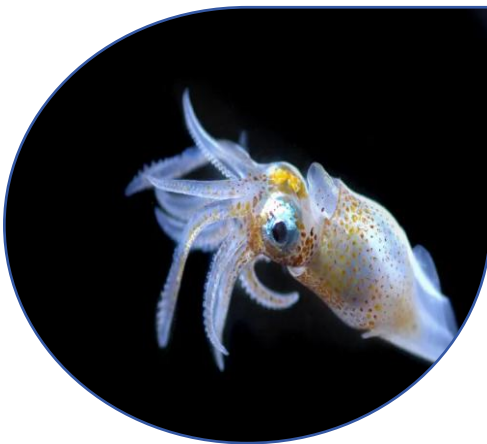




EVALUATION SUMMARY

COUNTRY: MADAGASCAR, SENEGAL, FIJI, ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, CHILE, MEXICO



Oceanic Plankton Project, Climate and Development

Evaluator: Jean-Jacques Goussard, EOSZ.D2C
Evaluation date: June 2022 – November 2022

KEY FFEM SUPPORT DATA

Amount financed by the FFEM: 2,058,000 million euros
Project approval date: 2015
Duration: 2015- 2022
Project name: Oceanic Plankton, Climate and Development
Project number: CZZ-2038

Background

This final evaluation is taking place almost simultaneously with the planning of a future TARA-FFEM project (Plankt'Eco), which aims to strengthen the governance of areas of biological and climatic importance in the ocean by drawing on knowledge of the marine microbiome. This means that the findings from this evaluation have been directly applied to this project assessment, with the aim of improving its quality based on the lessons learnt from this first TARA/FFEM project.

Participants and operating methods

The TARA Foundation is responsible for project management, including overall operational and logistical coordination. A three-person project team has been set up within the Foundation. The initiative brings together a scientific consortium comprising, in particular, the TARA OCEAN Foundation, the European Molecular

Biology Laboratory (EMBL), the École normale supérieure (ENS), the Villefranche Oceanography Laboratory (LOV), the French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) and the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS).

OBJECTIVES

The project aims to strengthen scientific knowledge of plankton and its links with marine ecosystems, to enhance the capacity of researchers from the Global South to carry out research, and to use the research findings to inform international ocean governance and raise public awareness.

Specific objectives:

The project aims to (i) strengthen research into plankton and its interactions with marine ecosystems, (ii) develop the scientific capacity of countries in the Global South, (iii) utilise the findings in international ocean governance processes, and (iv) raise public awareness of issues relating to marine ecosystems.

TESTED INNOVATION

The added value and innovative nature of the project lie in its focus on the microbiome, its transdisciplinary approach and the integration of its various components, from research through to advocacy and the dissemination of knowledge.



Marine organism @C.Guigand



Départ de Lorient @Floriane Guillou



EVALUATION RESULTS

Relevance

The scientific work produced since 2013 by the Tara consortium has led to remarkable advances in our scientific understanding of the microbiome. The FFEM's contribution was intended to capitalise on these advances for the benefit of countries in the Global South, and to support the development of applications for the management of the ocean's biological resources, as well as the evolution of the policy framework governing the management of these resources. The structure of the project's components was also appropriate, in that the implementation processes ultimately highlighted the interdependencies, interrelationships and complementarities between these components, giving the project a high degree of internal coherence.

Coherence

The relative interdependence of the various components has been a key factor in ensuring internal consistency. Scientific findings have been utilised at various levels: publications, advocacy, and communication initiatives underpinned by efforts to make scientific knowledge accessible to the general public. It is fair to say that there has been a genuine optimisation of research outcomes.

Effectiveness

Most of the target values for the indicators in the logical framework were achieved and, overall, effectiveness was satisfactory. The main weakness relates to the development of applicable models for fisheries resource management, which was not completed. The timeframe required for research activities was underestimated. With regard to advocacy, there was virtually no interaction with the

IUCN and the IOC. Finally, the regional seas conventions were not significantly involved.

Efficiency

The project's efficiency is satisfactory: unit costs are generally in line with standard practice, funds have been properly raised, and financial reporting is regular and clear.

Impact

The project's impact is particularly significant from a scientific perspective, with a massive output of open data, 106 publications and observation protocols produced by the TARA Ocean consortium. Capacity-building initiatives have benefited seven young researchers from the Global South. Advocacy activities have helped to bring scientific knowledge to international forums, whilst awareness-raising initiatives have increased the visibility of issues relating to the marine microbiome.

Viability / Sustainability

The scientific viability of the project appears sound, given the public nature of the laboratories involved and the open access to the data produced. The scientific results and the networks established should therefore continue to inform research and ocean governance processes. The sustainability of capacity-building is more mixed, with some postdoctoral researchers having pursued their careers outside the project. The long-term viability of advocacy efforts, however, depends largely on external factors, notably the adoption and implementation of the high seas treaty known as the BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction). Consolidating the achievements will also depend on translating them into operational management tools.

ADDED VALUE OF THE FFEM

The FFEM contributed its expertise throughout the project, notably through its participation in more than 30 international meetings (within the framework of the UNCLOS) and in the negotiations on the future ABNJ (Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction) treaty. Its involvement in the project's various activities resulted in the production of educational programmes, press articles, publications and audiovisual content.

All the data from the TARA research project have been made available via an open-access online database. These data are used, for example, by North American research institutions to calibrate their models.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The project has yielded major scientific advances, but remains primarily research-driven. The application of this knowledge must now be more closely aligned with users' needs and facilitate its translation into operational tools and applications.

- Focus a new phase on developing tools and applications that meet the needs of end-users and are likely to inform decision-making;
- Support the development of demand through enhanced dialogue with potential users and a clearer demonstration of the operational usefulness of the results;
- Strengthen the documentation and monitoring of the processes by which the results are adopted and utilised, in order to document the impacts and consolidate the lessons learnt from what is still a pioneering initiative;
- Broaden the project's stakeholders and target audiences by involving institutions, managers, decision-makers and other potential users of the knowledge produced to a greater extent;
- Develop a more proactive and tailored communication strategy, with objectives and messages adapted to different categories of stakeholders, going beyond mere awareness-raising events.

Find out more about the project by scanning the QR code

