

Final evaluation of IUCN project Plastic Waste Free Islands

As part of its global Close the Plastic Tap Program, IUCN launched in 2019 the Plastic Waste Free Islands (PWFI) project with the support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) to promote island circular economy and to demonstrate effective, quantifiable solutions to addressing plastic leakage from Small Island Developing States (SIDS). PWFI was planned as a 3-year project focusing on six SIDS: Fiji, Vanuatu and Samoa in Oceania and Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia and Grenada in the Caribbean. Implemented by IUCN headquarters and the IUCN regional offices for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean (ORMACC) and Oceania (ORO), the project was granted a 12-month no-cost extension in 2021 and is slated for a no-cost extension in the Pacific countries until August 2023.

The Final Evaluation of the PWFI project was undertaken from December 2022 to March 2023 by PEMconsult. It had the purpose of assessing PWFI's implementation, results and sustainability with the aim of informing decisions for the development of project proposals for potential additional interventions, replication or scaling up the approach across wider contexts. Using the standard OECD/DAC criteria, the evaluation was based on a combination of direct consultations with project stakeholders, visits to four out of the six targeted countries, project analysis and document review. The overall rating for PWFI is **Satisfactory**.

Ratings and Key Findings

Relevance: HIGHLY SATISFACTORY

The project generated new and important knowledge which is useful for guiding the strategic planning of circular economy solutions and, with the Blueprint, the project provided SIDSs with a useful stepping stone for further policy development at the national, regional and global levels.

Coherence: MODERATELY SATISFACTORY

IUCN made efforts to avoid duplication of work and establish collaboration with national, regional and global organizations. The project could have benefitted from a thorough mapping of initiatives and projects at the start of or even before implementation. The project was in most cases able to build effectively on past work and the knowledge generated has been shared with various organizations working on plastic waste management.

Effectiveness: HIGHLY (Caribbean) and MODERATELY (Pacific) SATISFACTORY

Project implementation was severely impacted by the Covid pandemic. There was considerable difference in the level of achievement between the two regions.

Efficiency: SATISFACTORY

While the implementation of PWFI was severely delayed by the pandemic, it also meant the funds that had been allocated to travel and field missions could be reshuffled to other (planned and additional) activities, thereby facilitating output delivery.

Impact: SATISFACTORY

PWFI's most impactful contribution was the knowledge it generated. The findings from the policy assessments have contributed to increasing the level of visibility of the plastics problem in each of the targeted countries. PWFI has also further contributed to consolidate IUCN as a global leading entity in the field of plastic pollution.

Sustainability: LIKELY (Caribbean) / MODERATELY LIKELY (Pacific)

The prospects for the sustainability of PWFI are markedly different in the two regions. In the Caribbean, the project achieved more and will also benefit from the follow-up phase starting soon. The sustainability of some project achievements in the Pacific is still likely, especially if a no-cost extension until is granted.

Key conclusions

- 1.** PWFI was well designed because its four outcomes constituted an integrated package with data and knowledge generation, policy development, private sector development and the Blueprint "A journey to zero plastic waste".
- 2.** PWFI supported the national priorities of the SIDS on reducing plastic waste and leakage by generating new knowledge, demonstrating business cases for plastic recycling and providing step-by-step guidance for further policy development and implementation including the private sector in recycling and reuse. PWFI was successful in establishing a space for people and organizations to find common interests. The project delivered well on all the components but was less successful in relation to policy development.
- 3.** COVID-19 restrictions had a profound impact on project implementation and result achievement. The effects of the pandemic on the project implementation were mostly negative but adaptive management at HQ level led unspent funds due to the pandemic to be productively reallocated to provide small grants to consolidate pilot projects on alternative value chains.

Lessons learned

- 1.** Pandemics or other global events can hit without notice and have profound negative consequences on project implementation. Project management and implementation that have inbuilt flexibility in terms of application of resources e.g., budget and staff, will tend to fare better.
- 2.** Influencing national and regional policies takes time and requires in-depth understanding and knowledge of the context and the stakeholders. Having policy assessments and recommendations ready early in the implementation process increases the chances of their national uptake.
- 3.** Planning stakeholder engagement and consultancy work should take into consideration that stakeholders in SIDS are prone to participation fatigue because government staff usually have limited human resources and are typically overwhelmed by multiple functions and policy areas, while other stakeholders often wear multiple hats in different organizations. Hiring suitable national consultants with relevant experience and educational background is also more difficult and time-consuming than in larger countries.
- 4.** The purchase of technical equipment is particularly time-consuming both because of its specifications and the clearance procedures of international organizations such as IUCN. The preparatory time required for contracts that relate to equipment purchase needs to be factored in and adequately planned.

