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### **Sustainable Management of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) - GCP/RAS/236/GFF, GCP/RAS/248/SWE; GCP/RAS/246/NOR**

*Mid-term evaluation report*

March 2012

## **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

### **Office of Evaluation (OED)**

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## Acronyms

AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
ANWP	Annual National Work Plan
APFIC	Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission
ARWP	Annual Regional Work Plan
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASWGF	ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Fisheries
AWGCM	ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment
BOB	Bay of Bengal
BOB LME	Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem
BOBLME	Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Project
BOBP	Bay of Bengal Programme
BOBP-IGO	Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organization
CCA	Causal Chain Analysis
CoFI	Committee of Fisheries (FAO)
CORIN-Asia	Asia Coastal Resources Institute
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
CTI	Coral Triangle Initiative
CTSP	Coral Triangle Support Partnership
EAF	Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management
ECOSEAS	Aquatic Ecosystem Health and Management Society
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAOR	FAO Representative
FTDA	Framework Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis
GCRMN	Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIWA	Global International Waters Assessment
GPA	Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities
GPNM	Global Partnership on Nutrient Management
ICM	Integrated Coastal Management
ICSF	International Collective in Support of Fishworkers
IMPAACT	Improving Marine Protected Areas on the Andaman Coast of Thailand under a Climate Change Regime
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO)
IOGOOS	Indian Ocean Global Ocean Observing System
IOSEA	Indian Ocean – South-East Asian Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IW Learn	International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network
IW	International Waters
LME	Large Marine Ecosystem
LTU	Lead Technical Unit
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFF	Mangroves for the Future
MFF	Marine Fish Forum
MPA	Marine Protected Area

MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
NACA	Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia-Pacific
NAP	National Action Plan
NARA	National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency
NC	National Coordinator
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NTA	National Technical Advisor
NTF	National Task Force
OED	Office of Evaluation
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PY	Project Year
RAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO)
RC	Regional Coordinator
RCU	Regional Coordination Unit
RFLP	Rural Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and Southeast Asia
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SACEP	South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme
SAP	Strategic Action Programme
SEAFDEC	Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TDA	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis
TOR	Terms of Reference
TWAP	Transboundary Waters Assessment Programme
UBC-SAUP	University of British Columbia – Sea Around Us Project
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-GPA	United Nations Environment Programme – Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WESTPAC	IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific

## **Executive Summary**

### Information about the evaluation

ES1. The Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOB LME) project (GCP/RAS/236/GFF) is a five-year initiative (1 April 2009 – 30 March 2014), and represents the first phase of a BOB LME programme expected to last for 12–15 years. The project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), with contributions from Norway, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the USA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the eight project countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives<sup>1</sup>, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand). The BOB LME Project (BOBLME) finance amounts to around USD 31 million. FAO is both the GEF Agency and the project executing agency.

ES2. Provision for an independent mid-term evaluation (MTE) is included in the Project Document. The purpose of the MTE was to determine progress being made towards achievement of project outcomes and identify corrective actions if necessary. The MTE was conducted from 9 November 2011 to 31 January 2012 by a team of two independent consultants contracted by FAO. From 09 November 2011 to 03 January 2012, the evaluation team visited five of the eight participating countries (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand) and carried out extensive interviews based on a questionnaire with 60 persons, including: Regional Coordinator (RC); Chief Technical Advisor (CTA); Lead Technical Unit (LTU) and the Chief of Operations, FAO Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (RAP); National Coordinators (NCs), National Technical Advisors (NTAs), and other national counterparts; and regional organizations involved in collaborative activities. The team also interviewed representatives from India, Malaysia and Maldives during the National Coordinators/National Technical Advisors planning meeting held in Phuket in December 2011. The team also carried out desk review of a sub-set of the available project documents and specific products including reports, studies, project website, and newsletters.

### Key findings and conclusions

ES3. The living resources of the BOB LME are of major significance in providing food security and livelihoods to millions of people in the bordering countries. The sustainability of the BOB LME, however, is threatened by three major problems: (i) overexploitation of living resources, (ii) degradation of critical habitats, and (iii) land and marine-based pollution. Many of the fish stocks (for example, Hilsa and Indian mackerel) are shared between two or more countries and the environmental issues could have transboundary impacts when they extend across national borders. The bordering countries recognize that these problems cannot be addressed only by national initiatives.

ES4. The BOBLME provides the only existing platform for region-wide collaboration and with a mandate to address both fisheries management and environmental issues. It is also the only regional forum for dialogue among the countries, all of whom recognize the value of sub-regional and to some extent regional collaboration to solve common problems, and to

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of the project the original geographic limitation of the BOB LME was extended to include the EEZ of Maldives, which has a long history of collaboration with the other BOB countries.

build awareness and capacity. Among the constraints to addressing these issues are weak institutional capacities at national levels, insufficient budgetary commitments, lack of stakeholder consultation and empowerment, as well as absence of regional institutional arrangements to facilitate a joint, coordinated approach.

ES5. Based on the foregoing, in 1995 the Advisory Committee of the UNDP/FAO project “The Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP)” requested FAO to assist in the development of a project proposal that could be submitted to GEF and other donors. Project development funds (PDF-B and Supplemental Block B grants) and associated co-financing were used to establish national and regional coordinating mechanisms; prepare a Framework Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (FTDA); and formulate the Project Document for consideration by GEF and other donors. The draft Project Brief was endorsed by the countries in October 2004. Following the tsunami in December 2004, the proposal was revised to include a post-tsunami environmental “baseline”. The GEF Council approved the BOBLME in February 2005.

ES6. The project is highly relevant for the sustainable management of the Bay of Bengal. It is consistent with priorities in the FAO Country Programming Framework broadly related to food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable management of natural resources and the environment. FAOs normative work is extensively used in the project and results have been achieved that contribute to FAO Core Functions. The BOBLME is also laying the foundation for contributing to FAO Strategic Objectives C and Organizational Results.

ES7. The BOBLME, which has five components or outcomes, is focused on the development of the foundation for regional cooperation and related capacity building of institutions, as well as removing barriers to national and regional cooperation to address transboundary issues for the sustainable management of the Bay of Bengal. The major output is the development and adoption of a Strategic Action Programme (SAP), which is supported by a comprehensive regional Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA). Inconsistent statements were evident in the Project Document and in the Logical Framework Analysis. While the revisions, which were endorsed by the PSC during its first meeting, improved the original Logical Framework, these did not eliminate all the inconsistencies.

ES8. The methodology adopted by the project consists mainly of training and capacity development, workshops, meetings, working groups, studies, and consultations. The MTE evaluators concluded that the chosen approach is feasible and the result of a long period of negotiations among stakeholders. There were, however, strong opinions in the countries that more on-the-ground activities would have benefited the coastal communities and promoted greater project buy-in by politicians and the public.

ES9. The BOBLME has a complex institutional set-up including the eight participating countries, FAO, GEF, and donor agencies. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) is made up of two members from each country representing the ministries responsible for fisheries and the environment. The PSC effectively performs its functions, but about half of the participants attending PSC meetings have been alternates, with only seven of the 16 members having participated in the two meetings held. The decision of the PSC to be the SAP formulation team demonstrates ownership and commitment to project. The MTE team also found that there were weak linkages between the institutions responsible for the project at the national level (fisheries research institutions) and the ministries responsible for fisheries and environment. Further, there was insufficient higher level collaboration between these two



ministries. Leading the SAP development will, however, require the PSC to be more active and with frequent inter-sessional contacts and continuity in membership.

ES10. By signing the Project Document, the Governments have agreed to provide cash and in kind co-financing for the project. At the time of the MTE, not all the Governments had completely fulfilled their obligations to appoint national teams and to provide sufficient resources for their operation. While all National Coordinators (NC) have been appointed, only three countries had full time National Technical Advisors (NTA) at the time of the MTE. The absence of NTAs stretches the capacity of the NCs, hampers project activities, and reduces the management capacity of the national teams in the countries in question. Demands on the national teams are expected to increase when the project moves into SAP formulation. The evaluators also found that the National Task Forces have not performed as expected. It was evident that, with a few exceptions, the NCs mainly responded to requests from the RCU and did not independently implement project activities, despite their commitment to the project. The MTE team found that only in few cases do the National Task Forces (NTF) fulfil their terms of reference.

ES11. The project is managed in an excellent manner from the RCU with support, technical backstopping, and guidance from the LTU at FAORAP. The MTE concluded that the institutional capacity to coordinate regional interventions, monitor project impacts, and disseminate and exchange information has been adequately established. The administrative support to the project from FAORAP is efficient and while the Budget Holder provides adequate support in terms of disbursements of funds, it is in no position to provide effective operational support to the RCU. The RC and CTA spend up to 60% and 40% of their time, respectively, on operations, which reduces the time available for project management and substantive technical work. This underscores the need for a dedicated field operations officer to be based at the RCU, especially in the next stage of the project when the RC and CTA will be required to focus on SAP formulation and its adoption by the Governments. FAO's BOBLME Task Force does not function as envisaged. This represents a lost opportunity to FAO for institutional learning from the project.

ES12. The project design did not cater for the long inception period required for complex projects with multiple outcomes and engaging several countries. This, as well as the over-optimistic work-plans, led to delays in implementation and low financial delivery in the first year. At the time of the MTE 35.7% of the budget had been used. The evaluators concluded that there are adequate budget provisions for project implementation and it is not likely that the whole budget will be used by the end of the project.

ES13. By the time of the MTE, the project had made considerable progress towards achieving the outputs and outcomes that were expected during this period. The project has collaborated with over 30 organizations and took advantage of various opportunities to advance project objectives. In addition, a number of top experts have been contracted and Working Groups established for specific thematic areas. This approach adopted by the RCU to implement project activities is considered by the MTE team to be very effective and efficient.

ES14. The Project Development Objective is expected to be achieved with regard to the formulation and review of the SAP. However, with the short timeframe remaining, the evaluators concluded that there is a risk that the SAP will not be adopted when the project closes. The SAP will address regional and sub-regional institutional arrangements, financial

investments, and programmes to address transboundary issues. Support and engagement of senior management and political levels in the relevant ministries are crucial for the success of the SAP process. Feedback from interviews revealed that the bureaucratic and hierarchical national institutional set up is not conducive to this requirement. It was clear to the evaluators that while the project has considerable buy-in and support at the technical level, this was not the case at the higher political level. This is a serious issue that the project management has to address. In addition to providing the required support to the PSC in SAP formulation, a mechanism is needed to help the PSC members in their advocacy role at high political level. This could include (upon request) providing assistance and resources to the PSC and involvement of GEF National Operational and Political Focal Points, FAO Representatives (FAORs), and others in facilitating access to high administrative and political levels and in raising awareness about the project.

ES15. The MTE team concluded that the overriding concern for the remaining part of the project is the SAP formulation, which will require that project resources are focused on the timely conclusion of the process and on creating awareness and support from senior administrative and political level. While the evaluators do not consider an extension of the project at this time, the RCU should engage with the PSC to closely monitor progress. At the 4<sup>th</sup> regular PSC meeting in March 2013, they will be in a better position to judge if the SAP could be concluded on time and if there is need for an extension of the project.

ES16. It was also evident during the interviews that there is little support among participating Governments for a region-wide institutional management arrangement for the SAP. In contrast, there was overwhelming support for smaller thematic and/or sub-regional sub-components, with management or coordination responsibility assigned to existing or newly created sub-regional institutional mechanisms. In this regard, partnerships with sub-regional organizations and initiatives should be fostered and strengthened. The RCU should investigate, in consultation with the PSC and subject to final approval by the PSC, feasible alternatives to a region-wide SAP and institutional arrangements.

ES17. At the time of the MTE, the project had completed 12 of the 25 Logical Framework targets expected to be completed in PY 1 - 3, with 10 expected to be completed by March 2012 (end of PY 3) and 3 to be rescheduled. For 31 targets, a score based on the GEF six-point scale system<sup>2</sup> were assigned by the evaluators: 5 were rated as highly satisfactory, 21 as satisfactory, 2 as marginally satisfactory, 1 as marginally unsatisfactory, and 2 as unsatisfactory. Among the completed targets is the draft regional TDA, which will be presented to the PSC meeting in March 2012 for approval. In addition to targets specified in the Logical Framework, many other outputs have been produced that supported the regional TDA and/or that will be taken up in the SAP. The project successfully engaged with over 30 partner organizations with experience in the BOB region. The MTE team highly commends the RC and CTA for these achievements and progress made.

ES18. There have been delays, however, in achieving a number of other targets. Of major concern is the slow progress in the preparation of the draft regional SAP, but the RCU expects this to be completed by 31 March 2012. The MTE team thinks that this timeframe is overly optimistic. It should be mentioned that since the conclusion of the MTE mission, a

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<sup>2</sup> GEF six-point scale scoring system: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Marginally Satisfactory (MS), Marginally Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), and Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)

SAP meeting has been held in February 2012 and a skeleton outline of the regional SAP prepared. More work needs to be done, however, if the GEF guidelines for SAP formulation are to be followed and the extensive negotiations required to reach consensus held. Progress on other regional components was hampered by delays in finalizing contractual arrangements or slow delivery by partners. Activities to be implemented at the national level have also seen slow progress. For example, not all countries have nominated their pilot Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) sites, with only one country so far having implemented its pilot ICM initiative. The project management proactively promoted ICM capacity development through the regional ICM postgraduate training course organized by the Asian Institute of Technology and Mangroves for the Future. Many persons interviewed expressed doubt about the willingness (both political and technical) and ability at the national and local level to implement activities in the countries. On the other hand, several interviewees felt that more on-the-ground actions should have been included.

ES19. Regarding gender, the evaluation found that gender (women) issues and gender mainstreaming are not explicitly included in the Project Document, in the identification of beneficiaries or in the TDA, despite the important role of women in coastal fisheries in the region. At the time of the MTE, contract negotiations were ongoing for the conduct of gender analysis. Participants in meetings and training events were also predominantly males. The project is urged to pay more attention, especially in SAP development, to women's issues in view of their role in and their dependence on this sector.

ES20. A significant amount of project resources is devoted to training and capacity development. The project has already conducted or supported participants from member countries in a number of training courses and programmes. The approach has been to provide the same training to all countries, without considering the wide disparity in the level of capacity needs among the countries (although the project is beginning to address this). The MTE team recommends that a capacity needs assessment be conducted and a strategy developed during the next year to meet the specific needs of the countries. The SAP should also propose priority capacity building interventions.

ES21. The MTE team found it too early to provide any firm statements on sustainability, and concluded that it is of utmost importance to consider means for ensuring sustainability, which can be enhanced even now. For example, management arrangements in Mergui Archipelago being developed can be sustained through continued efforts by the countries, IUCN, and Wetlands Alliance. The Hilsa management plan and bilateral arrangements for Gulf of Mannar are examples where sustainability can be achieved through implementation by existing regional and/or sub-regional organizations. Sustainability can also be enhanced by strengthening of collaboration with existing sub-regional arrangements and initiatives. There is need to accelerate efforts to have partners assume greater responsibility for larger project components.

ES22. It is evident that the project has already had some positive intermediate results, which have potential to produce lasting impacts. The project is creating an enabling environment and helping to overcome national and regional obstacles to sustainable management of the BOB. Among the intermediate results achieved so far are raised awareness about the BOB LME, and increased knowledge and enhanced national capacity to address transboundary issues and to work in a collaborative manner with other countries.

ES23. The MTE rated the overall success of the project as satisfactory, based on 13 criteria using the GEF six-point scale system. The individual rating for each criterion is given in the report.

ES24. While it is too early to expect major lessons to be learned at this stage, one lesson learned concerning flexibility in the Logical Framework merits being recorded: Flexibility should be integrated in the design of a project to allow for changing conditions that may occur between the design phase and actual implementation. Flexibility must, however, include agreed procedures for changes to be decided and recorded.

### Recommendations

ES25. Shortcomings were identified in the Project Document with regard to inconsistent statements on approaches and the time needed for project inception. There are also inconsistencies in the Logical Framework Analysis.

#### **Recommendation 1: To FAO on project formulation (Sections 3.1.2- 3.1.4)**

FAO is urged to enhance quality control for the preparation of project documents with a view to having them reviewed in-depth before becoming a management instrument for projects, with emphasis given to consistency and logic in the Logical Framework Analysis.

ES26. The project is in a challenging phase, having in reality only two years to complete the SAP and its adoption. Currently, the project lacks effective access to the political level to mobilize support for the SAP process and its adoption, which is essential if it is to be concluded within the remaining time. To achieve this, there is a need to raise awareness and support for the SAP and to create more profound buy-in by politicians and the public. There is also a need to complement and strengthen the efforts by the PSC members to drive the SAP process and the RCU's capacity to manage and support it. The following recommendations are all linked with the aim to facilitate the SAP process.

#### **Recommendation 2: To FAO GEF Focal Point on National GEF Focal Points (Section 4.2.1)**

GEF Focal Point in FAO should encourage national GEF Operational and Political Focal Points to engage in promotion of the project. There is scope for effective support to increase awareness of the project and facilitate high level contacts and inter-ministerial interactions.

#### **Recommendation 3: To the Regional Coordinating Unit on complementary support to PSC for advocacy on high political level (Sections 4.4 and 5.1.2)**

In order to complement the PSC members in their advocacy role, the RCU should consider contracting individuals with high status in the society, known for their commitment to conservation of nature, including sustainable management of aquatic living resources, and with access to and influence on high political level.

**Recommendation 4: To FAORAP on strengthening links to high administrative and political level in participating countries (Section 4.2.2)**

- a) FAORAP should encourage FAO Representatives to take a more proactive role in the promotion of the BOBLME at country level and facilitate access to high administrative and political levels to enhance awareness about the project in regular high level contacts, and to participate in high profile project events;
- b) ADG FAORAP should be the Convener and Chair of a forum for annual regional meetings among Permanent Secretaries with the aim of reviewing the status of the SAP and agree on actions to enhance progress towards the Project Development Objective. At least two meetings should be held during the remaining project period.

**Recommendation 5: To FAORAP on strengthening of the Regional Coordinating Unit (Section 4.2.2)**

FAORAP (in consultation with GEF Focal Point) should urgently appoint a full time Field Operations Officer, preferably with a fisheries background, to be based in Phuket for tasks that to a large extent are currently done by the RC and CTA. These include organization of meetings and workshops, recruitment of consultants, drafting of Letters of Agreement and negotiating with recipient organizations, and monitoring of budget disbursement.

ES27. Sustainability of project outcomes rely on the SAP being formulated and adopted, and regional or sub-regional mechanisms for collaboration being created and/or strengthened. Partners engaged in the current project will also contribute to sustainability by integrating project outcomes in their future work.

**Recommendation 6: To the Regional Coordinating Unit on partnerships (Sections 4.2.2, 4.2.3 and 5.4)**

The RCU should increase its efforts to strengthen collaboration with relevant existing institutions, organizations, and programmes in the region with compatible mandates, aims, and objectives as the BOBLME, in which partners take the responsibility for entire project outputs. This requires longer term and wider contractual arrangements than are used at present.

ES28. The PSC will play a crucial role in the SAP formulation and adoption process. This will require a more active PSC with frequent inter-sessional contacts. However, there is lack of continuity in its membership and about half of the participants in PSC meetings have been alternates.

**Recommendation 7: To the Regional Coordinating Unit on strengthening the role of the Project Steering Committee (Section 4.2.4)**

The RCU should take the initiation of the SAP formulation process as an opportunity to engage the PSC more actively through inter-sessional interactions between the PSC members and RCU and among PSC members. This can possibly be through teleconferences and interactive networks to monitor and drive the SAP process. RCU should further urge the Governments to improve continuity in participation in meetings, directly and through the PSC.

ES29. The national teams (primarily the NC and NTA) are crucial for the implementation of the project to achieve its development objective. Not all Governments have fulfilled their obligations to appoint NCs and NTAs and to provide sufficient resources for their operation. At the time of the MTE, only three countries had appointed full time NTAs. Demands on the national teams will increase when the project moves into SAP formulation.

**Recommendation 8: To the Regional Coordinating Unit and PSC on Government obligations (Section 4.4)**

In PSC meetings, the RCU should continue to draw attention to fulfillment of national obligations, appointment of NTAs, and provisions of facilities and support, and seek the PSC members' support to urge the Governments to strengthen the national teams. The RCU should also more actively engage the national teams in project activities, and increase dialogue and cooperation among national agencies, PSC members, and other stakeholders within the countries.

ES30. There is an opportunity for FAO to use the FAO Task Force to enhance the institutional learning from the project and promote exchange of experiences between GEF-funded and FAO-implemented projects.

