematic focus reveal the project's very ambitious scope relative to the available resources. This is all the more evident given that the planned co-financing was not mobilized to a degree commensurate with the project's ambitions. As a result, the results are very satisfactory, but the sustainability of the achievements remains fragile.

The recommendations were:

- Identify a technical assistance provider that is financially independent and whose intervention strategy aligns with that of the project.
- Identify a technical assistance provider with a multisectoral approach, including social issues. If no organization meets these criteria, arrange for external support from entities with proven expertise.
- Take a two-step approach with potential project leaders who lack sufficiently developed management capacity: provide capacity-building support prior to financial assistance.
- Unless the sustainability of the tools put in place is guaranteed, limit the creation of new websites and other databases and prioritize existing tools and media that have proven their usefulness and whose viability is assured outside the project.
- Include, from the project's design phase, a credit line allocated for the implementation of a genuine exit strategy. This action should be implemented starting in the first year and throughout the project.
- Fund projects in two phases: Phase 1, implement and then evaluate small pilot projects (here using FFEM funds); Phase 2, replicate and scale up successful initiatives.