

BACKGROUND

Eritrea, as a new member of the community of nations, has many development priorities. While traditionally the main source of economic support has been subsistence agriculture and livestock rearing in the hinterland, and artisan fishing in parts of the coastline, the primary economic development opportunities for Eritrea lie in its coastal, marine and island areas. These opportunities include fisheries, trade, oil exploration and tourism. The development of these sectors could have significant impact on the environment of the Red Sea as a whole, and on its globally significant biodiversity in particular. Eritrea is committed to ensure that this development is sustainable and that the integrity of its coastal, marine and island biodiversity is not compromised. This was affirmed on March 21st 1996 when Eritrea acceded to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. As a result of its commitment, in 1998 the Government of Eritrea initiated a partnership with the Global Environment Facility and UNDP Eritrea to conceive the Eritrean Coastal Marine and Island Biodiversity Project. to protect the biodiversity of its coastal and marine areas.

While the project assures fulfillment of CBD commitments and protection of Eritrea's Coastal Marine and endemic CMI (18%) resources, lays ground for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals in particular MDG1; Eradicate extreme poverty by sustaining coastal fisheries, and MDG 7; Ensuring Environmental Sustainability through conserving optimal ecosystem function.

OBJECTIVES

The four main objectives of the project are:

- To collect and analyze biodiversity information for use in sustainable development planning;
- To increase awareness of reasons and methods for sustainable development;
- To integrate coastal management approaches for coastal zone development, and
- To establish a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

PROGRAMME DETAILS

The Eritrean Coastal, Marine and Island Biodiversity (ECMIB) Project serves the dual purposes of conserving the unique and globally significant biodiversity in Eritrean coastal and marine areas, while facilitating locally accepted sustainable economic development in the areas it covers. The approach includes creating enabling environment for strong participation in communication and cooperation between all government agencies, the private sector, and local communities; development of a Zoning Plan and actions plans for addressing development impacts on the CMI resources; preparing a strategy for sustainable financing; the establishment of effective mechanisms for regional and international collaboration and expanding baseline inventory from being limited to only fish to include all marine and coastal biological diversity. In its efforts to speed up implementation, the project will develop capacity in partnerships and stakeholder coordination by focusing on priorities and strengthening teamwork as well as project management.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

By completion of the project implementation, the following results have been achieved:

- Reliable and accurate information on the state of the coast and of coastal and marine resources have been collected and drafted. IRS images of the whole coast at 5M has been purchased. State of the Coast prepared and under publication;
- Awareness of coastal communities and the general public raised on conservation of biodiversity values;
- National Coastal Development Policy, ICAM Proclamation and ICAM Authority establishment Proclamation as well as ICAM Plan Implementation Guidelines prepared pending final government approval and endorsement;
- Three potential Marine Protected areas (MPA) identified, and management plan prepared; declaration in process;

- National capacity enhanced (more than 300 national staff received training in conservation practices, underwater habitat monitoring taxonomic identification and GIS and database). Diversified and numerous equipment, including research vessel, made available to enhance assessment and planning of biodiversity resources and values.