**Recommendation 9: To FAO on the role of the BOBLME Task Force (Section 4.3)**

FAORAP and the GEF Focal Point should consider the potential role of the BOBLME Task Force in institutional learning from project implementation and in networking between similar projects to exchange experiences with the aim to enhance and improve FAO's management of large regional projects. The BOBLME Task Force could be used as a pilot case to revitalize the task force concept and test and demonstrate its potential usefulness.

ES31. The project is most likely to achieve one part of the Project Development Objective, the formulation of the SAP. There is doubt, however, if the adoption process can be achieved in time. The MTE team concludes that for this to be successful all parties have to contribute effectively. While the evaluators do not consider an extension of the project at this time, very close monitoring of the process is necessary.

**Recommendation 10: To the Regional Coordination Unit on close monitoring of the SAP formulation process (Section 5.1.2)**

The RCU should engage with the PSC to closely monitor progress towards SAP formulation and adoption. The first bench mark will be the 3rd PSC meeting where the regional TDA will be presented for approval, which will trigger the start of SAP formulation. Six months later the RCU should consult with PSC (in an extra physical meeting or a teleconference) about progress for the PSC to decide on required actions. The 4th regular PSC meeting in March 2013 should decide if there is need for an extension of the project.

ES32. The MTE concluded that there was weak commitment among participating Governments to a region-wide management arrangement. Thus, a comprehensive region-wide SAP may encounter difficulties in adoption. There is therefore need to investigate alternative options to speed up the adoption process, facilitate the mechanisms for collaboration between countries, and secure financing for SAP implementation.

**Recommendation 11: To the Regional Coordination Unit on the SAP formulation process (Section 5.1.2)**

The RCU should consider, in consultation with the PSC and subject to final approval by the PSC, alternatives to a region-wide SAP, potentially a SAP consisting of smaller sub-regional, bi-lateral, and thematic components that could be brought together into a regional programme, with responsibility for management of individual components given to existing sub-regional institutions or institutional arrangements created specifically for this purpose.

ES33. Despite the important role of women in coastal fisheries in the region, gender (women) issues and gender mainstreaming are not explicitly included in the project document or in the TDA, and no gender analysis has been undertaken. Participants in the project consist predominantly of males. The evaluation team strongly recommends that the project pay more attention to women's issues in view of their important role in and their dependence on this sector for livelihoods.

**Recommendation 12: To the Regional Coordinating Unit on gender issues (Section 5.2)**

The RCU should engage the PSC to urge the countries to increase the participation of women in the project, including in training and capacity building initiatives; and ensure that gender issues are explicitly considered in the SAP, including evaluation of gender implications of proposed actions. The RC and CTA should ensure that the revised TDA incorporate gender issues as appropriate, including in the Causal Chain Analysis.

ES34. The approach taken to training and capacity building is to provide the same training courses and at the same level to all countries, despite differences in their capacity needs. This partly arises from the absence of a capacity needs assessment and an appropriate capacity development strategy. Not all the individuals nominated by the countries for training are the most appropriate and there is often lack of continuity in participation. This reduces the potential for uptake and sustainability.

**Recommendation 13: To the Regional Coordinating Unit on capacity development (Section 5.3)**

A capacity needs assessment should be conducted and a strategy that targets the specific needs of the individual countries developed during the next year. Further, the RCU should ensure that provisions are made in the SAP for priority training and capacity development in the next phase of the project. The RCU should, through the PSC, urge countries to nominate the appropriate individuals and to provide mechanisms and incentives to enable them to contribute to the project on a sustainable basis.

## **1 Introduction**

### ***1.1 Evaluation background***

1. The Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem project (BOBLME) is a five-year project (1 April 2009 – 30 March 2014), which is the first phase of a BOB LME programme expected to last for 12 -15 years. Funded principally by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the project is also supported with contributions from Norway, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the USA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the eight project countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand). The Project finance amounts to around USD 31 million. FAO is both the GEF Agency and the executing agency of the project.

2. The Project Document makes provisions for an independent Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) to be undertaken at the end of the second year of project implementation. The Terms of Reference (TORs) for this MTE (Annex 1) were prepared in close consultation with FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) and the FAO GEF Coordination Unit within FAO Investment Centre in accordance with the evaluation policies and procedures of FAO and the GEF. This was followed by discussion and endorsement of the TORs by the participating BOB countries and BOBLME partners.

3. The MTE was conducted from 9 November 2011 to 31 January 2012 by a team of two independent consultants contracted by FAO. The profile of each of the consultants is given in Annex 2. Evaluation findings are expected to be presented to the BOBLME Steering Committee (PSC) meeting scheduled for March 2012. It was agreed by OED, the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU), FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAORAP) and the FAO GEF Unit in the Investment Centre Division that the evaluation team would visit five of the eight participating countries (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand) in order to capture a varied perspective of the different context in which the programme operates and the specific challenges and progress. Selection criteria included the state of progress, allowing a mix of more and less advanced, location of the project RCU in Phuket, Thailand and FAO offices, as well as time and cost considerations.

### ***1.2 Evaluation purpose***

4. The purpose of the MTE was to determine progress being made towards achievement of project outcomes and identify necessary corrective actions. According to the TORs, it would, inter alia:

- review the effectiveness, efficiency, and timeliness of project implementation;
- analyse effectiveness of implementation and partnership arrangements;
- identify issues requiring decisions and remedial actions;
- identify lessons learned about project design, implementation, and management;
- highlight technical achievements and lessons learned;



- analyse whether the project has achieved any of the benchmarks for moving towards Phase 2 of the BOBLME; and
  - propose any mid-course corrections and/or adjustments to the Work Plan as necessary.
5. Where appropriate, the MTE looked closely at these issues at both the national and regional levels.

### **1.3 Evaluation scope**

6. The scope of the evaluation was described in the TORs in Annex 1, which specified that the evaluation would critically assess the programme through internationally accepted evaluation criteria, that is, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. In addition, mainstreaming of gender issues was also added by FAO OED as a criterion for assessment. Gender equity is one of FAO Strategic Objectives and Organizational Results (Gender equity in access to resources, goods, services, and decision-making in rural areas).

7. Based on the analysis, the evaluation drew specific conclusions and formulated recommendations for any necessary further action by project personnel, Governments, FAO and/or other parties to ensure that the project is on track, including any need for follow-up action. The evaluation was to also draw attention to specific good practices and lessons of interest to other similar activities.

### **1.4 Evaluation methodology**

8. The evaluation methodology followed the guidance provided in the ToRs and according to the timetable shown in Annex 3. The evaluation team (MTE team) visited five of the eight project countries: Bangladesh (Dhaka), India (New Delhi and Chennai), Myanmar (Yangon and Naypyidaw), Sri Lanka (Colombo) and Thailand (Bangkok and Phuket). During these visits extensive discussions and/or structured interviews were held with 60 persons (Annex 3), including project staff and national institutions involved in project implementation. Among them were the Regional Coordinator (RC), the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), and other members of the RCU; the Lead Technical Unit (LTU) and the Chief of Operations at FAORAP; National Coordinators (NCs), National Technical Advisors (NTAs) and other national counterparts; and regional and international organizations who have been involved in collaborative activities with the project. The latter were Wetlands Alliance, Mangroves for the Future (MFF), World Conservation Union (IUCN) Asia, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), and World Fish Centre (Dhaka). A meeting was also held with a representative of the Norwegian Embassy in Bangkok. In each of the five countries visited, a courtesy visit was paid to the FAO country representative, during which the BOBLME was also discussed.

9. A questionnaire was developed by the MTE team and used to guide the structured interviews (Annex 4). Some of the questions required respondents to assign a rank on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means lowest/poor and 5 positive/excellent. This questionnaire was sent by email to three persons whom it was not possible to meet face to face. The questionnaire was used mainly with national counterparts and the project RC and CTA. The MTE team also participated in the National Coordinators/National Technical Advisors planning meeting held

in Phuket on 1-2 December 2011. At this venue, interviews were conducted with a representative from the Ministry of Environment of Indonesia, NC and NTA from Malaysia, and the NC from the Maldives. As such, it was possible for the evaluation team to meet face to face with members of the national teams from all eight countries. The frequency of responses in each ranking category (1 to 5) is presented in Annex 5.

10. The MTE team also conducted a desk review of a sub-set of the available project documents (including the Project Document, Progress Implementation Reports, quarterly and annual reports, Results Matrix, etc) and specific products including thematic reports and reviews as well as the website and newsletters. These documents and products were selected by the evaluators to represent a subset of the range available. A list of documents and products reviewed is presented in Annex 6. Triangulation of evidence and information gathered helped validate evidence collected and its analysis.

11. OED participated in the debriefing held on 16<sup>th</sup> December at the RCU to present its preliminary conclusions and recommendations to the RC and CTA, following which teleconferences were held with the Lead Technical Officer and the GEF unit in FAO. In addition, on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2012 the team leader also held a debriefing with the Deputy Regional Representative at FAORAP in Bangkok.

12. Constraints faced included the lack of opportunity to visit the remaining three countries and the short time available in the countries visited, with the exception of Thailand, where most of the time was spent at the RCU. In some instances, it was not possible to meet or have detailed discussions with some key stakeholders because of their busy schedules. A few meetings with stakeholders in Bangkok had to be re-scheduled because of the floods, which reduced the time available for these meetings. These constraints, however, did not significantly affect the conduct of the evaluation.

13. The draft report was circulated to FAO internal stakeholders, including the RC and CTA, the Lead Technical Officer and Project Task Force members for comments and suggestions, which were incorporated, as considered appropriate by the evaluators, in the final report.

## **2 Context of the project**

14. The BOB LME is surrounded by eight countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand) and supports numerous commercially important fish stocks and critical natural habitats. Some 450 million people live in its catchment, many subsisting at or below the poverty level. Millions of people in the bordering countries, including an estimated two million fishers who operate primarily in the coastal waters, are dependent on the Bay of Bengal's natural resources for livelihoods and food security.

15. Within the LME a number of issues have been identified that threaten its natural living resources and dependent human communities. These include: (i) overexploitation of living resources, (ii) degradation of critical habitats, and (iii) land and marine-based pollution. Many of the fish stocks (for example, Hilsa and Indian mackerel) are shared between two or more countries. In addition, the environmental issues in this LME could have transboundary impacts when they extend across national borders. Therefore, the shared

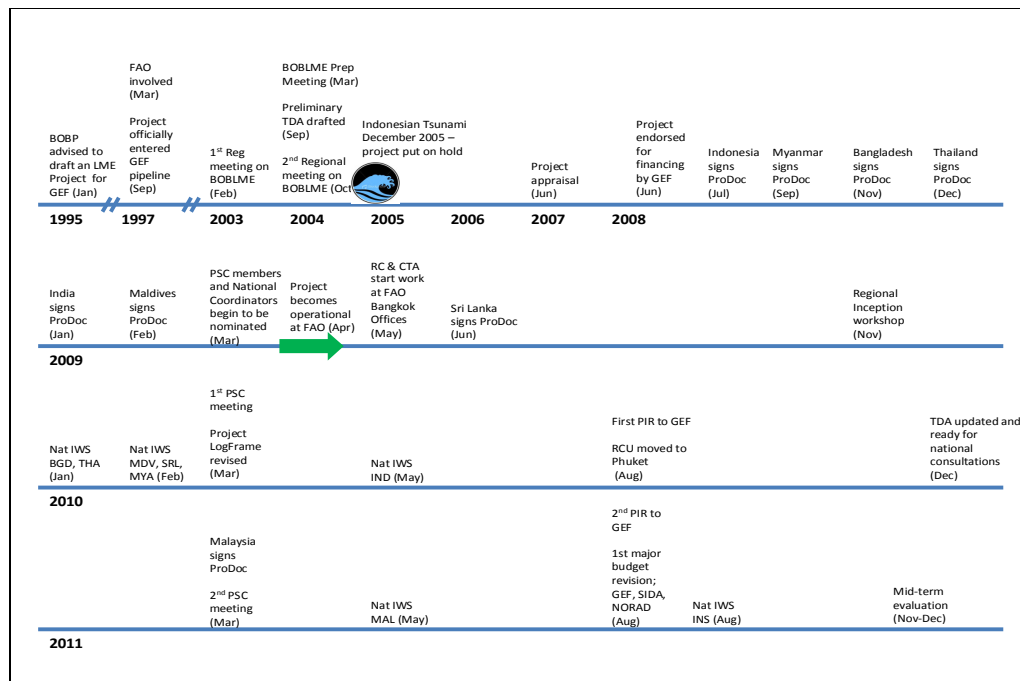
nature of the BOB LME and its living resources requires a joint, coordinated, comprehensive and integrated management approach.

16. A critical barrier to addressing these issues is the weak and/or inappropriate policies, strategies and legal measures as well as their poor enforcement, which characterize much of the region. Other major constraints include lack of alternative livelihoods, weak institutional capacity at national levels, insufficient budgetary commitments, and lack of community stakeholder consultation and empowerment. One of the key barriers to resolving the transboundary issues is the lack of regional institutional arrangements to facilitate a coordinated approach among the BOB LME countries. A number of donors, including Asian Development Bank, World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), FAO, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and bilateral donors have been active in integrated coastal resources management, biodiversity conservation, environmental capacity building, and sustainable fisheries management in the region. None of these organizations, however, has the mandate, geographical scope and/or capacity to support a broad initiative based on a Large Marine Ecosystem approach that addresses the shared and common issues and barriers that are characteristic of the Bay of Bengal.

17. The countries declared their willingness to work together through the BOBLME and to lay the foundations for a coordinated programme of action designed to improve the lives of the coastal populations through improved regional management of the Bay of Bengal environment and its fisheries. Most of the participating countries were actively involved in the Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP), a regional fisheries programme that was implemented in three phases over the period 1979 – 1999. At the time, the BOBP participating countries included Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, with Myanmar participating in BOBP meetings as an observer.

18. The need to address the serious problems facing the fisheries resources and environment was originally proposed in 1995 by the Advisory Committee of the BOBP, which requested FAO to assist in the development of a project proposal that could be submitted to the GEF and other donors for funding. FAO recognized that this programme would provide a coordinated approach to the management of the resources of the BOB LME, maximizing inputs from countries and complementary programmes, thereby adding value to management and policy development, and subsequently accepted supporting its member countries in this effort. The World Bank (as Implementing Agency), SIDA, and NOAA also supported this initiative. The substantial national participation among the eight BOB LME countries during the preparation process indicated their strong commitment to jointly addressing the problems facing the LME.

19. The GEF process including PDF-B and Supplemental Block B grants, as well as associated co-financing, have been used to: (i) put in place national and regional coordinating mechanisms to ensure both broad-based stakeholder participation in the preparation of the project and its future cost-efficient implementation; (ii) prepare national and thematic baseline reports; (iii) prepare a Framework Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (FTDA); and (iv) formulate the Project Document for consideration by GEF and other donors for possible financing. The draft Project Brief, in the format of a World Bank Project Appraisal Document, was reviewed, commented upon, and endorsed by the countries at the Second Regional Workshop that was held in Colombo in October 2004. The calendar of major events in the project is shown below in Box 1.

**Box 1. Major programme events**

Source: BOBLME

20. During the preparation of the FTDA, the occurrence of natural hazards generally and tsunamis specifically, were not identified as a priority. This situation changed dramatically with the earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2004. The BOBLME proposal was reassessed to ascertain where meaningful and compatible contributions could be made in a timely manner. An important consideration was to establish a new, post-tsunami environmental “baseline” under the TDA sub-component.

21. Following a revision of the Project Brief to take into account the impact of the tsunami, the project was approved by the GEF Council in the February 2005 Inter-sessional Work Programme.

### 3 Concept and relevance

#### 3.1 Design

##### 3.1.1 Theory of change

22. The Global Environmental Objective of the BOBLME is: “A healthy ecosystem and sustainability of living resources for the benefit of coastal populations of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem” (revised objective). The threats to a healthy ecosystem are defined broadly as overexploitation of living resources, land- and sea-based pollution, and destruction of habitats, all with negative impacts on poverty, food security, and nutrition. A basic assumption underpinning the project is that these problems are frequently of a transboundary

nature and cannot be effectively addressed only at national level. Interventions for transboundary problems need bi-lateral, sub-regional and regional mechanisms and arrangements for cooperation. Further, it is presumed that for the BOB LME there is inadequate knowledge about the hydrography, biology, pollution load, destruction of habitats, and utilization of natural living resources, and that there is a lack of national and regional capacity to address these issues.

23. There is thus a need for increased knowledge about the ecosystem and all its aspects, development of capacity, and the establishment of a regional mechanism to jointly address the priority issues. The BOBLME is expected to provide the first steps in the chain of interventions, eventually leading to the Global Environment Objective. The ultimate result of the current project will be a Strategic Action Programme (SAP), which will specify needed reforms, activities, and interventions as well as institutional arrangements and a strategy for funding the implementation of the SAP, which is envisaged as the second phase of a longer-term BOB LME programme.

24. The project is organized into five components that relate to the preparation of a regional TDA and formulation and adoption of the SAP, studies and consultations to document the status of the BOB and understand its large-scale processes, development of fisheries management plans for shared fish stocks, integrated coastal management, and marine protected areas, among others. The project is also developing an ecosystem indicator framework and criteria for coastal pollution load and water quality. There is logic in the theory: enhanced knowledge, strengthened capacity, agreed indicators, and an agreed action programme, based on a thorough analysis of problems and their causes, to reach the global environment objective. The envisaged sequence of interventions is considered to be relevant.

25. A major issue in the theory of change underpinning the project is, however, the time scale. The initial discussions eventually leading to the BOBLME were initiated in 1995, but the project only became operational 14 years later. The formulation of the SAP is planned to add 5 years to this, and its implementation is a long-term undertaking by the Governments and the international community. One weak aspect of the assumption is how to maintain public and political commitment to a cause over such a long period before practical positive impacts can be expected. Flexibility in institutional arrangements and in the SAP itself will be fundamental if they are to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. Thus, another weak link is the extent to which flexibility and adaptability can be built into agreements between countries on regional or sub-regional arrangements for cooperation and into the programming. The SAP itself needs to be a “rolling” programme, which can be updated and adjusted without long procedures for the future interventions to be relevant and effective in reaching the Global Environment Objective.

### *3.1.2 Project design and Logical framework*

26. The BOBLME is focused on the development of the foundation for regional cooperation and related capacity building of institutions to support them to address transboundary issues for the sustainable management of the Bay of Bengal. For the purpose of the project the original geographic limitation of the LME was extended to include the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Maldives. This country has a long history of cooperation with other Bay of Bengal countries, and is a member of the BOBP Inter-Governmental Organization (BOBP-IGO) and integrated with existing mechanisms for regional cooperation.

27. The Project Document states that the main inputs during the Project period will be devoted to capacity building for regional cooperation and removing barriers to national and regional collaboration. However, the document also states (Sections 3.1 and 4.4) that it will implement activities with direct impact on rural fisher communities. At the outset of the project, the Regional Coordinator and Chief Technical Advisor reviewed the Project Document and proposed changes to the Logical Framework, which were adopted by the first PSC meeting in March 2010. The PSC also agreed that the project should use a rolling Logical Framework, to allow adjustments as needed. The agreed changes are illustrated below in Box 2.

**Box 2. BOBLME revised Logical Framework**

Component	Original Logical Framework (Project Document)	Revised Logical Framework (March 2010)
<b>Global Environmental Objective (changed)</b>	To formulate an agreed on SAP whose implementation over time will lead to an environmentally healthy BOB LME	A healthy ecosystem and sustainability of living resources for the benefit of coastal populations of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOB LME)
<b>Project Development Objective (changed)</b>	To support a series of strategic interventions that will provide critical inputs into the SAP, whose implementation will lead to enhanced food security and reduced poverty for coastal communities	To support a series of strategic interventions that would result in and provide critical inputs into the Strategic Action Programme (SAP), whose implementation will lead to enhanced food security and reduced poverty for coastal communities
<b>Outcome 1 (changed)</b>	Long-term sustainability of the BOB LME Programme ensured	The institutional and programmatic basis for implementing the SAP has been developed
<b>Outcome 2 (changed)</b>	Regional and sub-regional collaborative management approaches applied to priority issues and barriers affecting coastal/marine living natural resources in the BOB LME and the livelihoods of dependent fisher communities	Regional and sub-regional collaborative management approaches applied to priority issues and barriers affecting coastal/marine living natural resources in the BOB LME and the livelihoods of dependent fisher communities are removed
<b>Outcome 3</b>	Increased understanding of large-scale processes and ecological dynamics and inter-dependencies characteristic of the BOB LME	Increased understanding of large-scale processes and ecological dynamics and inter-dependencies characteristic of the BOB LME
<b>Outcome 4 (changed)</b>	Institutional arrangements and processes established to support a collaborative approach to ascertain and monitor the health of the BOB LME and priority coastal water quality issues	Institutional arrangements and processes established to support a collaborative approach to ascertain and monitor the health of the BOB LME
<b>Outcome 5 (changed)</b>	Institutional capacity established to co-ordinate regional interventions, monitor project impacts, and disseminate and exchange information	Sufficient institutional capacity established to co-ordinate regional interventions, monitor project impacts, and disseminate and exchange information

28. The revised Logical Framework (Annex 7) is an improvement by including sources of verification and associated risks. The most fundamental change is to the Global Environment Objective, with which the MTE team agrees.