Recommendations

Based on the final evaluation of PWFI, in the design or implementation of similar projects, IUCN should:

- 1.** Immediately present a proposal to Norad for using the funds unspent by IUCN ORO to secure the full handover of project initiatives to national governments in the Pacific.
- 2.** Strive to secure adequate and local project representation in each of the target countries based on the different regional performance of project management and on the experience of pandemic restrictions.
- 3.** Carefully study how it could integrate a small grant scheme in similar projects and, in its strategic approach to plastic waste and leakage, apply a more integrated strategy that also supports improvement of systems for collecting and treating waste in SIDS.
- 4.** Developing a carefully prepared strategy for the specific conditions and challenges of the fisheries sector, including a compelling scheme for producing tangible short-term benefits for stakeholders.
- 5.** Include an adequate context analysis in project proposals with key relevant data and information on the political situation, the private sector, main ongoing projects and partners and general waste management.
- 6.** In future projects with waste audit campaigns, consider more closely solutions for capacitating local authorities to gradually decrease their dependency on external technical assistance for national waste monitoring and management systems, and include in the ToR for plastic waste audits the requirement of complete technical methodological reports, made available in open source together with the resulting data.
- 7.** Invest more efforts in communication and integration with national and regional stakeholders to operationalize existing cooperation channels and ensure that stakeholders are kept abreast of project progress and findings.

Management Responses – PWFI Final Evaluation – April 2023

Project identification data			
Project title:	Plastic Waste Free Islands (PWFI)		
Date started:	10.12.2018	Registration n°:	P03025
Date closed:	31.08.2023		
Project manager:	Programme/office:		
Janaka de Silva	Ocean Team	IUCN HQ GLAND	

Management Response Summary Data	
Evaluation or review title as it appears on final report: Final evaluation of IUCN Plastic Waste Free Islands (PWFI) Date received: 25 April 2023	Unit/person responsible for managing/tracking follow-up: Ocean Team and Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Unit
Date Management Response approved: 04 September 2023 Last updated: 04 September 2023	Units/positions requested to take action: ORO, ORMACC, Ocean Team
Expected duration required to fully implement the MR: 2 years	

April 2023

Background

The Plastic Waste Free Islands (PWFI) final evaluation was commissioned by IUCN, and it fulfils its Monitoring and Evaluation Policy to conduct an independent Final Evaluation for the purpose of assessing the results of the intervention. It is expected that the findings and recommendations of this final evaluation will help to inform future decisions such as whether to pursue additional interventions, to scale up existing interventions, or to replicate this project elsewhere. The external evaluation should also help IUCN identify key lessons learned that could be used for the development of future project proposals and improve the implementation of future interventions.

IUCN's welcome the nine (9) recommendations put forward by the evaluators as the basis for the design and management of similar project in the future.

The IUCN Ocean Team will lead the implementation and tracking of the actions to implement the recommendations below and will count on the support of several other units named here with shared responsibility for the actions and intended results. Every individual/unit requested to take action (listed below) has been consulted and commented on this response and agreed on the planned actions.

Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible Unit	Timeframe	Completed Actions (progress update)	Comment (for tracking)
<p>Recommendation 1: IUCN should immediately present a proposal to Norad for using the funds unspent by IUCN ORO to secure the full handover of project initiatives to national governments and dissemination in the Pacific of project documents and results.</p>	<p>Accepted.</p>	<p>Request a no-cost extension form Norad by March 2023 In collaboration between ORO and HQ develop an action plan to address dissemination by March 2023</p>		<p>Project Manager HQ, ORO – Regional Programme Coordinator</p>	<p>End of July 2023</p>	<p>Fully achieved No cost Extension approved by Norad In Oceania, IUCN has contracted a consultant to address this / anticipated to complete activity by end of July</p>	
<p>Recommendation 2: Based on the different performance of the project management in the Caribbean and in the Pacific, and the closing down of possibilities for travelling during a pandemic, IUCN should strive to secure adequate and local project representation in each of the target countries.</p>	<p>Partially accepted. A challenge with output-based budgeting is that costs are developed on delivering specific outputs. Including full time coordination costs for year-round support can increase project costs substantially, as it usually requires extra headcounts</p>	<p>Future Projects in development include specific budget line for local project representation</p>	<p>Future projects will endeavour to budget costs for staffing and support for full time representation. In Oceania, IUCN has a track record of installing “project liaison officers” in countries without IUCN offices. This can be applied in future projects.</p>	<p>HQ and – Regional Programme Coordinators responsible for Proposal development.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Partially achieved Budget to cover regional staffing for future projects has been included in budget development</p>	
<p>Recommendation 3: IUCN should carefully study how it could integrate a small grant scheme in similar projects.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>For Phase 2 of the PWFI Caribbean Project: The development/ implementation of a sustainable small grant community-based action program to promote sustainable livelihood activities across the plastic life cycle is already contemplated within phase two of the project in the Caribbean: “Closing the Caribbean Plastic Tap”. (2024-2026) Additionally in the Caribbean, a small grant mechanism is integrated in the BIOPAMA programme and contemplated within scope of a national GEF-</p>	<p>Future projects will include a component for resource mobilization subject to donor acceptance and alignment to existing IUCN grant mechanisms to the extent practicable. ORO has several grant schemes that can be adapted including Kiwa and BIOPAMA which will be considered as a toll for future implementation</p>	<p>ORMACC– Regional Programme Manager for Project</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>This is an ongoing activity to be incorporated into future project development and in context with project goals.</p>

Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible Unit	Timeframe	Completed Actions (progress update)	Comment (for tracking)
		funded project “Strengthening access and benefit-sharing (ABS) policies and institutional frameworks through demonstrable models in Saint Lucia”.					
<p>Recommendation 4: In its strategic approach to plastic waste and leakage, IUCN should apply a more integrated approach that also supports improvement of systems for collecting and treating waste in SIDS.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted. Looking at Life cycle approach to Plastic waste management is essential and is part of IUCN intervention strategy and will continue. However, some elements such infrastructure costs for new landfills and supporting operational costs for treating waste will be outside IUCNs current mandate and need to be delivered by other partners.</p>	<p>To be considered in future project design where appropriate.</p>	<p>Team up with private sector organisations or other potential partners who can provide those services and functions in the project design phase.</p>	<p>IUCN Project development team</p>	<p>Variable depending on future Projects</p>	<p>Not started</p>	<p>This is a an ongoing activity to be incorporated into future project development into projects where appropriate to the goals.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: In similar projects, IUCN should include an adequate context analysis in project proposals which include key relevant data and information on the political situation, the private sector development, main ongoing projects and partners and general waste management information.</p>	<p>Accepted, and needs to be built into inception phases of proposals. However, it should be noted often proposal need to be developed at short notice and on specific donor requests for interventions in specific geographic reasons. In such situations a detailed situational analysis may not be possible and need to be conducted during the inception phase once approved.</p>	<p>For the Phase II in the Caribbean: A situational analysis of the five project countries is included in the “Closing the Caribbean Plastic Tap” proposal. The analysis includes relevant data and information on the legal and management framework, main ongoing projects/partners and general waste management information. (2022)</p>	<p>Formalise updated situation analysis as a key output of the inception phase of the project Determine if donors provide preparatory funds to prepare the project document</p>	<p>IUCN HQ- Project development Team ORMACC and ORO – Regional Programme Coordinator</p>	<p>Ongoing into future projects</p>	<p>Not started</p>	<p>This is an ongoing activity to be incorporated into future project development</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: In future projects with waste audit campaigns, IUCN should consider more</p>	<p>Accepted. However, often the challenges with Sids are with the lack of human capacity to take</p>	<p>In the Caribbean, this will be taken into consideration in phase 2 of the project. However, for the reasons</p>	<p>A practical step to address the issue of technical capacity is to build into training tools</p>	<p>ORMACC and ORO – Regional Programme Coordinator</p>	<p>Ongoing into future projects</p>	<p>Not started</p>	<p>This is an ongoing activity to be incorporated into future project development</p>

Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible Unit	Timeframe	Completed Actions (progress update)	Comment (for tracking)
closely solutions for capacitating local authorities to gradually decrease their dependency on external technical assistance for the implementation of national waste monitoring and management systems.	over those responsibilities and build that long term technical expertise. In countries with small populations local authorities often turn over frequently. They get jobs elsewhere, migrate, or move positions within government. This lack of stability means that external expertise is often the best solution.	stated above we also have a high risk of shifts in government staff which directly impacts knowledge transfer between governments and eventually affects sustainability. Engagement and activities that involve capacity building in government staff can be planned for early project implementation stages to partially mitigate the above. (2024-2025)	are programmes that can be used to onboard newly appointed staff in the project design				
Recommendation 8: IUCN should include in the ToR for plastic waste studies and audits the requirement of complete technical methodological reports, made available in open source together with the resulting data.	Accepted.	Develop a technical comparison of assessment methods publicly available to be shared with countries.	Future Tor will reflect such actions.	Ocean Team	Variable depending on future Projects	Not started	
Recommendation 9: IUCN should invest more efforts in communication and integration with national and regional stakeholders to operationalize existing cooperation channels and in making sure that stakeholders are kept abreast of project progress and findings.	Partially accepted due to the specific conditions in operation during the project implementation, engaging with stakeholders had to be adapted to prevailing conditions of COVID. A such, to have done more that achieved was a challenge. Under normal conditions IUCN engagement strategy would have been different,	For OWFI Phase II: An Advisory Committee (AC) that meets biannually and is composed by stakeholders from the fisheries, tourism and waste management sectors will be appointed by the Closing the Caribbean Plastic Tap project to provide strategic, guidance and support during implementation. AC meetings will be used to keep stakeholders abreast of the project's progress. The AC is also intended to ensure adherence with national priorities and requirements and	Use the no-cost extension to enhance stakeholder engagement where practical and integrate into future projects formally	IUCN ORO and ORMACC team leads	August 2023	Fully achieved	

Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Responsible Unit	Timeframe	Completed Actions (progress update)	Comment (for tracking)
		<p>stakeholder participation in key project meetings/workshops. (2023-2026)</p> <p>A communications strategy for the project will also be developed and implemented. (2023-2026)</p> <p>In Oceania, IUCN is in the process of contracting a consultant to address this recommendation / anticipated to complete activity by end of July 2023</p>					