29. The Project Development Objective and Outcomes are not fully consistent with each other. While Outcome 1 states that the institutional and programmatic basis for the implementation of the SAP has been established, the Project Development Objective is a series of interventions providing inputs to the SAP. Outcome 1 (rephrased) would be more feasible as the Project Development Objective and the objective, somewhat reformulated, would be suitable as Outcome 1. The inclusion of the sentence "... whose implementation will lead to enhanced food security and reduced poverty for coastal communities." in the Project Development Objective is misleading, and captured in the Global Environmental Objective.

30. The formulation of Outcome 1 ("The institutional and programmatic basis for implementing the SAP has been developed") contextually also covers the phrase "... and barriers affecting coastal/marine living natural resources in the BOB LME and the livelihoods of dependent fisher communities are removed" (Outcome 2) and "Institutional arrangements and processes established to support a collaborative approach to ascertain and monitor the health of the BOB LME" (Outcome 4).

31. The MTE team considered recommending a revision of the Logical Framework, but concluded that the time and effort needed would be counterproductive to concluding the project on time. Instead, the team prepared a tentative "shadow" logical framework, describing how the MTE evaluators understand the project, in Box 3:

**Box 3. Suggested new Logical Framework**

<b>Global Environmental Objective</b>	<b>No change</b>
<b><i>Project Development Objective</i></b>	Rephrased to emphasise that conditions for the implementation of the SAP have been established and adopted by the Governments ("institutional and programmatic basis")
<b><i>Outcome 1</i></b>	Rephrased to focus on conclusion of the process of the formulation of the SAP document with its components of programme, institutional arrangements, and strategy for financing as contributing to the Project Development Objective
<b><i>Outcome 2</i></b>	Rephrased to focus on strategic lessons/best practices learned from policy harmonisation, ICM, MPA, and management planning as contributing to the Project Development Objective and to the SAP
<b><i>Outcome 3</i></b>	No change
<b><i>Outcome 4</i></b>	Rephrased to reflect the establishment of agreed indicators and water quality criteria for ecosystem health as an input to the Project Development Objective
<b><i>Outcome 5</i></b>	No change

### 3.1.3 The causal relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes

32. The in-depth review of the project document by the project team resulted in a detailed elaboration of activities and revision of timelines and budgets. These were endorsed by the Inception Workshop<sup>3</sup> and adopted by the 1<sup>st</sup> PSC meeting<sup>4</sup>. The review improved the causal relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, and their alignment. It detailed the broad range of activities, which were perceived to be required to achieve the outcomes: approximately 486 workshops, 77 studies, 129 international consultant months, 259 national consultant months, data collection, short courses, training, communications, and monitoring and evaluation.

33. Component 1 is entitled Strategic Action Programme. The stated outcome is “The institutional and programmatic basis for implementing the SAP has been developed”, and it has four sub-components:

- 1). TDA preparation;
- 2). BOBLME Institutional Arrangements;
- 3). Sustainable Financing Strategy and Recommendations; and
- 4). SAP Formulation and Adoption.

34. Activities include studies, workshops, consultations, and meetings, all with outputs aimed at achieving the outcome. Activities under sub-component 1 are straight-forward and directly linked to the output, the TDA. Sub-component 2 aims at agreed institutional arrangements. The proposed inter-ministerial conference will not be in a position to agree on institutional arrangements – these will likely require further national processes. Activities under sub-component 3 with the expected output (a series of recommendations for the funding of the implementation of SAP) are well designed to achieve the output. Sub-component 4 requires a complicated and time consuming process. The activities will lead to the SAP being formulated and reviewed but the adoption process will need time, which the project has few means to directly influence. The adoption will, according to responses the evaluators received during interviews, require a decision by cabinet, and in some countries by parliament. The process will be influenced by national political considerations and also by upcoming general elections in at least two of the countries during the SAP formulation and adoption period.

35. Component 2 is Coastal/Marine Natural Resources Management and Sustainable Use. This is the largest component in terms of budget and activities, and it consists of four sub-components:

- 1). Community-based Integrated Coastal Management;
- 2). Improved Policy Harmonization;
- 3). Collaborative Regional Fishery Assessments and Management Plans; and
- 4). Collaborative Critical Habitat Management.

36. The activities are studies, case studies, consultations, workshops, and meetings. Expectations were expressed to the team that actual harmonization would take place during

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<sup>3</sup> BOBLME (2009) Report of the Inception Workshop of the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Project. Bangkok, Thailand 3 – 5 November 2009. BOBLME-2009-Reg IWS-MR, 31 pp

<sup>4</sup> BOBLME (2010) Report of the First Project Steering Committee Meeting for the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem Project. Dhaka, Bangladesh 3 – 4 March 2010. BOBLME-2010-Meeting Report-06, 48 pp



the project. The Project Document, however, has a less ambitious, but realistic, output: the establishment of channels for exchange of information on policies and enhanced capacity for policy formulation. The proposed activities are appropriate. The overall plan for the Component is ambitious but logically and systematically formulated.

37. Component 3 is Improved Understanding and Predictability of the BOB LME Environment. It has three sub-components:

- 1). Improved understanding of Large-scale Processes and Dynamics affecting the BOB LME;
- 2). Marine Protected Areas in the Conservation of Regional Fish stocks; and
- 3). Improved Regional Collaboration.

38. Sub-component 1 should lead to updating of existing knowledge of large-scale processes and identification of data gaps and an action plan to address them. The activities (inventories of existing data, retrospective studies in member countries, regional workshops, and deployment of device for oceanographic measurements) will serve to achieve the expected outcome. Sub-component 2 relates to Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and conservation of fish stocks. The activities are inventories and updating of data on existing MPAs and capacity development, ultimately leading to the establishment of sub-regional systems of MPAs and fish refugia. Sub-component 3 (Improved Regional Cooperation) is intended to result in improved coordination and collaboration with other regional and sub-regional initiatives such as the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (UNEP-GPA), Indian Ocean Global Ocean Observing System (IOGOOS), and Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN). The principal approach is to support participation of member countries in such initiatives.

39. Component 4 is Maintenance of Ecosystem Health and Management of Pollution. It has two sub-components: 1). Establishment of an effective Ecosystem Indicator Framework, and 2). Coastal Pollution Loading and Water Quality Criteria. The expected outputs are related to agreement on a regional set of environmental indicators to measure ecosystem health and identify coastal pollution issues. This will be achieved through a series of national and regional workshops, capacity development, and a regional strategy. While the aims are ambitious, a framework for ecosystem indicators and water quality criteria will be essential elements of the SAP.

40. Component 5 relates to the functions of the RCU (management, monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge management). Activities are straight-forward and will lead to the expected outputs, which are: a) successful and cost-effective implementation of the project, b) a transparent and accurate monitoring system, and c) awareness of the project in the region as well as lessons learned.

### *3.1.4 Relevance and appropriateness of indicators*

41. The indicators, as identified in the revised Logical Framework (Annex 7), are generally well defined. One indicator for the Project Development Objective is: “A regional SAP establishing priorities for action (policy, legal, and institutional reform and investments) to resolve priority transboundary environmental problems in the BOB LME, and endorsed and adopted by the participating government”. It is identical to the indicator “Regional level

SAP completed and adopted” for Outcome 1. Using the same indicator for two levels of results should be avoided and this issue needs to be addressed by project management and the PSC.

42. An important aspect of the project is capacity development for multi-country transboundary collaboration. However, there is no indicator reflecting capacity development. The first indicator for Outcome 2, “Learning and adopting best ICM practice benefits coastal communities”, is specific but benefits at the local level will not be measurable within the life of the project.

### *3.1.5 Validity of assumptions and risks*

43. Assumptions and risks are valid and important. One is that countries will, on a political level, recognize the importance and benefit of joint management of the BOB and give priority to this through adoption of the SAP and establishment of regional institutional mechanisms for its implementation. It is yet too early to make any definitive statement about this assumption. However, there was little support expressed for a region-wide management mechanism, while sub-regional arrangements seemed to be more acceptable and consistent with national interests.

44. An assumption/risk is smooth collaboration with other regional and sub-regional processes. The project has made good progress in establishing working relations with other processes, but it cannot be assumed that there will be continued commitments to cooperation. The team wishes to emphasize one risk: natural disasters. It is most likely that the region will suffer from one or more severe cyclones during the project and the risk for earthquakes, followed by tsunamis is high. Even discounting climate change impacts, extreme weather events are a high risk and a major disaster could impact on the SAP adoption process and prevent the project from reaching its Project Development Objective.

45. Sustained political commitment is also a high level risk. At least two of the participating countries will hold parliamentary elections during the period in which the SAP will be formulated and expected to be adopted. The adoption process may be delayed by these elections. Lack of political will as manifested in support to national teams may negatively impact on implementation. This has proven to be a real risk. Not all countries have allocated manpower and other resources as agreed.

### *3.1.6 Participants’ views on project design*

46. The MTE Team asked respondents<sup>5</sup> to identify gaps in project design, and several design issues were mentioned. During the long project formulation process<sup>6</sup>, the balance between environment and utilization of living resources was reviewed. One of the four key principles adopted by the countries was, however, that the SAP should focus on living marine (fisheries) resources and the environmental threats to those resources (Project Document, Section 4.4., Strategy and Methodology). This was raised during the interviews, with strong

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<sup>5</sup> National Coordinators, National Technical Advisors, PSC members, Project staff, and Project partners

<sup>6</sup> The project was officially taken up in the GEF pipeline in September 1997

support for a design with more emphasis on environment and engagement of other key ministries in project implementation.

47. The project has five outcomes and approximately 100 defined outputs. One opinion voiced by respondents was that priorities were not clear and that activities were too dispersed and not focused on the Project Development Objective. Most respondents expressed the view that more on-the-ground, concrete activities engaging coastal communities would be preferable to the chosen methodology. While technical level respondents actively engaged in project activities demonstrated a good understanding of the design and approach, there were expectations of “on-the-ground activities” by senior management level in the government ministries. It was stated by several respondents that concrete actions would help create more buy-in and support by politicians for the project.

48. The implementation has clearly demonstrated that complex projects engaging several countries and with multiple outcomes need an adequate inception period. The design did not cater for this, which led to delays in implementation as well as low financial delivery. This issue is common for most projects and would call for FAO to revisit project preparation processes.

49. The national teams are funded through government cash and in kind contributions. This was, as one respondent stated, both one of the strongest and one of the weakest elements of the design. It fosters national ownership, but also means less direct control and influence over national teams and activities by the project.

### *3.1.7 Institutional set-up and management arrangements*

50. The BOBLME has a complex institutional set-up including participating countries and FAO. At the core of the set-up is the RCU, which coordinates the work on regional and national levels and reports to and receives guidance and advice from governing bodies. It also has direct links to the Governments of participating countries. The structure as envisaged in the Project Document is presented in Annex 8.

51. Other donors contribute to the project with grants and through endorsing co-funding from projects. Governments, GEF, and donor agencies form an important framework for the institutional set-up of the project. FAO is the implementing and executing agency and is in a unique position to provide the guidance and administrative set-up for efficient and effective implementation. FAO RAP plays a strategic role in the implementation of the project by being both Lead Technical Unit (LTU) and Budget Holder. FAO has country representations in six of the eight countries, the exceptions being Maldives and Malaysia.

52. The RCU is staffed by the Regional Coordinator, the Chief Technical Advisor, and nationally recruited administrative and financial assistants. Short-term consultants are used for monitoring and evaluation, IT development and maintenance, and communications. The RCU coordinates the preparation and implementation of the Annual Regional Work Plan (ARWP). Activities are implemented through the national teams and contracts with sub-contractors, which can be individual consultants, consultancy companies or global, regional or sub-regional organizations and institutions. The RCU reports to the PSC and to FAO RAP in Bangkok and through the latter, to FAO HQ and the FAO GEF Focal Point.

53. The PSC, whose terms of reference are given in the Project Document, is the project's decision-making body and responsible for endorsing the ARWP. Each country has two members on the PSC, representing the ministries responsible for fisheries and the environment. A senior officer of FAO and the RC are also ex-officio members, with the latter the Secretary of the PSC.

54. The National Task Force (NTF) is intended to complement the PSC at the national level, overseeing and guiding the implementation of activities and participation in regional activities. Members should be from the ministries and also from NGOs, the civil society, and private sector organizations. The TORs of the NTF in the Project Document state that the NTF shall meet twice per year, one meeting focusing on the endorsement of the ARWP for submission to the RCU. Each country shall appoint one NC to be assisted by a full-time NTA and a secretary. The terms of reference for the NC are specified in the Project Document. The national teams represent part of the countries' co-funding of the project.

#### *3.1.8 Adequacy of timeframe for implementation*

55. A general perception of the project was that it has taken too long to produce any tangible results. One often cited example was that studies of the Bay of Bengal have been carried out through regional projects for decades (for example, BOBP) preceding the start-up of BOBLME. Several respondents commented that there is sufficient information to initiate action, questioning the five year process to formulate the TDA and SAP.

56. The project had ambitious and unrealistic targets for the first year, which is a common feature in project designs. The expected end result is the adopted SAP. Following the approval of the regional TDA by the PSC in March 2012, there will be about two years for the SAP development process. The evaluators found that it is unlikely that the SAP will be adopted during the project life as this requires lengthy national political processes. The project will formulate a second phase. It is highly unlikely, however, considering the time required for approval of GEF funded projects, identification of co-financing, and Government approval, that the next phase will be operational when the present phase ends.

#### *3.1.9 Adequacy of the methodology of implementation to achieve intended results*

57. During the lengthy preparatory period, a sound foundation for the current project was created through the establishment of the PSC, preparation of the FTDA, literature reviews, thematic studies, national studies, consultations, peer review, and experts' meetings.

58. Project design was, according to the Project Document, based on a set of strategic principles emerging from this process:

- Agreement to work on a regional rather than sub-regional basis to address the transboundary issues identified in a TDA;
- Action oriented and on-the-ground activities should be initiated at the same time as the formulation of the TDA and SAP, to ensure buy-in from stakeholders;
- Focus on living marine resources and environmental threats to these; and
- A long-term commitment to addressing transboundary issues through a 12 – 15 year programme.

59. The TDA and SAP development processes aim to foster a shared vision and collaboration for the management of the BOB LME, through an extensive series of meetings, workshops, and working groups. One issue is to create and maintain sustained political and public support over the life of the project because of the length of time before tangible results for coastal communities can be achieved. The methodology stresses the need for public awareness campaigns, information dissemination, and partnership with existing regional and sub-regional initiatives to build this support.

60. LME and transboundary diagnostic analysis are relatively recent concepts, developed to respond to the alarming trends in natural living resource utilization, pollution, and habitat degradation. The Project Document presupposes that the concepts are not fully operational on national level and that the technical and scientific knowledge is lacking. The methodology focuses on capacity development to enable the countries to collaborate regionally and sub-regionally to implement the SAP. Workshops, meetings, short training courses, working groups, consultations with stakeholders, partnership with existing regional and sub-regional organizations and programmes, and active information dissemination are mechanisms used by the project to implement the strategy.

61. The evaluators considered alternative methodologies with more on-the-ground case studies and concluded that a better balance between workshops, training courses, and practical case studies would have assisted in creating a shared vision and maintaining political and public support. However, the team also concluded that the approach chosen had been negotiated over a long period and agreed between Governments, GEF, and FAO, and is adequate to achieve the intended results.

#### 3.1.10 Quality of stakeholders and beneficiaries identification

62. Multilateral/bilateral development agencies and programmes, regional development banks, and international NGOs are defined “*regional stakeholders*”. At the *national* level stakeholders are described as government agencies, civil society organizations, NGOs, private foundations, private sector organizations, and academic institutions. Finally, the *local beneficiary stakeholders* are local government agencies, commercial and rural fishers and their families, school teachers, students and rural youth, coastal/marine tour operators and their clients, local environmental and social/cultural NGOs, and other local citizens.

63. The MTE considers that the project document missed out on some important stakeholders, while being redundant at one end of the spectrum. At the regional level, the list omits the potentially important role of regional economic and political organizations<sup>7</sup>, of which there are two in the Bay of Bengal region: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The crucial role of partners (sub-regional organizations and institutions in the region and complementary programmes and projects) as stakeholders is also omitted. On the other hand, the whole population living in rural coastal areas are defined as beneficiary stakeholders: this identification is neither meaningful nor operational. The beneficiary stakeholder identification would have been meaningful if primary beneficiary stakeholders (for example, those whose livelihoods depend on utilization of marine living resources), including women,

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<sup>7</sup> Note that the importance of interactions with these organizations is recognized in the Project Document, but not in the identification of stakeholders

had been identified and their role in the implementation of the project as well as in the sustainability of project outcomes described.

### **3.2      *Relevance***

64.      The project design is based on the recognition that overexploitation of living resources, pollution, and habitat destruction are important issues in the Bay of Bengal. The exploitation of aquatic resources is very important for nutrition and income in often poverty stricken coastal communities, in national economies, and for national export earnings. All countries in the Bay of Bengal are experiencing overfishing and have initiated fisheries management regimes. Legislation has been enacted to regulate discharge of pollutants into the bay and to preserve coastal habitats such as mangroves and coral reefs.

65.      The countries have signed up to and ratified international environmental conventions. All have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Jakarta Mandate on Marine and Coastal Biological Diversity. All, except Myanmar, have adopted the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Seas Agreements/Programmes, and all, with the same exception, are participants in the Declaration and Global Programme of Action on Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities. All countries are members of FAO's Committee of Fisheries (COFI) and have endorsed FAO's voluntary Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

66.      The Project Development Objective is to support a series of strategic interventions that would result in and provide critical inputs into the SAP, whose implementation will lead to enhanced food security and reduced poverty for coastal communities while protecting the health of the ecosystem. Outcome 2 of the project states: "Regional and sub-regional collaborative management approaches applied to priority issues, and barriers affecting coastal/marine living natural resources in the BOB LME, and the livelihoods of dependent coastal communities are removed." In this regard, the project is consistent with priorities in the FAO Country Programming Frameworks (National Medium Term Priority Framework for Indonesia and Thailand) broadly related to food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable management of natural resources and the environment.

67.      The evaluators found the project to be highly relevant for the management of the Bay of Bengal by focusing on arrangements and capacity development to address transboundary issues. Regional and sub-regional initiatives will increasingly be required to complement national activities to sustainably manage fisheries, reduce the pollution load in the Bay of Bengal, and protect and restore habitats. The capacity and competence to address the issues varies between the countries, all of whom stated a need for capacity development and for enhanced sub-regional and regional cooperation. They all ranked the project high in meeting these needs.

68.      The project was considered by respondents as being very relevant for the sector, very important for the participating countries, and important for the region. The high ranking (for details, see Annex 5) reflects the understanding that problems affecting the Bay of Bengal are of regional and sub-regional character and cannot be solved only at the national level.

69. Indonesia specifically mentions sustainable fisheries resource management and development and climate change's mitigation and adaptation implications as a priority. Only a small part of this country's waters, however, is in the BOB LME. One of Thailand's priorities is promotion of fisheries resources management, although marine fisheries are not explicitly mentioned. Among the priorities of Bangladesh is sustainable management of natural resources, including stock assessment of marine fisheries.

70. The current project will not meet the needs of the populations in coastal communities. It will, however, lay the foundation to address transboundary issues affecting coastal communities through the establishment of regional and sub-regional mechanisms for collaboration. The SAP, if successfully implemented during subsequent phases of the envisaged programme, will contribute to addressing the needs of the ultimate beneficiaries.

71. FAO's normative work over several decades has provided a framework for management of living marine resources and protection of the marine environment. The BOBLME is relevant to Article 7 of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Fisheries Management) and Article 10 (Integration of Fisheries into Coastal Area Management). These two Articles make provisions for the collaborative management of shared fish stocks and addressing of transboundary issues. Further, the project is making use of a series of FAO Technical Guidelines for Fisheries Management: Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF), Marine Protected Areas and Fisheries, and integrated management of coastal zones, which would be incorporated in the SAP as appropriate. EAF is an integral part of the BOBLME's philosophy and approach. The project is collaborating with partners to provide training on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (i.e. the fundamental principles of EAF).

72. The project is fully consistent with GEF-4 International Waters (IW) priorities as identified in GEF's Focal Area Strategies and Strategic Programming for GEF-4. In particular, the project addresses GEF IW Strategic Objectives (To foster international, multi-state cooperation on priority transboundary water concerns through more comprehensive, ecosystem-based approaches to management; to catalyze transboundary action addressing water concerns) and GEF-4 IW Strategic Programme 1 (Restoring and sustaining coastal and marine fish stocks and associated biological diversity).

## 4 Implementation

### 4.1 Budget and Expenditure

73. The total budget for the BOBLME is USD 30,993,500, and is made up by contributions from GEF and co-financing (Table 1).

**Table 1. Sources of funding for the BOBLME and allocation to project components**

Source of funding	Type	Amount (USD)	Allocation to components	Amount (USD)	%
<b>GEF</b>		12,082,000	Strategic Action Plan (C1)	5,441,500	18
<b>Governments</b>	Cash	2,200,000	Coastal/Marine Natural Resources management and Sustainable Use (C2)	14,461,500	47
<b>Governments</b>	In kind	3,500,000	Improved Understanding and Predictability of BOB LME Environment (C3)	6,624,100	21
<b>Norway</b>	Grant (cash)	1,200,000	Maintenance of Ecosystem Health and Management of Pollution (C4)	1,339,800	4
<b>Sweden</b>	Grant (cash)	1,288,900	Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation and Knowledge Management (C5)	3,126,700	10
<b>Sweden</b>	Other	9,522,500			
<b>NOAA</b>	In kind	400,000	Physical Contingencies	1,604,800	6
<b>FAO</b>	In kind	800,000	Price Contingencies	1,856,200	7
<b>TOTAL</b>		30,993,500	<b>TOTAL</b>	30,993,500	

74. The allocation to the various components indicates their anticipated importance in contribution to the overall aims and objectives of the project. Almost half the budget (47%) is allocated to Component 2 (Coastal/Marine Natural Resources Management and Sustainable Use). Within this component the budget focuses on “Collaborative Regional Fisheries Assessments and Management Plans” (32% of the total budget). Component 1 (the TDA and SAP formulation) is allocated 18% of the total budget.

75. A budget revision was carried out during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2011 to reflect changes required for implementation of the 2011 Annual Regional Work Plan. The revision was prompted by the initial review of the Project Document leading to changes in timelines, activities, and budgets. The revisions reflect under-spending in the initial stages of the project and the budget was re-phased to future years and or reallocated. The GEF budget was revised to reflect agreed changes in staffing, new standard costs for professional posts, and consultants. Other changes reflected the nature of costs. Finally, changes were induced by revision of activities.

76. The budget revision also covered the cash contributions from Norway and Sweden. These budgets had been evenly allocated across components, which complicated accounting. The funds from Norway and Sweden were re-allocated to Component 2 and, to a lesser extent, Component 3. Components 1, 4, and 5 were reduced accordingly.



77. The budget re-allocations are reasonable, well-argued, and adequate. The co-financing “Sweden other” consisted of planned and on-going projects in the region with objectives that were compatible with those of BOBLME. Because of the delayed start of BOBLME, however, most of these projects had already been completed. The review team did not view this as a major issue, because there are new and planned national, regional or sub-regional initiatives in the region that are complementary to the project and could, after endorsement, be counted as co-financing.

78. **Error! Reference source not found.** summarize financial delivery and co-financing, respectively, up to the end of December 2011.

**Table 2. Budget and expenditure, 2009-2011 (USD million)**

Source	Budget	Actual expenditure 2009	%	Actual expenditure 2010	Cumulative expenditure 2009 – 2010 (%)	Actual expenditure 2011	Cumulative expenditure 2009 – 2011 (%)
<i>GEF contribution</i>	12.08	0.39	3.2	1.733	17.6	1.507	30.0
<i>Norway cash</i>	1.2	0.03	2.5	0.288	26.5	0.492	67.5
<i>Sweden cash</i>	1.28	0.13	1.0	0.153	13.0	0.589	59.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14.56</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.17</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>2.588</b>	<b>35.7</b>

79. There has been a considerable under-spending of the budget since the project started. The initially low level of financial delivery was caused by overoptimistic assumptions about what could be delivered during the first year. Other factors that have had impacts on financial delivery are cumbersome procedures and uncertainties about proper processes for contracts with service providers and partners. The procedures have now been firmly established, speeding up delivery.

**Table 3. Co-financing contribution, 2009 – 2011 (USD million)**

Source	Budget	2009	%	2010	Cumulative co-financing 2009 – 2010 (%)	2011	Cumulative co-financing 2009 – 2011 (%)
<i>Government cash</i>	2.2	0.320	14.5	0.474	36.1	0.464	57.2
<i>In-kind Sweden others</i>	9.52	0.026	0.3	0.112	1.5	0.051	2.0
<i>In-kind Governments</i>	3.5	0.083	2.4	0.596	19.4	0.785	41.8
<i>FAO in kind</i>	0.8	0.152	19.0	0.085	29.7	0.115	44.0
<i>NOAA in kind</i>	0.4	0.008	1.9	0.006	3.4	0.026	9.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16.42</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>1.27</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>1.440</b>	<b>20.1</b>

80. Table 3 demonstrates that the rate of expenditure has increased considerably after the slow start, and at mid-term 35.7% of the budget and 20.1% of the co-financing was utilized. If Sweden “others” is discounted, the co-financing is close to half of the planned amount for the whole project. The increasing delivery as well as the increasing achievement of outputs indicates increased efficiency. In the Project Implementation Report up to June

2011, the project maintained that the committed budget will be fully used by the end of the project. The MTE team has concluded, however, that it is more likely that there will be some savings.

81. Cash and in kind contributions by the Governments of the participating countries as well as FAO's in-kind contributions follow the delivery plan, while others are lagging behind. Sweden "others" has been utilized to 2.0% and will not increase considerably. The MTE team concludes that there are adequate budgetary provisions for the implementation of the BOBLME. The project is maintaining considerable financial discipline and transparent accounting and reporting on financial matters.

## **4.2 Project Management**

82. GEF is supporting the implementation of the LME approach with development of TDAs and formulation of SAPs to address transboundary issues. In this respect, GEF is responding to the needs of countries for sustainable development but also assumes a normative role for the implementation of the LME approach.

83. FAO is the implementing and executing agency for the project and has the overall responsibility for its management. Project implementation is handled by FAO's Technical Cooperation Department and its FAO GEF Focal Point, who provides the link to GEF and guides the project on GEF policies and strategies as well as reporting and financial management requirements. Project execution is managed by FAORAP through the RCU, the LTU, and project Budget Holder. FAO's Task Force is expected to monitor progress and provide technical guidance and support for project execution.

84. The RCU is responsible for the preparation and implementation of the annual regional work plans, and supervision and monitoring of regional and national activities. It reports to the PSC, which endorses the progress made and approves the annual work plan. Implementation on the national level is guided by the National Task Forces and the day-to-day activities are carried out by the National Coordinators and National Technical Advisors.

### **4.2.1 GEF**

85. GEF National Focal Points, who are influential, high level Government officials, play an important role in developing programmes and projects and in the mobilization of funds. The evaluators found that national GEF Focal Points played a strategic and important role in the development of projects, but, in the case of BOBLME, their role ended when the project had been approved. The GEF National Operational and Political Focal Points could be instrumental in promoting the project and creating awareness at high levels. They could also assist in coordination between GEF initiatives at national level as well as facilitate inter-ministerial links and access to the political level.

### **4.2.2 FAO**

86. FAO brings to the project the experience of regional cooperation and its normative work. Its network of regional and national offices and the vast technical experience are of

utmost value for smooth project implementation. The BOBLME became operational in April 2009 and project staff (RC and CTA) joined the project in May 2009. This was an example of efficient (and effective) recruitment, which supported the timely initiation of project activities. The team was initially based in FAORAP offices in Bangkok awaiting the final decision on duty station. This turned out to be a useful arrangement prompting close contacts between project staff, the LTU, and the Budget Holder in establishing routines and processes. The project retained the services of the secretary in Bangkok when moving to the permanent facilities in Phuket, which was an operationally important decision. The “RAP-based” project secretary performs essential liaison functions in FAORAP, facilitating operation and logistics.

87. The process of deciding on host country was initiated during the first year and followed a transparent process with an agreed set of criteria. Countries were invited to offer hosting the project, and Thailand was successful. It has provided excellent facilities for and support to the project in Phuket.

88. On the national level, FAO is represented by FAO Representatives (FAOR) in seven project countries. Their role in a regional programme is not always obvious. While they provide logistic support, they do not promote project objectives through their high level contacts. One FAOR stated that the reason was that the time spent by the representation on support to regional projects was not covered through allocation of overhead funds. The team noted the limited engagement of FAORs as a missed opportunity by FAO to strengthen management of regional projects. Opportunities should be created to engage the project more closely with FAORs, for example, through regular teleconferences with all FAORs.

89. A key role in FAO’s support to the project is played by the Lead Technical Officer, who is the RAP Senior Fishery Officer and is responsible for providing technical backstopping, clearances of reports, and support in contacts with other donor agencies as well as regional and sub-regional organizations and institutions. The team was impressed by the efficient and effective interactions between the project and the incumbent.

90. In line with the GEF procedures, resources were included in the project budget for a Budget and Operations Officer, to be recruited by RAP. In FAO, operations and Budget Holder functions are often separate as rules establish that Budget Holder function can only be discharged by an FAO Regular Programme Officer. The current incumbent is correctly an FAO RAP administrative staff whose time spent on the project should be reimbursed through project fee. Tasks basically include approvals of budget disbursements in the corporate DataWareHouse systems (ORACLE).

91. At the same time, the allocation for an Operations Officer recognized that in a multi-country project like BOBLME, ‘operations’ is a major category of work that includes activities ranging from organization of frequent travel for project staff and national participants, setting-up meetings and workshops, to identification, selection, and recruitment of consultants, drafting of Letters of Agreement, and negotiation with recipient organizations, logistics, preparation of budget revisions, etc. Project staff usually also monitor budget disbursement in parallel with the official corporate system.

92. However, RAP did not assign or recruit a full time Operations Officer to the project as initially foreseen. Evidence available to the evaluation team from extensive interviews with stakeholders showed that virtually all this work is carried out by RCU, directly from the

project headquarters in Phuket or through their assistant located in RAP. This subtracted precious time of the Project RC and of the CTA, which should have been dedicated to substantive technical work. Hence, despite the availability of resources, there has been an inefficient use of project technical staff time and financial resources.

93. The MTE Team recommends that the project operations and administrative function be assigned to a full-time Field Operations officer, preferably with experience in the fisheries sector. The officer should be based in the RCU, Phuket. While providing crucial services for the RCU, the Field Operations Officer will also reduce to the minimum the need for the Budget Holder to be involved in oversight of the project operations management.

94. A successful implementation of the BOBLME will depend on partnerships working together towards a common objective on an equal level. Sustainability of outcomes will largely depend on organizations continuing the work initiated or supported by the project. However, the Letters of Agreement do not lend themselves to true partnerships, being more suitable for contracts with “service providers” rather than partners. More flexible contractual arrangements for partnership arrangements in FAO implemented projects would be of utmost value for the BOBLME.

#### 4.2.3 Regional Coordinating Unit

95. The routines and processes established by the RCU generate timely and high quality progress reporting and Project Implementation Reports, allowing the RCU to detect delays in project implementation and finalization of reports and outputs. The signals that are generated are used by the management to take corrective measures.

96. The team has been meticulous in setting up its tracking systems, databases, and processes. This has been necessary in order to implement and monitor a complex regional programme. The RC and the CTA spend a major part of their time on operational issues, to keep up momentum in implementation. The next stage is the SAP formulation period, which is intended to start in earnest in March 2012 (anticipating that the PSC adopts the regional TDA). A management preoccupation is reaching the senior management and political level in the countries. This is essential to enhance awareness about the project and the LME approach and to create support for the SAP formulation and adoption process.

97. Respondents to interviews were almost unanimously of the opinion that the RCU was excellently managed and that the unit performed its tasks very well. The main critical comment was late invitations to workshops and meetings hampering the approval processes for selection of country participants. This is an issue to which the RC should pay close attention in order to facilitate participation of all countries in regional events.

98. The main instrument for implementation is the ARWP and Annual National Work Plans (ANWP). The ANWPs should provide inputs to the regional plan, but this has not functioned. The process is driven by the RCU and the national plans are more a reflection of the regional plan than an independent plan providing inputs to the regional level.

99. Overall, the evaluators were impressed by the ambiance and team spirit, which is of great value for efficient and effective project implementation, and consider that management of the RCU has been excellent. At the same time, the MTE team concluded that the RCU was

seriously understaffed and that the impressive results are due to the dedication and commitment of the staff. It also concluded that during the next two years, the RC and CTA need to focus more on strategic issues, communications with the countries and partners, and contacts with senior management and political levels in the countries. The MTE team regards the understaffing of the RCU as a potentially high risk for the successful conclusion of the project and recommends strengthening it with a Field Operations Officer.

100. Two issues related to management decisions were brought out strongly in the interviews. One was the use of consultants from within the region versus outside the region. The RCU team has chosen the approach to contract the best person available for a task, and not relate the decision to regional belonging. In spite of this, 77% of consultants who have been contracted were based in the region. The approach by the RCU has merits, ensuring that always the best contribution is provided to achieve the project development objective. The approach however, reduces the potential longer-term impact by developing consultancy capacity in the region. The MTE team has noted the two approaches and suggests that elements of capacity building are included when expertise from outside the region is used. This could be addressed, for example, through linking an external consultant with an institution or consultant from the region.

101. The other issue brought out in the interviews was the use of institutions versus individual consultants. This is an important consideration. Using institutions or organizations as service providers or partners provides opportunities for institutional learning, which may benefit the BOBLME, other regional and sub-regional initiatives, and the Governments in the longer term. The MTE team is of the opinion that RCU should attempt to use institutions to the extent possible to advance capacity development in the region.

102. The role of partnerships in promoting the work of the project is stressed in the Project Document. The project has contracted numerous institutions and organizations, including sub-regional organizations for activities (reviewed in detail in Section 5). Engagement of these organizations and institutions has, however, been more as service providers rather than as true partners and they have mainly been contracted for specific activities, for example, organization of a workshop. There have been few attempts to create longer term contractual relations to which the project may contribute funds and expertise, while an existing organization brings a mandate and institutional set up, because of limitations in the existing contractual instruments

103. The MTE team wishes to stress the urgency to strengthen partnerships further, by both the BOBLME and FAO. There are two main reasons for this. One is sustainability of project outcomes. The other is that implementation of larger parts of the project's activities would lessen the administrative burden on the RCU team. Long term agreements with equal partners would support the project to achieve its project development objective, by helping to establish the foundation for institutional arrangements for SAP implementation and allowing the RCU team to focus on the SAP process. The MTE team is aware of shortcomings in the contractual arrangements FAO has developed, as experienced by the RCU, and stresses the need for FAO to elaborate suitable mechanisms for true partnerships on equal level.

#### 4.2.4 Project Steering Committee

104. The PSC is the policy setting body for the project, and has 16 members from the participating countries. It has held two successful meetings (2010 and 2011), in which all the countries participated. In the first meeting there were two absentees, both representing ministries responsible for environment. In the second meeting there were no absentees. The MTE team noted that half of the participants in both meetings were alternates. In the first meeting there were eight alternates and in the second nine, almost equally divided between fisheries and environmental ministries. The alternates were of lower rank than the full members and at times with limited knowledge of the project. Only seven participants attended both meetings. Of those, four were full members and three alternates. The high number of alternates may impact the project by lack of interaction with senior management levels in the countries and thus understanding of and support to the SAP process.

105. The MTE team appreciates that the PSC has assumed the role of being the driver for the SAP process. For this to be successful there will be need for high level representation and for the full members to assume their responsibilities for the work. An active participation in the SAP process would require frequent interactions and could possibly lead to an improved understanding of the project and thus a more effective national support to achieve its outcomes. However, the MTE team concluded that PSC members need to be supported and complemented by other means, for which the evaluators have provided recommendations.

106. The country representatives in the SAP team should be high level officials from the respective ministries, which is important for the political processes in the formulation and adoption of the SAP. However, high level officials cannot be expected to have a detailed knowledge about the project, its aims, progress, and problems, which may reduce the PSC's utility in guiding the project. The arrangement presupposes that there are efficient interactions between the NCs and the PSC members and functioning NTFs, in which both NCs and PSC members participate. The interviews held by the MTE evaluation team demonstrated that neither functioned well in the majority of the countries.

107. One of the questions asked was how well the PSC functions. No one gave it the highest ranking (5), but the majority of respondents (71%) ranked it as 4, 15% as 3, and 15% did not know. Some of the comments were:

- PSC is mainly to endorse, more rubber stamping than steering;
- Very active PSC meetings, but no interaction during the inter-sessional periods;
- Little feedback to the national team from the meetings by PSC members;
- The PSC members are not given sufficient time before the meetings to review documents.

108. The evaluators noted that there were no inter-sessional contacts between members of the PSC, which may be partly attributed to the high number of alternates and lack of continuity. It will be essential that mechanisms for interactions between sessions are established for the PSC to play a meaningful role as driver of the SAP process.

#### *4.2.5 Implementation at the national level*

109. National Task Forces (NTFs) are intended to complement the PSC on national level, guiding and monitoring the implementation of national activities. Their TOR includes review and approval of the ANWP. Members are appointed by the respective ministries, but should also include NGOs, civil society, and private sector organizations. FAO and World Bank

should participate in NTF meetings, of which the NC acts as chairperson and secretary. One change introduced by the PSC was that PSC members should participate in the meetings.<sup>8</sup>

110. The MTE team found that only in few cases do the NTFs fulfil their TOR and that they held meetings infrequently. In several cases it was proposed that the tasks of the NTFs be done through individual contacts and consultations between members, replacing formal meetings. The short-comings are evident also from the report of the second PSC meeting, which reminded NCs about the deadline for ANWPs and endorsed the recommendation that the NTFs should hold two meetings per year.

111. The decision that PSC members shall participate in NTF meetings, which are called by the NC, can be seen as vital for the active role that the PSC will assume for the SAP formulation. This would require them to keep informed about the work in more detail, which is a relevant reason for the decision. However, the participation of a PSC member, inevitably more senior than the NC, could in the hierarchical structures in some countries, undermine the authority of the NC. It was not clear to the MTE team if a change to appoint the PSC member from the lead ministry as Chair of the NTF had been considered.

112. Government obligations as per the Project Document include to “... assign authority for the project within the country to a Government agency, which shall constitute the focal point for cooperation with FAO in the execution of the project, and which shall exercise the Government’s responsibility in this regard.” NCs have been appointed mainly from fisheries research institutions. In Bangladesh the NC is the Director General of Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute, in India the Director General of Fishery Survey of India, in Indonesia from the Territorial and Archipelagic Water Fish Resources Utilization Sub Directorate, in Malaysia the Fisheries Research Institute, in Maldives the Marine Research Centre, in Myanmar from the Department of Fisheries, in Sri Lanka from the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), and in Thailand the Marine Fisheries Research and Development Institute.

113. The selection of research institutions was based on the heavy emphasis on information gathering and knowledge generation for the TDA process and was adequate for that purpose. However, the relevance of research institutions is not obvious during the SAP formulation stage, which will address regional and sub-regional institutional arrangements, financial investments, and programmes to address transboundary issues. This process requires support and engagement of senior management and political levels in the relevant ministries. The interviews revealed that the bureaucratic and hierarchical national institutional set up is not conducive to this requirement. The project at present has limited access and limited interactions with these levels.

114. The MTE team considered alternative arrangements for the national team’s institutional setup. However, it will not recommend any changes, as this would take time and the momentum would be lost. The NCs are working very hard with their teams and now have a thorough understanding of the project approach and objectives.

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<sup>8</sup> An addition to the Terms of Reference for the PSC, as in the BOBLME Steering Committee Rules of Procedure, adopted by the first PSC meeting

115. According to their ToRs, the NC shall "... take primary responsibility for the implementation of BOBLME activities within his/her country of operation and will ensure that all national inputs and processes required for the development of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA), the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) and any additional activities agreed upon under the GEF project document are adequately prepared and carried out." The team concluded that, with a few exceptions, the NCs mainly responded to requests from the RCU and did not independently implement project activities. Also, most NCs work considerably more than the envisaged 10% of their working time on project-related activities. The enthusiasm and dedication for the work has made the NCs take on activities that should be carried out by the NTAs, in the five cases where full-time NTAs have not been appointed. The lack of NTAs in several countries hampers project activities and the management capacity of the national team. This has led the RCU to assume more work in coordination and logistics for regional workshops, training courses, and meetings than would be required if fully functional national teams were in place.

116. The contacts between NCs and PSCs are infrequent and mainly related to preparations for PSC meetings (not for debriefings after the meetings) and the appointment of participants in workshops, training courses, and meetings. The decision that the PSC shall participate in NTF meetings is not sufficient to improve the linkages, because the NTFs do not function in most countries. Close collaboration between the PSCs and NCs will be of critical importance for SAP formulation.

#### *4.2.6 Efficiency and effectiveness of monitoring system and internal evaluation processes*

117. The Project Document states that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a core function of the RCU and sets out a plan with associated budget (USD 1,050,000). Specific M&E tasks should be part of the ARWPs, which are guiding project activities. Three levels of outputs from M&E are defined; 1) project progress, 2) activity outcomes, and 3) project impact, with 1) and 2) carried out by RCU in collaboration with national teams.

118. An M&E Consultant has developed a Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.<sup>9</sup> It states four basic purposes of the M&E system: 1) enable course corrections, 2) provide timely and actionable advice to project personnel, 3) satisfy FAO, GEF, and donor monitoring and evaluation requirements, and 4) provide a base of information for the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations. There are three pillars: 1) the Logical Framework, 2) Annual Regional Work Plans, and 3) Annual National Work Plans. The M&E outputs are Inception Workshop/Report, the rolling Logical Framework reviewed annually and presented to the PSC for endorsement, PSC meetings, Quarterly Progress Reports, annual Project Implementation Reviews (PIR), the Mid-Term Evaluation, the Project Terminal Report, and the Final Evaluation.

119. The project has prepared high quality progress reports and project implementation reports. Evidence of the contribution to course corrections and provision of actionable advice to project personnel are the budget revision and rescheduling of activities in the ARWPs. The PIR format as revised by BOBLME has been accepted as a model for FAO PIRs, which is one evidence of the commitment to comprehensive monitoring by RCU. In October 2011, the

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<sup>9</sup> BOBLME (2010). Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. BOBLME-2010-Project-07



M&E Consultant prepared a comprehensive draft report,<sup>10</sup> based on a desk review, interviews in participating countries, and participation in a meeting with NCs and in one with the PSC. The methodology for the internal review was similar to the methodology for the MTE. The M&E system provided useful inputs to the MTE both for financial information and for judgement of progress and identification of issues for action.

120. The M&E plan was supposed to include the ANWPs, but these have not been produced and national activities are included in the ARWPs. Since these activities are funded under contractual arrangements, monitoring within the contracts serves the M & E purpose. NCs were also to be trained by the M&E expert to develop and establish a M&E programme at the national level. However, the MTE team was informed by the RCU that the countries did not wish to establish these national level M&E mechanisms and requested the M&E budget be reduced in favour of other activities. The limited number of country level pilot activities at the time also meant there was not a pressing need for M&E training, which consequently did not take place.

121. The country-specific activities to be funded by the project present excellent opportunities for the NCs to develop ANWPs and M&E mechanisms. The MTE team suggests that the RCU should support and encourage the national teams to develop these work plans, which would allow not only proper planning and monitoring of progress, but also promote national dialogue and consultation, increase ownership, and build capacity.

#### *4.2.7 Elaboration and implementation of an exit strategy*

122. There is no specific obligation in the Project Document to elaborate and implement an exit strategy, which however is implicit in the project. The main elements of the strategy are: Implementation of the SAP, the second phase of BOBLME; and Partnerships. All of these, however, have associated risks.

123. It was earlier concluded that it is unlikely that the SAP will be adopted and the next phase operational when the project ends. These gaps will jeopardize sustained activities and put emphasis on partners to continue and implement outcomes of BOBLME. The MTE team has drawn the attention to the lack of progress in advancing true partnerships. The existing sub-regional arrangements are an important instrument to ensure sustainability. The project therefore needs to identify the institutions or organizations that can provide leadership and evolve into sustained partnership arrangements between institutions. This would require that these institutions assume ownership of outputs/outcomes before the end of the project.

### **4.3 Technical Backstopping**

124. Technical backstopping to the project is provided through the FAO multidisciplinary Task Force led by the Lead Technical Officer based in RAP, with members from FAORAP and FAO HQ. The Task Force will be "...called upon as a group or individually to consider project progress and advise on specific questions that arise."

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<sup>10</sup> Report for BOBLME Consultancy CST-GCP 15/2/2011. Monitoring and Evaluation Expert: Dr David La Roche, October 2011. The report was made available to the MTE team.

125. The project has daily contacts with the RAP Senior Fishery Officer, who monitors progress and provides technical guidance and support. In addition, FAO provides backstopping through participation of Task Force members in meetings, workshops and training events. The project reports 71 days of support (Annex 9) by participation in events, although this does not take into account time allocated to interactions by e-mail and telephone with the project during any normal working day/week. The MTE team noted the close links between the project and the Lead Technical Officer, who responds quickly and timely to issues raised by the project, clears reports in a timely and competent manner, and provides high quality technical advice.

126. The Task Force is not meeting regularly, few members have participated in meetings, and its role to monitor, guide, and support the project is not effective. Quarterly Progress Reports and other reports are sent to the task force for comments. However, there has been little feedback or comments. Further, the Task Force is not an effective mechanism for institutional learning from the project. The role of providing technical backstopping has been replaced with individual contacts with the Senior Fisheries Officer and individual staff members in FAO HQ. These arrangements provide the project with relevant, high quality, and effective technical backstopping.

127. The Task Force is important in several aspects. It should function as an instrument for the Organization to monitor progress and provide technical support. In the case of BOBLME there is also another essential function for the Task Force. BOBLME is an important project for FAO, being its first LME project. The learning from BOBLME will be valuable for other similar projects and the Task Force could be instrumental in the institutional learning arising from the project.

#### **4.4 Government support**

128. The long-term success of BOBLME ultimately rests with the commitment of Governments to engage in regional and sub-regional arrangements for cooperation for sustainable management of the Bay of Bengal. The commitment has been demonstrated through engagement in sub-regional collaboration mechanisms, involvement in multilateral conventions, and support in the preparation of the project.

129. The support of Governments to BOBLME is USD 2.2 million in cash and USD 3.5 million in-kind. The cash support is intended as salary for a full-time National Technical Advisor, *pro rata* portion of the salary for the National Coordinator, a Secretary, office space and utilities, and in-country costs for national workshops. The in-kind support is related to counterpart salaries for participation in workshops and training events, local travel, and the time of NTF members. In addition to these costs, the host country, Thailand, has made excellent facilities available for the RCU in Phuket.

130. National human resources for the project are primarily the NC, NTA, and PSC members. Additional human resources are participants in the numerous workshops, training events, and meetings. Considering the number of events, it is challenging for the Governments to appoint appropriate participants. A comment made to the MTE team was that “we are running out of people for all events”. Another was that travel abroad in some instances is regarded as rewards for good performance and that a Government may be

reluctant to approve participation of the same person in several events during a limited period.

131. There is more commitment to the project on a technical level than on the senior management and political levels. This is a serious issue that the project management has to address, especially during the SAP formulation process. The MTE team strongly recommends that individuals of high status, with a commitment to conservation of nature and sustainable management of aquatic living resources, and with access to and influence at senior management and high political levels be identified and engaged as soon as possible. Without a deeper understanding, commitment, and support at these levels there is a considerable risk that SAP adoption will stall.

132. All Governments do not fulfil their obligations as per the project agreement in appointment of NCs, NTAs, and secretaries, and provision of funds and facilities for operational costs. The evaluation team is of the opinion that lack of secretarial services may not necessarily hamper work in the digital era, but recognizes the traditional status-related value of secretarial services associated with a post.

## **5 Results and contribution to stated objectives**

### **5.1 Outputs and outcomes**

133. The Project has an ambitious work programme that requires a considerable commitment of staff time to coordinate and facilitate the broad range of activities. This Section contains an evaluation of project outputs and outcomes expected to be completed within project years (PY) 1-3, as specified in the Logical Framework, as per their progress at the time of the MTE. Reference to other outputs is included as relevant. For the MTE, progress on 36 targets or outputs were evaluated, with the percentage completion given for all and a rating using the GEF six-point scale system assigned to 31.<sup>11</sup> The numbering sequence of targets in the summary tables follows that in the MTE Terms of Reference.

134. By mid-term the project had completed 12 of the 25 targets expected to be completed in PY 1-3, with 10 expected to be completed by March 2012 (end of PY 3) and 3 to be rescheduled. Of the targets to which GEF ratings were assigned, 5 were rated as highly satisfactory, 21 as satisfactory, 2 as marginally satisfactory, 1 as marginally unsatisfactory, and 2 as unsatisfactory, and 5 not rated (Tables 4 - 9). The project also completed a large number of meetings and workshops (Annex 10) and generated a significant body of knowledge and information (Annex 6), which it has made widely accessible, including through the project website (<http://www.boblme.org/>). In addition to targets specified in the Logical Framework, many other outputs have been produced that supported the TDA and/or that will be taken up in the SAP. The participating countries have also been requested to develop and submit to the RCU proposals for work in the countries to be funded by the project (Annex 11). This support could total up to over USD 1 million.

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<sup>11</sup> GEF six-point scoring system: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Marginally Satisfactory (MS), Marginally Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), and Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)

135. The project has collaborated with over 30 organizations (Annex 12) with experience in the Bay of Bengal region. The project also took advantage of opportunistic events organized by other regional and international organizations to advance project objectives. In addition, a number of top experts have been contracted and Working Groups (WG) established for specific thematic areas (Hilsa, sharks, Indian mackerel, ecosystem indicators, pollution, MPAs, climate change, oceanography). In view of the limited availability of staff within the small RCU, this approach adopted by the RCU to implement project activities is considered by the MTE team to be very effective and efficient.

136. Some delays were apparent, which according to the RC, could be attributed to working with calendar year activities and use of project year targets that run from April to March of the following year. The RCU team stated that so far the project has been able to catch up with most delays in the first quarter of the annual plan of the following year. It is essential that the RCU continues to closely monitor implementation and to take mitigating measures to address delays as they occur.

137. In general, the written outputs reviewed by the MTE team were found to be of a high technical standard, and this can be attributed to the competent experts involved in producing them as well as to the quality assurance by the RCU and LTU. Indeed, quality assurance and technical clearance of all written outputs is a tremendous undertaking considering the large volume of such outputs produced. The poor technical standard of some of the reports could be due to the data-poor situation in certain thematic areas. A number of the reports require editing, including those obviously written by persons whose first language is not English. The RC and CTA attempt, as far as possible, to improve the quality of written outputs, but this in itself is a very time-consuming exercise.

138. The MTE team highly commends the RC and CTA for the achievements and progress made in the first half of the project, which are more impressive given that they are the only two permanent professional staff members in the small RCU. The LTU in Bangkok has also provided considerable support and guidance.

#### *5.1.1 Project Development Objective*

139. Within the first half of the project, the updated regional TDA was one of the principal targets towards meeting the Project Development Objective (Table 4). This target is very close to being achieved, with the TDA expected to be approved by the PSC in March 2012. Stakeholder consultations have been ongoing and activities for SAP development will be initiated in February 2012. The activities and outputs completed so far in the five project components undoubtedly represent significant and positive inputs, and are creating an enabling environment for the SAP and hence achievement of the Project Development Objective.

140. The majority of persons interviewed were of the opinion that the project is on track to achieve its Development Objective, although there were concerns about the time frame, limited actions at grass roots level, and overcoming national and regional obstacles. There was more confidence that objectives related to Hilsa and Indian mackerel would be more achievable than to halting pollution.

**Table 4. Status (% completion) of outputs towards meeting the Project Development Objective**

<b>Project Development Objective: To support a series of strategic interventions that would result in and provide critical inputs into the Strategic Action Programme (SAP), whose implementation will lead to enhanced food security and reduced poverty for coastal communities</b>					
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Completion date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<p>A regional SAP establishing priorities for action (policy, legal and institutional reform and investments) to resolve priority transboundary environmental problems in the BOBLME, and endorsed and adopted by the participating governments.</p> <p>Proposed actions in the SAP address the well-being of coastal communities through promoting regional approaches to resolving resource issues and barriers affecting their livelihoods.</p>	1. A regional level transboundary diagnostic analysis completed	PY3/March 2012	90%	Expected to be completed on time. The PSC to consider approving the TDA on 20-23 March 2012.	S (HS if approved)
	2. A SAP developed and endorsed by governments (end PY5).	PY5/Apr 2014	5%	NCs and SAP experts will draft a SAP framework and a work plan for SAP completion, to be presented to the PSC in March 2012.	Not rated
	3. Stakeholder consultations undertaken over the life of the Project	PY1-5/ Ongoing	On going	Multiple TDA consultations with a wide range of stakeholders have been held in the countries.	S
	4. Institutional and financial mechanisms spelled out in the SAP to ensure Programme sustainability beyond the life of the Project.	PY5/Apr 2014	0%	The institutional and financial options analysis will be undertaken in conjunction with work being undertaken for the SAP.	Not rated

*5.1.2 Outcome 1. Institutional and programmatic basis for implementing the SAP has been developed*

141. The major outputs under this component are the updated TDA and first draft of the regional SAP. Nearly all activities of Outcome 1 were implemented in accordance with the ARWP. Of the 15 outputs, nine were expected to be completed by PY 3. At the end of 2011, six outputs were fully or nearly completed, and little or no progress on the other three (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

**Table 5. Status (% completion) of outputs for Outcome 1**

<b>Outcome 1 (Project Component 1). The institutional and programmatic basis for implementing the SAP has been developed</b>					
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Completion date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Updated and revised TDA (from FTDA) based on post-tsunami update and gap analysis.	5. Updating TDA incorporating post-tsunami environmental	PY2/ March 2011	100%		S

<p>Final TDA to identify environmental concerns and root causes of environmental degradation completed through an effective inter-governmental process and adopted by respective governments.</p> <p>Institutional arrangements agreed to and established for the long-term management of the BOBLME.</p> <p>Recommendations for financial sustainability formulated and endorsed.</p> <p>Regional level SAP completed and adopted.</p> <p>Eight National Actions Plans (NAPs) under development.</p> <p>Full-size project proposal for second phase of BOBLME programme (SAP implementation) submitted to the GEF.</p>	studies.				
	6. Gap analysis of existing TDA.	PY1/March 2011	100%		S
	7. National technical consultation processes on updated TDA.	PY2/March 2012	100%		HS
	8. National inter-ministry and stakeholder consultations on updated TDA.	PY3/March 2012	90%	National TDA consultations completed. The PSC to consider adopting the TDA in March 2012. This target is expected to be completed on time.	S
	9. Finalized and approved TDA.	PY3/March 2012	90%	TDA will be finalized in February 2012; PSC meets to consider adopting the TDA in March 2012. This target is expected to be completed on time.	S (HS if approved)
	10. Regional institutional and financial analysis completed.	PY3/March 2012	0%	The institutional and financial options analysis will be undertaken in conjunction with work being carried out for the SAP (the SAP is expected to influence the nature and extent of those options). Completion date is expected to be rescheduled.	Not rated
	11. First draft of regional SAP	PY3/March 2012	5%	A contract has been signed with the "SAP Writer" who will draft a SAP framework and completion plan, which will be presented to the PSC in March 2012. The first draft of the regional SAP is expected to be completed by 31 March 2012	MU
	12. Regional SAP team formed	PY3/March 2012	100%	At its meeting in 2011 the PSC confirmed itself as the Regional SAP team	S
	13. National Action Plans drafted	PY3/March 2012	0%	NAPs will be included in the SAP framework and completion plan. Completion date is expected to be rescheduled.	Not rated

142. In addition to the TDA, theme reports were produced on policy-legal, habitats, marine resources, socio-economics, and pollution. These will support the TDA and SAP processes. Because of the long time gap (5 years) between the publication of the FTDA and the initiation of the current BOB LME Project, it was necessary to review the FTDA and identify gaps and updates that were needed. Following the 2004 tsunami, it was also agreed that the updated TDA would incorporate post-tsunami environmental studies. An outline of the draft TDA was presented to the Regional Workshop on BOBLME TDA National Consultation Planning (Bangkok, August 2010). At the workshop, each country elaborated a “roadmap” to seek national validation and agreement to the TDA.

143. A detailed review and update of the existing FTDA was completed by experts in 2010, and the draft regional TDA released for national consultations in November 2010. Consultations were expected to be completed by May 2011, but they commenced in January 2011 and were completed by the end of December 2011. In some countries the TDA summary was translated into local languages for the national consultations, which included major road shows in provincial areas in India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. National consultations were reported to have been well attended and the TDA received with much interest and enthusiasm. Valuable feedback and recommendations were obtained from these consultations, and are to be incorporated into the regional TDA. While the finalization of the TDA was delayed because of the national consultations, these were important in order to increase buy-in, engagement, and awareness of the project from national stakeholders. Nevertheless, the finalization and approval of the TDA are expected to be completed by end of PY3.

144. Most persons interviewed who were familiar with the TDA agreed that it captured the priority issues, although a number of respondents mentioned other issues that may also be considered priority, including IUU, climate change, and oil pollution. Respondents from only one country considered the TDA a re-hash of previous work and the Causal Chain Analysis (CCA) weak.

145. The MTE team reviewed the draft regional TDA (Volumes 1 and 2), and found it to be very comprehensive and of high technical standard. This positive assessment applies also to the CCA, which was considered to be very comprehensive and well capturing the main causes of each of the three transboundary issues. At the same time, the CCA could be strengthened by prioritizing the causes (which would help in prioritizing needed interventions) and by including a discussion of the socio-economic impacts of each issue (consistent with GEF TDA methodology). Overall, the MTE considers that the project is adding value to the regional TDA by commissioning theme papers on livelihoods and transboundary migration associated with fishing, as well as aquaculture aspects. Consideration of these issues is important in SAP development and the decision to include them shows much foresight by the RC and CTA.

146. Training and awareness-raising on the TDA/SAP process was provided at the Regional Inception Workshop in 2009 and at the TDA Consultation and Planning Workshop (NCs and PSC members) in 2010. With respect to the TDA process, most interviewees gave high ratings for stakeholder participation, joint fact finding, transparency, and building consensus. A few persons felt that countries should have been asked to prepare sections of the TDA, which would have increased buy-in at the national level. While a few of the countries could have actually contributed to the TDA, others would not have been able to easily

contribute written sections within the required time frame. The view was also often expressed that the TDA process was too long, with which the evaluation team agrees. The TDA process should have been allocated less time, with more time allowed for SAP development.

147. A small team comprising experienced regional personnel will synthesize the recommendations from the national consultations in January 2012. NCs and national TDA managers will meet to consider the results of the TDA consultations and confirm the document in February 2012. The TDA will be presented to the PSC meeting in March for approval, which is a critical juncture in the life of the project. The completed TDA will meet one of the major targets of the project development objectives. The RCU should ensure that the regional TDA is signed off by the PSC in March 2012, which would require some lobbying and raising awareness about the TDA and SAP processes and implications for the project if the TDA is not approved.

148. The draft SAP framework was due to be completed in November 2011, but has been delayed. Since completion of the MTE mission, the SAP framework or outline has been developed at a SAP meeting in February 2012. This framework along with the SAP completion plan will be presented to the PSC in March 2012. The first draft of the regional SAP is expected to be completed by 31 March 2012. Despite the delay in SAP preparation, a number of activities have already been completed and outputs (TDA, reviews, best practices, fisheries management action plans, etc) produced that represent a significant foundation for the SAP.

149. The MTE team is concerned that the timeframe for drafting of the SAP is rather optimistic, considering the complex nature of a SAP document and the processes required in its development, and in particular if the GEF guidelines on SAP development are to be followed. These guidelines include a series of steps, some of which require engaging with stakeholders, consultations at political levels, and agreement on the institutional framework. Furthermore, the delay in development of the National Action Plans (NAPs), which complement the regional SAP, could adversely affect SAP development and eventual endorsement, in view of the extensive negotiations that could be required for countries to agree on the NAPs.

150. The majority of those interviewed also expressed doubt that the SAP could be finalized, consensus reached, and SAP adopted in the remaining time. They underscored the need to raise awareness and to involve stakeholders at central and local levels. If the SAP is feasible and consensus reached, adoption could be achieved by the end of the project. As previously discussed, a SAP that consists of pragmatic, sub-regional and/or thematic components for each of which specific institution(s) has coordination responsibility is more likely to be accepted, rather than a large regional SAP with a single coordinating regional body.

151. With decades of experience in the Bay of Bengal region, FAO should have good knowledge of the regional and sub-regional institutions (especially related to fisheries) that could potentially be involved in SAP implementation. Engagement of these institutions should be strengthened where necessary. The MTE team also strongly recommends that in the coming months the RCU and PSC focus on SAP and NAPs development, strengthen national teams, and lobby strongly for support at the highest political level.



**5.1.3 Outcome 2: Regional and sub-Regional collaborative management approaches applied to priority issues, and barriers affecting coastal/marine living natural resources in the BOB LME, and the livelihoods of dependent coastal communities are removed**

152. This is the biggest component of the project in terms of budget, receiving more than USD 2 million). Of the 10 outputs, six were expected to be completed by PY2- 3. At the end of 2011, four of these were nearly or fully completed (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Activities undertaken included training courses, meetings and workshops as well as collaborative activities with MFF, IUCN (Bangladesh and Sri Lanka), WFC, BOBP-IGO, AIT, SEAFDEC, and others.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 6. Status (% completion) of outputs for Outcome 2**

<b>Outcome 2: Regional and sub-regional collaborative management approaches applied to priority issues, and barriers affecting coastal/marine living natural resources in the BOB LME, and the livelihoods of dependent coastal communities are removed</b>					
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Completion date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Learning and adopting best ICM practice benefits coastal communities (not yet possible to verify this indicator. Further, the extent to which communities benefit would be difficult to quantify in the absence of specific criteria to define and determine benefits accruing from ICM. The other indicators expected to be achieved during the first half of the project are concrete and straightforward, and the status of completion of the associated outputs shows the level to which these indicators could be verified at the time of the MTE)	21. National pilot areas for disseminating best practices identified.	PY2/March 2011	50%	Countries were offered the option to choose between pilot site or regional ICM training (which includes a small case study). The logframe should be revised to reflect this. The completion date for this target is expected to be rescheduled.	MS
	22. Policy analysis and work plan to guide strengthening of national policy formulation.	PY2. March 2011	80%	Major policy review completed in 2011. Regional policy Group will produce a work plan in 2012. Progress is slower than expected, but should be completed by Q2 2012	S
	23. Policy formulation capacity component ongoing.	PY2-4/Mar 2011-13	0%	Depends on the work plan above. Work is expected to start in 2012.	Not rated
	24. Final report on policy formulation capacity building for community based ICM completed.	PY3/March 2012	100%		S
	25. Regional statistical working group formed and	PY2/March 2011	100%		S
Strengthened policy					

<sup>12</sup> MFF: Marine Fish Forum; IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature; WFC: World Fish Centre; AIT: Asian Institute of Technology; SEAFDEC: Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center.

formulation capacity and provision of advice on policy formulation in support of community-based integrated coastal fisheries management (ICM).  Regional statistical data protocols developed and data quality and access to data improved.  Three fishery management plans (sharks, Hilsa, and Indian mackerel) developed and submitted to governments for their consideration.  Two bi-national management plans for critical transboundary ecosystems developed and submitted to the respective governments.	operational				
	26: Regional statistical protocols developed and available.	PY3/March 2012	70%	The Fisheries Statistic WG is expected to meet in March 2012 to confirm protocols. This target is expected to be completed on time.	S
	27. Reports on fisheries data and information produced - ongoing.	PY1-5/Ongoing	Ongoing	A range of materials have been produced from fisheries WGs and various consultants. Major reviews are available on hilsa, Fisheries Pre-assessments, Fisheries performance indicators, Fisheries catches since 1950.	S
	28. Three fishery management plans developed and submitted to governments for their consideration.	PY3/March 2012	25%	A Fisheries Ecosystem Plan for the Bay of Bengal, and will be discussed by the BOBLME Regional Fisheries Management Advisory Committee then presented to the PSC in March 2012. This target is expected to be completed on time.	S
	29. Two bi-national management plans for critical transboundary habitats submitted to respective governments.	PY4/March 2013	40%	Major consultative processes underway in Gulf of Mannar and Mergui Archipelago.  Governments of Thailand & Myanmar have agreed to establishment of a transboundary collaborative management structure for Mergui. Expected to be completed on time	HS

153. Significant progress has been made on policy formulation capacity building for community-based ICM. But outputs on ICM relying on initiating national level activities rather than on stock-taking of ongoing work have seen slow progress. The MTE team was reliably informed that the grass-roots level of action required has been a challenge for national counterparts to take up. On the one hand, many persons interviewed expressed doubt about the willingness (both political and technical) and ability at the national and local level to implement activities in the countries. On the other hand, some interviewees conveyed the need for more on-the-ground activities.

154. Following the international workshop on ICM in 2010 in Colombo, countries were invited to nominate pilot ICM sites, but not all countries have yet done so and only one country has implemented its pilot ICM initiative. BOBLME and MFF offered the eight countries the opportunity to use the 2011 ICM funding allocation to develop ICM capacity by sending participants to a 5 week ICM postgraduate training course organized in late 2011 by the project with AIT and MFF. As part of the course 21 participants from BOBLME countries selected a site for implementing ICM practices and conducted a short term project.

Training of individuals in ICM to move this forward was considered by the evaluation team to be a good decision.

155. Among the other events held was a region-wide ICM Workshop in December 2011 in Bangladesh to work towards identifying ICM pilot sites. India has made significant progress, however, and has identified Puducherry as the pilot site for promoting ICM in India. A small working group was formed to kick-start the establishment of this pilot module. The Indian BOBLME Coordination Unit has secured active support and patronage of the Government of Puducherry, national level organizations and projects, universities, scientists, experts, and members of civil society to establish an ICM framework in Puducherry.

156. Development of proposals by the countries for studies / targeted research in support of Hilsa and Indian mackerel management and conservation has also been slower than expected. Despite training on proposal preparation, it was revealed that most of the proposals submitted were poor. The fisheries stock assessment coordinator worked with Thailand, Bangladesh, Maldives, and India on this issue during his country visits. A range of materials has been produced from the Hilsa and Indian mackerel fisheries assessment WGs, the sharks WG, and by various consultants. Major reviews were prepared on Hilsa, fisheries pre-assessments, fisheries performance indicators, and fisheries catches since 1950. A Fisheries Ecosystem Plan for the Bay of Bengal featuring Hilsa, Indian mackerel and sharks has been drafted, and will be presented to the PSC in March 2012.

157. Some advances were also made on outputs expected to be achieved in the next half of the project (Two bi-national management plans for critical transboundary habitats submitted to respective governments – Table 6). The BOB LME project engaged Wetlands Alliance to work with the Department of Fisheries of Thailand and Myanmar and other relevant stakeholders in the area to implement a “Joint Myanmar-Thailand Management initiative for the Mergui/Myeik Archipelago”. The third in a series of workshops aimed at development of a bi-national collaborative institutional approach and system-wide master plan to facilitate joint management of Myeik/ Mergui Archipelago was organized by the Asian Coastal Resources Institute Foundation (CORINAsia), in collaboration with the Governments of Thailand and Myanmar in January 2011. A management framework was agreed for this area by officials from the two countries in March 2011 and further work to draft a management plan was initiated in mid-2011.

158. In partnership with BOBP-IGO, the first stakeholder meeting with India and Sri Lanka for the Gulf of Mannar took place in September 2011, with a second meeting expected to be held in the second quarter of 2012. In addition, the project is collaborating with IUCN Sri Lanka to disseminate biological and socio-economic survey information on the Gulf of Mannar. It was brought to the attention of the MTE team that there was no provision in the project document for funding of work on the Gulf of Mannar. The RC and CTA have shown initiative and foresight by seizing the opportunity to promote dialogue on this important transboundary habitat.

159. A number of other outputs specified in the ARWP were achieved that support Outcome 2, including: Postgraduate Certificate Course on Integrated Coastal Management (with AIT, MFF); training on EAF (APFIC); and EAF training course development (USAID, FAO, SEAFDEC, SIDA).

160. The RCU is managing the current delays and it is hoped that the outputs would be achieved within a reasonable timeframe to allow uptake in the SAP. The team recommends that the country teams be strengthened and provided with the required resources to complete the remaining outputs.

*5.1.4 Outcome 3. Increased understanding of large-scale processes and ecological dynamics and interdependencies characteristic of the BOB LME*

161. There has been significant progress under this component (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Two of the three outputs that were expected to be achieved by PY2 have been completed. Activities towards the third output are ongoing, with meetings and collaborative work planned and/or undertaken with over 30 regional and international organizations operating in the Bay of Bengal region.

162. The work plan to address data and information gaps (Target 32) was incorporated in the 2011 ARWP, and is based on priority areas of work identified in the Regional BOBLME Oceanography Workshop held in July 2010 in Perth, Western Australia, in conjunction with the Meetings of the Global Ocean Observing System in the Indian Ocean (IOGOOS) and associated project groups. This workshop report (BOBLME-2010-Ecology-05) is available on the project website. Similarly, for Target 33, priority areas of work identified in the BOBLME workshop on “The Status of Marine Managed Areas in the Bay of Bengal”, held in January 2011 in Penang, Malaysia, were considered in the development of the 2011 ARWP. The report of this workshop (BOBLME-2011-Ecology-06) is available on the project website.

**Table 7. Status (% completion) of outputs for Outcome 3**

<b>Outcome 3. Increased understanding of large-scale processes and ecological dynamics and interdependencies characteristic of the BOB LME</b>					
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Completion date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<p>Agreed to address key data gaps serving as barriers to improving understanding of large-scale oceanographic and ecological processes controlling BOB LME living marine resources.</p> <p>A regional MPA/fish refugia inventory accompanied by a gap analysis, conclusions and recommendations.</p> <p>Partnerships established with regional and global environmental programmes and effective sharing of information in improving understanding of BOB LME processes.</p>	32. Agreed work plan to address key data and information gaps completed	PY2/March 2011	100%	Priority areas of work in oceanography considered in the development of the 2011 ARWP. This theme is continually developed and reprioritised	S
	33. Regional MPA/fish refugia action plan completed	PY2/March 2011	100%	Priority areas of work considered in the development of the 2011 ARWP. This theme is continually developed and reprioritised	S
	34. Creation of partnerships and collaborative work implemented	Ongoing	Ongoing	Collaborative activities undertaken with over 30 organizations.	S

163. Collaborative activities have been undertaken with over 30 (non-country) bodies and organizations operating in the BOB LME region. As previously discussed, however, the project needs to strengthen partnerships, rather than viewing collaborators as service providers. Strategic collaborations are ensuring that the BOBLME is contributing to regional knowledge and processes for improving understanding of oceanographic processes, while capitalizing on ongoing activities and programmes of other institutions and adding value to the BOBLME work. In March 2012, BOBLME will hold a Partners' meeting for project and portfolio managers working in fisheries, ecosystems, coastal management, pollution, and habitat protection. The MTE supports this initiative, which will be the first of its kind in the region, in view of the critical role of partners in the current project and in the SAP implementation phase. It is hoped that this meeting will identify and engage additional partners in the project and lead to strengthening of links with existing partners.

164. BOBLME joined the Indian Ocean research partnership in oceanography and is closely aligned to the competent regional bodies coordinating oceanographic work in the Indian Ocean. This will eventually help to build a sustainable partnership setup that is likely to exist and effectively function after completion of this phase of the project. Among these are NOAA (oceanography), APFIC (climate change) and WorldFish, IUCN, and Wetlands Alliance (MPAs). The project has also aligned itself with IOGOOS, becoming an Associate Member and supporting IOGOOS activities in the Bay of Bengal. One of the main thrusts of BOBLME is to contribute to a data buoy array to be deployed in the north east Bay of Bengal to support the physical and biological observing systems of SIBER<sup>13</sup> in the Indian Ocean. This has been delayed, however, pending information from NOAA on technical specifications for the data buoy.

165. Since the project was developed, a number of emerging issues have taken more prominence, such as climate change and livelihoods. At the project regional inception workshop the PSC was alerted that some refinements to existing activities might be required in order to take these issues into account. In this regard, BOBLME convened a Climate Change Working Group meeting in collaboration with the APFIC workshop on "Implications of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture: challenges for adaptation and mitigation in the Asia-Pacific Region", held in May 2011. The WG produced a set of recommendations for work to be undertaken under the auspices of BOBLME. The foresight on the part of the RC and PSC and flexibility of the project design has allowed these issues to be taken on board. The evaluation team encourages the RC to consider evaluating other relevant emerging issues for inclusion as they arise (depending on available time and resources).

166. In addition to the Logical Framework outputs, the project has produced a number of other outputs that support this component (Annex 6). Activities include on-the ground-actions, such as in MPA pilot/learning sites nominated by the NCs and an MPA Project in Lampi Island, Myanmar (with the Departments of Fisheries and of Forestry, Oikos and Wetland Alliance). Wetlands Alliance has been contracted to facilitate the work of the University of Victoria (Canada) and the Government of Thailand to link Thailand's MPA work with the university's current programme of work in southwest Thailand. The project

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<sup>13</sup> Sustained Indian Ocean Biogeochemical and Ecological Research- a biogeochemical science alliance under IOGOOS

also participated in a number of international and regional events of relevance to this component (Annex 10).

167. BOBLME has identified capacity building needs in this component and supported the participation of project country personnel in training events convened by other organizations (for example, a 5-day summer school on Monsoon Onset Monitoring and its Social and Ecosystem Impacts; training events conducted by SEAGOOS, IOGOOS, SACEP, SEAFDEC and partners to build capacity in oceanography; and collaboration with NOAA-CTSP on MPA Management Training).

*5.1.5 Outcome 4: Institutional arrangements and processes established to support a collaborative approach to ascertain and monitor ecosystem health of the BOB LME*

168. All five outputs in this component are expected to be completed by PY3. Two of the outputs have been completed and progress has been slower than expected in the other three (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The slow progress on the environmental outputs partly reflects the fact that the environmental agencies are not the national lead focal points, a role performed by the fisheries agencies. Every effort should be made by the RCU and PSC to strengthen and increase the participation of national environmental agencies.

169. In October 2010, the BOB LME project supported Ecosystem Indicator WG participants from all partner countries to attend the First International Conference on Managing Ecosystem Health of Tropical Seas, ECOSEAS 2010 (October 2010, Malaysia). Immediately after the conference the Ecosystem Indicator WG held a short meeting. The WG developed a preliminary list of ecosystem indicators for the BOB LME to be further developed through national consultations. These consultations are yet to be completed in five of the eight countries. The second BOBLME Regional Ecosystem Indicators WG meeting will be held in April 2012 to assist countries with their national consultations and activities.

170. The MTE team noted that the BOBLME is promoting the adoption by the countries of the LME ecosystem indicators proposed by the GEF Transboundary Waters Assessment Project (TWAP).<sup>14</sup> The TWAP LME indicators were developed by an international working group of experts coordinated by UNESCO Inter-Governmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), following extensive discussions and evaluation of a large number of potential indicators. They are considered to be scientifically sound and with data generally available to quantify them. It is highly commendable that the BOBLME is adopting outputs from another GEF project, particularly since these indicators would be applied in the proposed global assessment of LMEs, recently approved by the GEF.

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<sup>14</sup> A GEF medium size project to develop indicator-based methodologies for assessment of transboundary waters (completed in 2011)

**Table 8. Status (% completion) of outputs for Outcome 4**

<b>Outcome 4. Institutional arrangements and processes established to support a collaborative approach to ascertain and monitor ecosystem health of the BOB LME</b>					
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Completion date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Establishment of agreed to LME based ecosystem health indicators.  A set of conclusions and recommendations to participating countries for the harmonization of BOB LME water quality standards.  Agreed work plan that would lead to identification of a regional approach to address land-based sources of pollution in the BOB LME.	35. LME wide environmental health indicators available.	PY2/March 2011	100%	Preliminary list of ecosystem indicators prepared; to be further developed through national consultations in PY3.	S
	36. National consultations on environmental indicators report.	PY3/March 2012	40%	National consultations yet to be completed in five countries. Progress is slower than expected, but should be completed by Q2 2012.	U
	37: Final draft of report describing LME wide environmental health indicators available.	PY3/March 2012	60%	Progress is slower than expected, but should be completed by Q2 2012.	MS
	38. Regional work group on pollution monitoring created	PY2/March 2011	100%		S
	39. Action plan for addressing land-based sources of pollution forwarded to governments	PY3/March 2012	30%	Progress is slower than expected, but should be completed by Q2 2012.	U

171. BOBLME is collaborating with the UNEP-GPA to contribute to the work of the GPA in the region. The finalization of this partnership was initially delayed because of administrative matters, but has since been resolved and a Letter of Agreement signed between the project and UNEP. In 2012, the GPA will review the national plans of action on land-based pollution in each country and where necessary develop a road map for their improvement and implementation. BOBLME will support this activity to the extent possible. Other outputs produced that are not specified in the log frame, but which support this component, include a review on land-based sources of pollution completed by each country. These reviews were commissioned by the BOBLME.

**5.1.6 Outcome 5. Sufficient institutional capacity established to coordinate regional interventions, monitor project impacts, and disseminate and exchange information**

172. Significant progress has been and is being made on this component. Of the six outputs under this component, two have been completed by PY2 as expected, and the others ongoing, also as expected (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The RCU was established in 2009 at FAO in Bangkok and moved to its permanent location in Phuket in March 2011. Despite its small size with only five but very competent project personnel (RC, CTA, technical officer, finance assistant and secretary- the latter based at FAO in Bangkok), the RCU has been functioning in a highly effective and efficient manner. It was obvious to the evaluation team that these persons are very committed and passionate about the project, which accounts in part for the high level of achievement in the first half of the project. All persons interviewed highly commended the performance of the RC and CTA. As previously discussed, however, the capacity of the RCU could be increased by hiring a dedicated Field Operations Officer to be based at the RCU.

**Table 9. Status (% completion) of outputs for Outcome 5**

<b>Outcome 5. Sufficient institutional capacity established to coordinate regional interventions, monitor project impacts, and disseminate and exchange information</b>					
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Completion date</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<p>An RCU is initially staffed and functioning in a temporary location.</p> <p>Process of establishing a permanent location and staffing requirements for the RCU are completed.</p> <p>Recommendations for ensuring an effective and efficient RCU received and acted upon by the Project Steering Committee (PSC).</p> <p>Regional cooperation is promoted through a minimum of five meetings of the PSC.</p> <p>A project monitoring and reporting programme is established and under implementation.</p> <p>A project communications plan is recommended, discussed and approved by the PSC, and under implementation.</p> <p>Project results and lessons learned disseminated.</p>	40. Initial RCU established and functioning	April 2009	100%	RCU initially hosted at FAO RAP, Bangkok	S
	41. Final decision on location of RCU by start of PY2	March 2011	100%	After bidding process, decision was taken for Thailand to host the RCU, which was moved to Phuket, Thailand	S
	42. Recommendations for ensuring an effective and efficient RCU ongoing PY1-5.	Ongoing	Ongoing		HS
	43. Project monitoring programme reviewed and approved by the PSC and under implementation	Ongoing	Ongoing	M&E plan developed, approved and under implementation. Project Management database developed	HS
	44. Project communications plan reviewed and approved by the PSC and under implementation	Ongoing	Ongoing	Communications plan reviewed and approved by PSC in 2011	S
	45. Project results and lessons learned disseminated on ongoing basis	Ongoing	Ongoing	Results being disseminated through BOBLME website, newsletter, meetings, etc.	HS



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173. Project activities are largely guided by two ARWPs that were developed by the RCU in consultation with NCs and NTAs, and reviewed and approved by the PSC. The ARWPs identify time-bound miles stones, activities, outputs, and associated budget for each project component. The evaluation team examined the 2010 and 2011 ARWPs and found them to be very ambitious, with a very large number of activities and outputs. This raised questions about how realistic are these plans, in view of the constraints faced by the project especially at the country level and the small RCU. Further, it underscores the need to identify and engage the appropriate partner organizations to whom responsibility could be given for specific components or subcomponents. It was expected that national work plans would also be developed based on a template provided by the RCU, but these have not materialized. It was clear that the process and activities have been driven by the RCU at both regional and national levels.

174. An M&E Plan was developed by an M&E consultant, and is being implemented. Monitoring by the RCU is highly efficient and effective in providing information for preparation and revision of work plans and reporting. The RCU has also developed a comprehensive Project Management database to monitor over 100 contracts and agreements. The MTE team was given a demonstration of this database at the RCU, and found it to be a very effective and efficient tool that could be adapted for use by other projects. A comprehensive results matrix is also prepared to monitor progress in the ARWPs.

175. A communication strategy was developed and approved by the PSC at its 2011 meeting, and is being implemented to achieve a wider outreach and assist countries to be more effective in providing technical advice to management. BOBLME communications activities are reviewed and a new range of activities approved by the PSC annually. Each country has been allocated USD10,000 to develop national communication and information dissemination hubs. Further, under the communication subcomponent, country representatives have participated in training workshops on effective communication to support ICM, scientific writing and scientific presentation. The MTE team noted that there was limited or no dialogue between the project countries outside of the regional forums. The RCU should encourage dialogue between the countries as a means to strengthen regional collaboration, share experiences and build trust. While most countries agreed this would be constructive, one participant said his busy schedule did not allow time for this.

176. BOBLME has produced a range of products to disseminate information to national, regional, and global stakeholders. The project website ([www.boblme.org](http://www.boblme.org)) was revamped in 2011, and three issues of the tri-annual BOBLME newsletter published in 2011. In addition to information about the project, the website also provides access to documents and reports through a comprehensive search routine. Only India has established its own website for the BOBLME ([www.boblmeindia.org](http://www.boblmeindia.org)), and the other countries should be encouraged to do the same. A range of technical materials are in preparation (for example, MPA Brochure), and various promotional materials such as display posters, pens, hats, writing pads, backpacks, and USB keys have been produced. The Project has published an eight-page brochure, which is available on the project website. Of the persons who answered the questionnaire, 70% said that the dissemination and exchange of information generally satisfied their needs.

177. Project personnel participated in regional and international fora, which has given good visibility to the project, for example, GEF IW conference 2011 (presentation given on

BOBLME), participation of RC in UNESCO-IOC/NOAA Annual LME Consultative Committee Meeting in 2009 (presentation given on BOBLME), and participation in governing bodies of regional organizations (BOBP-IGO Governing Council, SEAFDEC Council, MFF Regional Steering Committee, APFIC Session). At its 31<sup>st</sup> Session, APFIC requested BOBLME to provide advisory information on the Bay of Bengal region to the Commission at its future sessions.

178. The MTE team concluded that this component is very successful at the regional level, with a very capable and competent RCU. Further improvements could be achieved if the RCU and PSC encouraged and supported countries to develop and implement national M & E systems and communication hubs and with a fully-dedicated field operations officer in the RCU.

## 5.2 Gender issues

179. In some BOB LME countries, women constitute about 50% of the total population involved in artisanal and small-scale coastal fishery activities.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, there is some recognition in the project document of the role of women in fisheries and limited provisions for gender considerations. It recognizes that women in developing countries are mainly subsistence producers and users of environmental resources, and that it is critical to recognize and integrate women's knowledge in the conservation and management of these resources to ensure their sustainability. The project document also recognizes that approaches to integration of gender issues into decision-making can positively impact decision-making in resource management as well as improve livelihood opportunities.

180. Further, the project document advocates that where possible, national governments should attempt to ensure that the NTFs will include national NGOs active in women issues, among others, with respect to coastal and marine areas management. The project document also states that it is expected that a small number of fisher communities are likely to benefit directly from activities supported under the project. These include, *inter alia*, broader impacts of advocacy on health and gender issues.

181. The project document also made provisions for background studies to look into women's issues, to be used to advocate for positive discriminatory strategies or approaches. At the time of the MTE, however, these studies had not yet been carried out. The RCU is negotiating with a gender specialist to examine gender issues and identify which dimensions are missing. BOBLME also supported the Workshop on Best Practices for Gender Mainstreaming in the Fisheries Sector, convened by the Regional Fisheries Livelihood Programme in Cambodia in November 2010, as well as the participation of Thailand and the International Collective in Support of Fish-workers (ICSF).

182. Other than the above, there are no project components or activities that specifically deal with mainstreaming gender issues. Despite the important role of women in coastal fisheries in the region and the references in the project document, the project design does not explicitly address gender issues and gender mainstreaming, nor are women explicitly included in identification of beneficiaries. The project Stakeholder Consultation Plan and

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<sup>15</sup>BOBLME (2010). ICM for the Bay of Bengal: A review on best practices and lessons learned from Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. BOBLME-2010-Socioec-02

Information Dissemination (Annex 7 in the Project Document) does not mention women among the key stakeholders and there was no attempt at a gender analysis.

183. The MTE team reviewed the regional TDA and also found that this report does not specifically address gender issues related to marine fisheries and the environment. The only discussion of women is regarding labour migration in the region, with an increasing number of women crossing borders for employment. It does not explain, however, if this phenomenon is related to the marine fisheries and environment sectors. Since one of the purposes of the TDA is to guide the SAP, women's issues and potential impacts of any proposed policies on women should have been discussed in this document. The MTE team was informed that the national TDA consultations were well attended by women, although they were not very vocal. Therefore, the number of women attending an event is not necessarily a good indication of their participation. Nevertheless, the national TDA consultations would have been an excellent opportunity to obtain gender perspectives from the stakeholders themselves. Of the three national consultation reports available for review by the evaluators, only one contains a comment from participants about fisher women participation/involvement in coastal and marine living resource management. It is recommended that, if possible, the revised TDA should incorporate gender issues as appropriate, including in the CCA.<sup>16</sup>

184. Three socio-economic papers<sup>17</sup> on best practices in Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) that were prepared under the project include case studies, best practices and recommendations that deal particularly with women in fisheries and ICM. The RCU should ensure that these are incorporated in the SAP, as appropriate.

185. The project management structure consists of predominantly males, with the RC and CTA being males, no females in the PSC, only one female NC, and no female NTA. Most of the individuals who participated in project events (including training) were males (Annex 10 and Annex 13). This reveals the great imbalance in the participation of women in project activities, which was also reinforced by the experience of the MTE team during country visits – of the 60 persons interviewed only 9 were females.

186. Respondents did not think that this situation was due to the selection of issues in the TDA, and could be attributed to several factors, including cultural traditions, especially in countries such as Bangladesh, as well as available expertise. A number of respondents revealed that it is a problem for women to travel for extended periods away from their homes because of cultural and family reasons. It was also pointed out that in some of the countries more women professionals tend to be involved in the environmental domain, rather than in marine fisheries. Therefore, the assignment of fisheries institutions as national focal points (rather than environmental agencies) could also account for the low participation of women. It should be noted that the nomination of participants in meetings and other project activities

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<sup>16</sup> The MTE team was recently informed by the RC that the regional TDA has already been confirmed, and that based on the outcome of the Gender Analysis, the RCU will be focussing on including the identified gender issues in the SAP.

<sup>17</sup> APFIC (2009). APFIC/FAO Regional consultative workshop- Best practices to support and improve the livelihoods of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture households, 13–15 October 2009, Manila, Philippines. FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand. RAP Publication 2009/01. BOBLME (2011). Review of community-based ICM: Best practices and lessons learned in the Bay of Bengal - South Asia. BOBLME-2011-Socioec-01; BOBLME (2010). ICM for the Bay of Bengal: A review on best practices and lessons learned from Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. BOBLME-2010-Socioec-02

as well as of national project personnel is the responsibility of the countries and not of the RCU.

187. The evaluators recommend that more effort be made by the RCU and the countries to increase the participation of women in all aspects of the project, including in training and capacity building initiatives. The planned studies on gender should be accelerated so that gender perspectives can be explicitly considered in the SAP and in any sub-regional work plan. Gender implications of specific options in the SAP and NAPs should also be evaluated as appropriate.

### 5.3 Capacity development

188. The BOBLME design has the dual goal of national development and capacity building, as demanded by the countries at start. The need for capacity development is explicitly stated in the BOBLME project document. Weak institutional capacity at national levels is stated as one of the constraints that prevent the effective resolution of the issues facing the Bay of Bengal LME. According to the project document, the project attempts to address many of the issues through supporting foundational/ capacity building processes for multi-country collaboration in this phase. It is recognized that the project must build on, among others, lesson-learning and capacity building to achieve any significant lasting impact. The project document also mentions that one of the expected outcomes is increased capacity, but it does not say for what. It should also build capacity in existing institutions or if appropriate, develop capacity through the establishment of new institutional arrangements, which is consistent with GEF OP 8. Further, GEF SP 2 cites the need to expand global coverage of foundation capacity building designed to address a number of the identified gaps.

189. The project components and subcomponents that include capacity development as an output, objective, or activity are given in **Error! Reference source not found.:**

**Table 10. Components and sub-components with capacity development**

<b>Component 2</b>	One of the expected outputs is to enhance local capacity to formulate policies supportive of community-based ICM. This is reflected as an indicator and target in the project logical framework.
<b>Subcomponent 3.2.</b>	One of the objectives is training and capacity building (presumably for marine protected areas and fish refugia).
<b>Subcomponent 4.2.</b>	One of the activities is to address identified capacity needs for monitoring and managing water quality and disseminating information.
<b>Component 5.</b>	The objective of this component is to establish sufficient institutional capacity to coordinate regional interventions, monitor project impacts, and disseminate and exchange information.

190. A significant portion of project resources are devoted to foundational/capacity building processes for multi-country collaboration in this phase of the project. This notwithstanding, a capacity needs assessment has not been conducted nor has a capacity development strategy been formulated. It is not clear what exactly constitutes capacity development within the framework of the project, although it could be argued that many of the activities would result in human and institutional capacity development/strengthening (for example, participation in meetings and workshops, generation of knowledge and information, establishment of partnerships and forums for discussions, development of fisheries

management plans). The impact of these on capacity development, however, is difficult to assess and quantify.

191. The capacity building efforts are largely guided by recommendations arising out of meetings and workshops and needs expressed by the countries. So far, the project has already conducted 13 training courses for the countries and plans to continue such efforts. A list of training courses and number of participants, including by gender, is given in Annex 13. It has also supported participants from member countries to attend training programmes organized by other organizations. Courses covered a range of topics, including fish stock assessment, ecosystem approach to fisheries, policy formulation for ICM, project cycle management, and communication, scientific writing, and oral presentation.

192. In general, respondents were of the view that the training opportunities were a strong feature of the project and met much of the capacity development needs (10 out of 12 respondents gave a rank of 4 and 5 to the question if the project met their country's capacity needs, although some countries expressed different needs). Still, others felt that the training activities appeared ad hoc and dispersed, consisted of too many regional workshops and not enough in-country training, should focus more on "learning by doing", did not meet their specific needs, and that one off courses were not adequate to build a core body of trained persons. As a consequence, there is reduced potential for lasting impacts at country level. This issue is illustrated by the poor quality of most of the scientific proposals prepared and submitted to the RCU by the countries, despite the fact that training was provided on proposal writing. The evaluators agree with the suggestion by at least two persons interviewed that more long term academic training programmes should have been included (for example, graduate programmes for masters degree).

193. In the absence of a capacity needs assessment that identified the particular requirements of each country, the approach taken has been to provide the same training to all countries ("one size fits all"). Consistent with this approach is the equal allocation of resources for capacity development among the countries, despite differences in their individual needs (topic areas and level). Because of the wide disparity in the level of capacity and needs among the countries, not all have equally benefited. For example, the stock assessment training course was at too high a level for participants from some of the countries. However, based on feedback on this course, a tailored approach is being developed by the stock assessment coordinator for in-country training in 2012. The MTE team recommends that further consideration be given by the RCU and PSC to allocate and target resources according to the capacity needs of individual countries.

194. Another issue brought to the attention of the evaluators was the appropriateness of some of the persons who participate in training activities. Several persons interviewed revealed that in many cases some of the individuals selected by countries for training were not the most appropriate. National nominations for training (and for attending meetings and workshops) are the responsibility of the countries and are often based on considerations not related to the needs of the project (including favouritism, political issues). It is also evident that there should be more participation by persons from the marine environment field, rather than from mainly fisheries. Related to this issue is continuity in participation in training initiatives, particularly in follow-up courses. These two issues are likely to have negative consequences for the uptake and sustainability of the project's capacity development efforts. There is a danger that skills would not be used to achieve project objectives or would be forgotten with time. Countries should ensure that persons nominated are the 'right persons',

and that there is continuity of participation in subsequent courses. As also explained above, most of the individuals who participated in training courses were males (Annex 13).

195. While a significant number of persons have participated in training activities, the real impacts of the project's capacity development initiatives would be manifested on the longer term, during SAP development and implementation. The MTE team recommends that that a capacity needs assessment be conducted and a strategy developed during the next year to meet the specific needs of the countries within the framework of the project. The SAP should propose priority capacity building interventions, which could include long term academic programmes, south-south cooperation and twinning of countries (utilizing top expertise), training of trainers, and institutionalizing training at the country level through, *inter alia*, mainstreaming new knowledge and establishing appropriate partnerships.

#### **5.4 Sustainability**

196. The Project Document (Section 3.5. Sustainability) states that sustainability is addressed through three sub-components: 1) development of the SAP, which will provide the road map to future interventions, 2) establishing permanent institutional arrangements, and 3) developing a strategy and mechanism leading to eventual self-financing. The MTE team recognizes these elements of sustainability of BOBLME's outcomes and Project Development Objective. The MTE team finds it too early to provide any firm statements on sustainability, because there are few outcomes so far sustaining it. However, the team concludes that it is of utmost importance to consider means for sustainability, which can be enhanced even now. It has been demonstrated elsewhere in the report that there is a risk that the SAP will not be adopted at the time of closure of the project and there may be a gap before the next envisaged phase of the longer term project will be initiated. There is also doubt if permanent institutional arrangements can be established by the end of the project. This implies that BOBLME also needs to promote sustainability through other means.

197. One result of the project should be improved national capacity to address transboundary issues and to work in a collaborative manner with other countries. This can enhance the work within existing collaborative arrangements. The management arrangements in Mergui Archipelago being developed can be sustained through continued efforts by the countries, IUCN, and Wetlands Alliance. The Hilsa management plan is an example where sustainability can be achieved and actively promoted during the lifetime of BOBLME. There is an existing sub-regional organization, BOBP-IGO owned by the countries, which could be the host for sustained implementation of the plan. Also, the bilateral arrangements for Gulf of Mannar could be sustained under the leadership of BOBP-IGO, alternatively IUCN. These examples demonstrate that sustainability can be enhanced by the establishment of partnerships with existing sub-regional arrangements and initiatives. These partnerships could assist in "carrying over" activities until they can be supported in the next phase, through the same partnerships. The MTE team thus considers the strengthening of partnerships during this phase as essential to ensure sustainability of its concrete outcomes. The evaluators conclude that there is a potential for sustainability of outcomes, but that mechanisms for this are not yet in place.

## 5.5 Impact

198. The project has had some positive intermediate results that have potential to produce lasting impacts. It is creating an enabling environment and helping to overcome national and regional obstacles to sustainable management of the BOB LME. Among the intermediate results achieved so far are raised awareness about the LME, increased knowledge and enhanced national capacity to address transboundary issues, and ability to work in a collaborative manner with other countries. The project is also injecting fresh ideas and encouraging thinking “outside the country box”, with focus on ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and transboundary issues.

199. The current phase of the project is laying the foundation for contributing to FAO Strategic Objectives C (Sustainable management and use of fisheries and aquaculture resources) and its Organizational Results C1, C2, C3, and F6.<sup>18</sup> The project has already achieved results that contribute to FAO Core Functions, as illustrated in **Error! Reference source not found.**

**Table 11. BOBLME’s contribution to FAO Core Functions**

<b>FAO Core Functions</b>	<b>Project’s contribution</b>
<i>Monitoring and assessment of long-term and medium-term trends and perspectives</i>	Suite of ecosystem and water quality indicators developed for monitoring, deployment of data buoy
<i>Assembly and provision of information, knowledge and statistics</i>	A significant body of knowledge and information generated; assisting countries with fisheries statistics
<i>Policy and strategy options and advice</i>	Management of transboundary fish stocks, ICM policies, best practices - to be incorporated in the SAP
<i>Technical support to promote technology transfer and build capacity</i>	Strong focus on capacity development
<i>Advocacy and communication</i>	Advocacy for jointly addressing transboundary issues, EAF, communication strategy
<i>Inter-disciplinarity and innovation</i>	Project promotes EAF, which is a relatively new concept that integrates a number of disciplines
<i>Partnerships and alliances</i>	Collaboration and alliances with over 30 institutions

200. So far, the BOB LME project has had little contribution to FAO Strategic Objectives and Organizational Results on gender issues. This is being addressed by the project.

<sup>18</sup> C1: Members and other stakeholders have improved formulation of policies and standards that facilitate the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and other international instruments, as well as response to emerging issues; C2: Governance of fisheries and aquaculture has improved through the establishment or strengthening of national and regional institutions, including RFBs; C3: More effective management of marine and inland capture fisheries by FAO Members and other stakeholders has contributed to the improved state of fisheries resources, ecosystems and their sustainable use; F6: Improved access to and sharing of knowledge for natural resource management.

## 6 GEF rating

201. In order to facilitate comparison with routine reporting to GEF and contribute to the GEF programme learning process (IWLearn), the MTE was asked to rate the success of the project based on a number of criteria against the GEF six-point scale system, as it was done for each outcome.<sup>19</sup> The rating and comment for each criterion are given in **Error! Reference source not found.** An overall rating is given at the bottom of the table.

**Table 12. GEF ratings assigned to the specific criteria**

Criteria	Rating	Comments
<i>Achievement of objectives</i>	S	The project has made significant progress towards achieving the Development Objective, by undertaking or supporting a wide range of activities and initiatives, including training and capacity building and engaging regional and national institutions, that would support and provide inputs to the SAP. It is laying a solid foundation for the SAP (although partnerships need to be strengthened). It is not possible to rank achievement of the project Global Environment Objective at this time - this objective is expected to be achieved on the longer term and following SAP implementation.
<i>Attainment of outputs and activities</i>	S	Significant progress has been made in attainment of outputs as stated in the Logical Framework, as well as activities and outputs specified in the annual regional work plans. Target under the project Development Objective to be completed by PY 3 (regional TDA) is on track and extensive stakeholder consultations have been undertaken. For Components 1-5, of the 12 LF targets expected to be completed by PY2, 10 have been attained, one 50% completed, and no progress on one target that is expected to be undertaken between PY2 -4.
<i>Progress towards meeting GEF-4 focal area priorities/objectives</i>	HS	With respect to GEF IW Strategic Objective 1, the project continues to foster cooperation among the 8 countries as well as with more than 30 regional institutions to address the priority transboundary concerns in the BOB LME. A comprehensive, ecosystem based approach to fisheries management (EAF) underpins the project's strategy. The project is also providing training in EAF. It is not possible at this time to rank progress with respect to GEF-4 IW Strategic Programme 1 - Restoring and sustaining coastal and marine fish stocks and associated biological diversity (a result on the longer term)
<i>Cost-effectiveness</i>	S	Activities have been carried out at or below budgeted costs. The annual work plans have, after considerable delays during the first year, been implemented effectively. Costs have generally been within budget. Cost-effectiveness has gained from BOBLME sponsoring participation of country representatives in other organizations'/programs' events (workshops, training)
<i>Impact</i>	S	The project has had significant impact in a number of areas at both national and regional levels that contribute to achievement of project objectives (e.g. improved knowledge base, capacity development, strengthened regional cooperation, forum for dialogue, raised awareness), as well as on FAO Core Functions. The current phase of the project is laying the foundation for contributing to FAO Strategic Objectives and Organizational Results. Greater impact could have been achieved if more pilot projects had been implemented in the countries.
<i>Risk and risk management</i>	S	Risks are constantly monitored by RCU and reported in PIRs and to PSC. Mitigating measures are defined and acted upon. RCU may have downplayed

<sup>19</sup> The scoring scale is as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Marginally Satisfactory (MS), Marginally Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), and Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)



Criteria	Rating	Comments
		some risks and has not flagged for considerable likelihood that SAP, while being produced, may not be adopted by the participating countries by the end of the project. Even with an approach with a “fragmented” SAP the likelihood of concluding the process in time is slim. Likewise is there a risk that the second phase will not be approved at the closure of the project by donor agencies and participating countries. No mitigating measures have so far been identified.
<i>Sustainability</i>	MU	There is potential sustainability, but not yet demonstrated by the project. There is a lack of engaging potential agents for sustainability as partners and stakeholders. There is a great risk for a gap between the present and the next phase of the project, with negative impact on sustainability of outcomes. The buy-in by the political level in participating countries is yet limited.
<i>Stakeholder participation</i>	S	The project has engaged a wide range of stakeholders on regional and national levels in consultations. The TDA process in some countries included decentralized stakeholder consultations, but this was not universal. In general there has been limited engagement of local stakeholders because of few on-the-ground activities.
<i>Country ownership</i>	MS	BOBLME has a reasonable buy-in from technical levels in most countries, but the political level is not yet fully committed. Improved country ownership would facilitate the SAP formulation process. The process itself, by engaging senior management officials and the political level in relevant ministries, may contribute to improved ownership. There is potential for higher ranking in later evaluations.
<i>Implementation approach</i>	S	The approach chosen are to achieve outputs and outcomes through series of workshops, meetings and training events. This has tentatively proven to a satisfactory approach. Alternative approaches were considered but not adopted during the design phase.
<i>Financial planning</i>	S	Effective financial planning as evidence of an excellently managed project. The planning has catered for initial delays in project execution and corrective actions have been taken. Forecasts for financial delivery to project end may prove over-optimistic.
<i>Replicability</i>	MS	There are a number of activities, approaches and results with high replication/scaling-up potential. Among these are training and capacity building initiatives, regional collaborative arrangements, thematic working groups, fisheries ecosystem plan, ICM best practices, indicators framework, and M & E plan. Pilot projects have high potential for replication, but only one pilot project has been implemented so far, with slow progress on others
<i>Monitoring and evaluation</i>	HS	Well established M&E programme and plan, well defined and executed. The programme has allowed high quality monitoring of progress in the project as well as the contribution of activities to outcomes presented in the project results matrix. Project reporting is of high quality and timely. In-depth monitoring and evaluation report prepared by M&E consultant in October 2011. The annual regional workplans are effective tools for guiding activities and tracking progress.
<i>Overall</i>	S	

## **7 Conclusions and recommendations**

### **7.1 Conclusions**

202. The Bay of Bengal is experiencing serious problems with overexploitation of living marine resources, pollution from both land- and sea-based sources, and destruction of critical habitats such as sea grass beds, mangroves, and coral reefs. The bordering countries recognize that these problems cannot be addressed only by national initiatives. The BOB LME project provides the only existing platform for region-wide collaboration in the BOB region with a mandate to address both fisheries management and environmental issues. It is also the only regional forum for dialogue among the countries, which recognize the value of sub-regional and to some extent regional collaboration to solve common problems, and to build awareness and capacity.

203. The project is consistent with priorities in the FAO Country Programming Framework broadly related to food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable management of natural resources and the environment. It is relevant to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Fisheries Management and Integration of Fisheries into Coastal Area Management). Further, the project is making extensive use of FAO normative work and has achieved results that contribute to FAO Core Functions and will contribute to FAO Strategic Objectives C and Organizational Results.

204. There were shortcomings in the Project Document with regard to inconsistent statements on approaches and in the Logical Framework Analysis. The revisions, which were endorsed by the PSC during its first meeting, improved on the original Logical Framework Analysis, but did not eliminate all inconsistencies. The MTE team, however, concluded that the time and effort, which would be required for a further refinement of the framework, would delay implementation and take precious time from the SAP formulation process.

205. The financial delivery was initially slow but has since increased, with 35.7% of the total project budget having been spent by the time of the MTE. The co-financing has been on target, except for Sweden in-kind “others”. This contribution consisted of ongoing projects that were complementary to BOBLME at the time of its design, but had been completed when BOBLME started. The MTE team concluded, however, that there are other ongoing or planned projects in the region that could compensate for this loss of co-financing. It is unlikely that the whole budget will be spent by the end of the project.

206. By the time of the MTE, the project had made considerable progress towards achieving the outputs and outcomes that were expected during this period. The Project Development Objective is expected to be achieved with regard to the formulation and review of the SAP. However, the timeframe will most likely not allow the SAP to be formally adopted by the Governments. The MTE team concluded that the overriding concern for the remaining part of the project is the SAP formulation process, which will require that project resources are focused on the timely conclusion of the process and on creating awareness and support from senior administrative and political level.

207. Project activities consist mainly of workshops and meetings at the regional and national levels. This provoked strong opinions in the participating countries that more on-the-

ground activities would better respond to their expectations and support buy-in by senior management and high political levels. The MTE team concluded, however, that the methodology is the outcome of a long process of negotiations between the countries, GEF, FAO, and donor agencies. It also concluded that the methodology is feasible and adequate to achieve the outcomes and the project development objective.

208. Management by the RCU is excellent. Project staff is dedicated and hardworking and remarkably successful in producing the outputs, given the scale and complexity of the project. The RCU has established efficient and effective routines, an excellent monitoring and evaluation system, and a much needed communications strategy. With only five officers, however, the RCU is understaffed. The Regional Coordinator estimated that he and the Chief Technical Advisor spend about 60% and 40% of their time, respectively, on operational issues. There is a profound need to reduce the operational burden on the RC and CTA to allow them more time for strategic thinking and for engaging with senior level management in ministries and the political level, during the crucial SAP formulation and adoption stage of the project. The RCU must focus on the SAP development process, possibly at the exclusion of other tasks, and consideration should be seriously given to hiring a Field Operations Officer to be based at the RCU.

209. Through the services of FAORAP with the LTU, FAO provides excellent technical backstopping to the project, bringing its comparative advantage of extensive experiences in the thematic areas and in the region, leadership in normative development, and a wide administrative network. The Budget Holder provides adequate support in terms of disbursements of funds, but is in no position to provide effective operational support to the RCU.

210. FAO's Task Force for BOBLME as well as for other projects does not function as envisaged. This represents a lost opportunity for FAO for institutional learning from BOBLME that would be of value for future GEF-funded projects, and for establishing a platform for exchange of experiences between similar projects.

211. By signing the Project Document, the Governments have agreed to the obligations of providing cash and in kind co-financing. At the time of the MTE however, Governments had not completely fulfilled their obligations to appoint the National Coordinator and National Technical Advisors, and to provide sufficient resources for the NC's and NTA's operation. While NCs have been appointed, only three countries had appointed full time NTAs at the time of the MTE. The absence of NTAs stretches the capacity of the NCs, hampers project activities and reduces the management capacity of the national teams in the countries in question. Demands on the national teams are expected to increase when the project moves into SAP formulation. The evaluators also found that the National Task Forces have not performed as expected. They have had few meetings and in most of the countries they are not playing any meaningful role in project implementation.

212. The PSC has demonstrated that it can effectively perform its functions. However, while the PSC meetings have been well attended, about half of the participants have been alternates and only seven of the 16 members have participated in the two meetings held. Continuity is an issue for the RCU and PSC to address, in addition to the high proportion of members being represented by alternates, which indicates that the project is not reaching the senior management and political levels. Indeed, it was evident that commitment to the project at these high levels was much lower than that at the technical level. This is another matter

that the project management has to urgently address, especially during the SAP formulation process.

213. The MTE team found that there were weak linkages between the institutions responsible for the project on the national level (fisheries research institutions) and the ministries responsible for fisheries and environment. Further, the ministry responsible for environment was generally less engaged in the project than the ministry responsible for fisheries. Also, there was insufficient higher level collaboration between the ministries.

214. The large number of workshops, training courses, and meetings in which the countries have to participate is stretching their capacity. There are also issues with the routines and procedures for approving international travels for staff, which sometimes lead to delays. This also impedes progress because of lack of continuity in the participation of some individuals in subsequent follow-up meetings and workshops. It also implies that the right skills and experiences are not always represented.

215. There is a need to raise awareness and support for the SAP and to significantly increase buy-in by politicians and the public during the next two years, which are crucial for the project to attain its Project Development Objective. The decision of the PSC to be the SAP formulation team demonstrates ownership and commitment to BOBLME. Leading the SAP development will, however, require a more active PSC with frequent inter-sessional contacts and continuity in membership. Additional support will also be required, including establishment of a mechanism to complement the PSC members in their advocacy role at high political level.

216. While the evaluators do not consider an extension of the project at this time, very close monitoring of the process is necessary. RCU should engage with the PSC to closely monitor progress towards SAP formulation and adoption. The 4<sup>th</sup> regular PSC meeting in March 2013 will be in a better position to decide if there is a need for an extension of the project.

217. Interviews revealed that there is weak commitment among participating Governments to a region-wide institutional management arrangement. Thus a comprehensive region-wide SAP may face difficulties in adoption. There is therefore need to investigate alternative, feasible options, to facilitate the mechanisms for collaboration between countries, and secure financing for SAP implementation. The RCU should consider, in consultation with the PSC and subject to final approval by the PSC, alternatives to a region-wide SAP, potentially a SAP consisting of smaller sub-regional, bi-lateral, and thematic components that could be brought together into a regional programme, with responsibility for management of individual components given to existing sub-regional institutions or institutional arrangements created specifically for this purpose. In this regard, partnerships with sub-regional organizations have an important role in SAP development.

218. By mid-term the project had made significant progress in achieving the Logical Framework targets expected to be completed in PY 1 – 3. Of the 31 targets rated using the GEF six-point scale system,<sup>20</sup> 26 received a rating of highly satisfactory and satisfactory.

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<sup>20</sup> GEF six-point scale scoring system: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Marginally Satisfactory (MS), Marginally Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), and Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)

Completion of the draft regional TDA was a major milestone reached, though there were delays partly due to the unexpectedly long period for national TDA consultations. A common opinion among persons interviewed was that the time frame for the TDA was too long and that there should have been more time for the SAP. There have been delays in several regional targets due to issues in finalizing contractual arrangements and slow delivery by some partners. Slow progress was also noted in activities at the national level, such as nomination of pilot ICM sites and development of proposals by the countries for studies to support Hilsa and Indian mackerel management. Some persons interviewed partly attributed this to insufficient political will and technical capacity at the national and local level.

219. Despite the important role of women in coastal fisheries in the region, gender (women) issues and gender mainstreaming are not explicitly included in the project document or in the TDA, and no gender analysis has been undertaken. The project intends to hire a gender specialist to ensure that gender issues are considered. Currently, participants in the project consist predominantly of males. The evaluation team strongly recommends that the project pay more attention to women's issues in view of their important role in fisheries and their dependence on this sector for livelihoods in the region.

220. The project has a strong emphasis on training and capacity development, and a number of courses and training workshops have been held. The approach has been to provide the same training courses and at the same level to all countries, despite differences in their capacity needs. This partly arises from the absence of a capacity needs assessment and of an appropriate capacity development strategy. Not all the individuals nominated by the countries for training are the most appropriate and there is often lack of continuity in participation.

221. The sustainability of project outcomes cannot yet be assured. The strategy for sustainability in the Project Document is based on the condition that the Project Development Objective has been achieved in full and funding made available for the second phase. Nevertheless, it is of utmost importance to consider means for ensuring sustainability, which can be enhanced even now. For example, management arrangements in Mergui Archipelago being developed can be sustained through continued efforts by the countries, IUCN, and Wetlands Alliance. The Hilsa management plan and bilateral arrangements for Gulf of Mannar are examples where sustainability can be achieved through implementation by existing regional and/or sub-regional organizations. Sustainability can also be enhanced by the establishment of partnerships with existing sub-regional arrangements and initiatives. A partnership should ideally be an arrangement between equal partners in terms of funding, but it can also be an arrangement, in which one part contributes most of the funding and the other a mandate or an organization that can further the common objectives. There is need to accelerate efforts to establish true partnerships in which partners assume responsibility for larger components than have been done so far.

222. The project has had some positive intermediate results, which have potential to produce lasting impacts. It is creating an enabling environment and helping to overcome national and regional obstacles to sustainable management of the BOB LME. The project is also injecting fresh ideas and encouraging thinking "outside the country box", with focus on ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and transboundary issues.

223. The MTE rated the overall success of the project as Satisfactory, based on 13 criteria against the GEF six-point scale system.

## 7.2 Recommendations

224. Shortcomings were identified in the Project Document with regard to inconsistent statements on approaches and the time needed for project inception. There are also inconsistencies in the Logical Framework Analysis.

### **Recommendation 1: To FAO on project formulation (Sections 3.1.2 – 3.1.4)**

FAO is urged to enhance quality control for the preparation of project documents with a view to having them reviewed in-depth before becoming a management instrument for projects, with emphasis given to consistency and logic in the Logical Framework Analysis.

225. The project is in a challenging phase, having in reality only two years to complete the SAP and its adoption. Currently, the project lacks effective access to the political level to mobilize support for the SAP process and its adoption, which is essential if it is to be concluded within the remaining time. To achieve this, there is a need to raise awareness and support for the SAP and to create a more profound buy-in by politicians and the public. There is also a need to complement and strengthen the efforts by the PSC members to drive the SAP process and RCU's capacity to manage and support it. The following recommendations are all linked with the aim to facilitate the SAP process.

### **Recommendation 2: To FAO GEF Focal Point on National GEF Focal Points (Section 4.2.1)**

GEF Focal Point in FAO should encourage national GEF Operational and Political Focal Points to engage in promotion of the project. There is scope for effective support to increase awareness of the project and facilitate high level contacts and inter-ministerial interactions

### **Recommendation 3: To the Regional Coordinating Unit on complementary support to PSC for advocacy on high political level (Section 4.4 and 5.1.2)**

In order to complement the PSC members in their advocacy role, the RCU should consider contracting individuals with high status in the society, known for their commitment to conservation of nature, including sustainable management of aquatic living resources, and with access to and influence on high political level.

### **Recommendation 4: To FAORAP on strengthening links to high administrative and political level in participating countries (Section 4.2.2)**

a) FAORAP should encourage FAO Representatives to take a more proactive role in the promotion of the BOBLME at country level and facilitate access to high administrative and political levels to enhance awareness about the project in regular high level contacts, and to participate in high profile project events;  
b) ADG FAORAP should be the Convener and Chair of a forum for annual regional meetings among Permanent Secretaries with the aim of reviewing the status of the SAP and agree on actions to enhance progress towards the Project Development Objective. At least two meetings should be held during the remaining project period.

**Recommendation 5: To FAORAP on strengthening of the Regional Coordinating Unit (Section 4.2.2)**

FAORAP (in consultation with GEF Focal Point) should urgently appoint a full time Field Operations Officer, preferably with a fisheries background, to be based in Phuket for tasks that to a large extent are currently done by the RC and CTA. These include organization of meetings and workshops, recruitment of consultants, drafting of Letters of Agreement and negotiation with recipient organizations, and monitoring of budget disbursement.

226. Sustainability of project outcomes rely on the SAP being formulated and adopted, and regional or sub-regional mechanisms for collaboration being created and/or strengthened. Partners engaged in the current project will also contribute to sustainability by integrating BOBLME outcomes in their future work.

**Recommendation 6: To the Regional Coordinating Unit on partnerships (Sections 4.2.2, 4.2.3, and 5.4 )**

The RCU should increase its efforts to strengthen collaboration with existing institutions, organizations, and programmes in the region with compatible mandates, aims, and objectives as BOBLME, in which partners take the responsibility for entire outputs. This requires longer term and wider contractual arrangements than are used at present.

227. The PSC will play a crucial role in the SAP formulation and adoption process. This will require a more active PSC with frequent inter-sessional contacts. However, there is lack of continuity in its membership and about half of the participants in PSC meetings have been alternates.

**Recommendation 7: To the Regional Coordinating Unit on strengthening the role of the Project Steering Committee (Section 4.2.4)**

The RCU should take the initiation of the SAP formulation process as an opportunity to engage PSC more actively through inter-sessional interactions between the PSC members and RCU and among PSC members. This can possibly be through teleconferences and interactive networks to monitor and drive the SAP process. RCU should further urge Governments to improve continuity in participation in meetings, directly and through the PSC.

228. The national teams (primarily the NC and NTA) are crucial for the implementation of the project to achieve its development objective. Not all Governments have fulfilled their obligations to appoint NCs and NTAs and to provide sufficient resources for their operation. At the time of the MTE, only three countries had appointed full time NTAs. Demands on the national teams will increase when the project moves into SAP formulation.

**Recommendation 8: To the Regional Coordinating Unit and PSC on Government obligations (Section 4.4)**

In PSC meetings, the RCU should continue to draw attention to fulfillment of national obligations, appointment of NTAs, and provisions of facilities and support, and seek the PSC members' support to urge the Governments to strengthen the national teams. The RCU should also more actively engage the national teams in project activities, and increase dialogue and cooperation among national agencies, PSC members, and other stakeholders within the countries.

229. There is an opportunity for FAO to use the FAO Task Force to enhance the institutional learning from the project and promote exchange of experiences between GEF-funded and FAO-implemented projects.

**Recommendation 9: To FAO on the role of BOBLME Task Force (Section 4.3)**

FAORAP and the GEF Focal Point should consider the potential role of the BOBLME Task Force in institutional learning from project implementation and in networking between similar projects to exchange experiences with the aim to enhance and improve FAO's management of large regional projects. The BOBLME Task Force could be used as a pilot case to revitalize the task force concept and test and demonstrate its potential usefulness.

230. The project is most likely to achieve one part of the Project Development Objective, the formulation of the SAP. There is doubt, however, if the adoption process can be achieved in time. The MTE team concludes that for this to be successful all parties have to contribute effectively. While the evaluators do not consider an extension of the project at this time, very close monitoring of the process is necessary.

**Recommendation 10: To the Regional Coordination Unit on close monitoring of the SAP formulation process (Section 5.1.2)**

The RCU should engage with the PSC to closely monitor progress towards SAP formulation and adoption. The first bench mark will be the 3rd PSC meeting where the regional TDA will be presented for approval, which will trigger the start of SAP formulation. Six months later the RCU should consult with PSC (in an extra physical meeting or a teleconference) about progress for PSC to decide on required actions. The 4th regular PSC meeting in March 2013 should decide if there is need for an extension of the project.

231. The MTE concluded that there was weak commitment among participating Governments to a region-wide management arrangement. Thus, a comprehensive region-wide SAP may encounter difficulties in adoption. There is therefore need to investigate alternative options to speed up the adoption process, facilitate the mechanisms for collaboration between countries, and secure financing for SAP implementation.

**Recommendation 11: To the Regional Coordination Unit on the SAP formulation process (Section 5.1.2)**

The RCU should consider, in consultation with the PSC and subject to final approval by the PSC, alternatives to a region-wide SAP, potentially a SAP consisting of smaller sub-regional, bi-lateral, and thematic components that could be brought together into a regional programme, with responsibility for management of individual components given to existing sub-regional institutions or institutional arrangements created specifically for this purpose.

232. Despite the important role of women in coastal fisheries in the region, gender (women) issues and gender mainstreaming are not explicitly included in the project document or in the TDA, and no gender analysis has been undertaken. Participants in the project consist predominantly of males. The evaluation team strongly recommends that the project pay more attention to women's issues in view of their important role in and their dependence on this sector for livelihoods.



**Recommendation 12: To the Regional Coordinating Unit on gender issues (Section 5.2)**

The RCU should engage the PSC to urge the countries to increase the participation of women in the project, including in training and capacity building initiatives; and ensure that gender issues are explicitly considered in the SAP, including evaluation of gender implications of proposed actions. The RC and CTA should ensure that the revised TDA incorporate gender issues as appropriate, including in the Causal Chain Analysis.

233. The approach taken to training and capacity building is to provide the same training courses and at the same level to all countries, despite differences in their capacity needs. This partly arises from the absence of a capacity needs assessment and an appropriate capacity development strategy. Not all the individuals nominated by the countries for training are the most appropriate and there is often lack of continuity in participation. This reduces the potential for uptake and sustainability.

**Recommendation 13: To the Regional Coordinating Unit on capacity development (Section 5.3)**

A capacity needs assessment should be conducted and a strategy that targets the specific needs of the individual countries developed during the next year. Further, the RCU should ensure that provisions are made in the SAP for priority training and capacity development in the next phase of the project. The RCU should, through the PSC, urge countries to nominate the appropriate individuals and to provide mechanisms and incentives to enable them to contribute to the project on a sustainable basis.

## **8 Lessons Learned**

234. The project has only been operational for 2.5 years and it is early to expect major lessons to be learned at this stage. Experiences gained during the implementation are recorded in the main body of the report, and when action is required they have been turned into recommendations. However, there is one lesson learned from the project, which merits being recorded as a lesson learned.

**Lesson Learned 1. Flexibility in Logical Framework**

*Flexibility should be integrated in the design of a project to allow for changing conditions that may occur between the design phase and actual implementation. The concept of a rolling Logical Framework Analysis, allowing for revision of activities and timelines, as well as indicators and targets can provide flexibility. Flexibility must, however, include agreed procedures for changes to be decided and recorded.*

## **Annexes**

- Annex 1. Evaluation terms of reference**
- Annex 2. Consultants' profiles**
- Annex 3. Itinerary and stakeholders met**
- Annex 4. Questionnaire developed for structured interviews with stakeholders**
- Annex 5. Frequency of responses in ranking categories**
- Annex 6. Reports produced by BOBLME and those reviewed by evaluators**
- Annex 7. Revised Logical Framework**
- Annex 8. BOBLME Institutional and Management Arrangements**
- Annex 9. Number of days support from Lead Technical Unit**
- Annex 10. Meetings and workshops**
- Annex 11. Activities to be supported in the countries and funds available**
- Annex 12. BOBLME Partners/collaborators and activities**
- Annex 13. Training courses held, number of participants, and gender ratios**