

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Biodiversity Planning Specialist for assessment of coastal and marine habitats and species of critical global and regional significance in the Yellow Sea and drafting of YSLME Biodiversity Conservation Plan and a program of MPA Network

Consultancy:	National
Estimated start of work:	September 2017
Duty Station:	Home-based with commitment of a week-long travel

Background

UNDP/GEF is providing assistance through UNOPS to countries bordering Yellow Sea in support of their efforts to address among others the increasing trends of depleting fishery stocks, loss of coastal wetland, land and sea-based pollution and implementation of the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Strategic Action Programme (YSLME SAP) adopted by China and RO Korea with support of DPR Korea. One of the assistance programs to implement the SAP is the UNDP/GEF/UNOPS project entitled Implementing the Strategic Action Programme for the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem: Restoring Ecosystem Goods and Services and Consolidation of a Long-term Regional Environmental Governance Framework, or the UNDP/GEF YSLME Phase II Project. The project was launched in July 2017.

The objective of this regional project is to achieve adaptive ecosystem-based management of the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem bordered by China, RO Korea and DPR Korea by fostering long-term sustainable institutional, policy and financial arrangements for effective ecosystem-based management of the Yellow Sea in accordance with the YSLME SAP.

There are four components of the project:

1. Sustainable national and regional cooperation for ecosystem based management.
2. Improved Ecosystem Carrying Capacity with respect to provisioning services.
3. Improved Ecosystem Carrying Capacity with respect to regulating and cultural services.
4. Improved Ecosystem Carrying Capacity with respect to supporting services.

The key outcomes sought are:

1. Establishment of a self-sustaining cooperative mechanism for ecosystem-based management.
2. Recovery of depleted fish stocks and improved mariculture production and quality.
3. Improved ecosystem health;
4. improved inter-sectoral coordination and mainstreaming of ecosystem based management principles at the national level, maintenance of habitat areas, strengthened stakeholder participation in management and improved policy making.
5. Skills and capacity significantly developed for region-wide ecosystem-based management.

Component 4 addresses improving ecosystem carrying capacity with respect to supporting services. In Outcome 4.1 of Component 4 entitled “Maintenance of current habitats and the monitoring and mitigation of the impacts of reclamation”, the project will support a series of activities leading to the development and adoption of the YSLME Biodiversity Conservation Plan including the targets to ensure areas of critical habitats are kept at baseline level. Output 4.1.1 of Outcome 4.1 specifically seeks to arrive at an agreement at all levels to implement the relevant management actions to regulate new coastal zone reclamation project. As one of proposed activities, assessment of coastal and marine habitats, and species of critical global and regional significance can and should be used for habitat management, conservation, and restoration in the YS. Understanding of the distribution, abundance, and functions of coastal and marine habitats will also assist in coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP), particularly with effective siting, design, and monitoring of marine protected areas (MPAs). Further, understanding and predicting the effects of climate change and other anthropogenic impacts on ocean resources will require an increased emphasis on marine habitat.

In order to implement biodiversity conservation plan, one of the targets expected to be achieved during the YSLME Project Phase II, assessment of coastal and marine habitats in the YS should be carried out by focusing on 23 Potential Priority Areas (PPAs) with collection of findings on distribution of endangered and threatened marine organisms, spawning, nursery and feeding grounds, cold water mass (CWM), and endangered migratory waterbirds. Since the Project Phase I, the coastal and marine ecosystems and ecosystem services have already been greatly changed and are still facing threats. Findings from assessment of coastal and marine habitats and critical species in the YS will contribute to the understanding of current status of ecosystems in the YS by providing guidance for regional biodiversity conservation plan in this region and development of the YSLME MPA Network. In this context, the project plans a consultancy for assessment of coastal and marine habitats and critical species with following terms of Reference.

Objectives

The objective underlying the proposed consultancy is to enhance resilience of YSLME biodiversity and ecosystems by strengthening the coverage and connectivity of MPAs and reduce the loss of coastal and marine habitats and species of critical global and regional significance in support of achieving SDG 14 and implementing CBD, RAMSAR and other relevant Conventions.

Expected Outputs

The consultant is expected to deliver the following results:

- A draft framework plan for YSLME Biodiversity Conservation in the Yellow Sea
- A proposal for an YSLME management-based MPA Network

Activities

The consultant under supervision of the Chief Technical Advisor and in close collaboration with the local project team, will:

Output 1: A draft framework plan for YSLME Biodiversity Conservation in the Yellow Sea

1. Conduct desk review to assess the status and trends of threats, stresses and underlying causes (drivers) using existing information on biological (e.g., distribution of endangered and threatened marine organisms, spawning, nursery and feeding grounds, endangered migratory water-birds, and etc.), physical factors (e.g., climate change, CWM, etc.), policy (reclamation, urbanization, marine economic development, etc) affecting coastal and marine ecosystems as contained in the NBSAPs, CBD country reports, RAMSAR reports in China, RO Korea and DPR Korea to the extent possible;
2. Analyze constraints, opportunities, threats, issues, problems and capacity needs and identify solutions (management tools such as MPA network, research and monitoring, education, spatial planning and awareness raising, regulatory tools ranging from regulations and permits to enforcement) through consultation with stakeholders and interest groups;
3. Prepare the draft framework YSLME Biodiversity Conservation Plan (2018-2020) and submit it for consultation and review by members of the Regional Working Group on Habitat of the YSLME Phase II Project;
4. Develop explicit goals, time-bound targets and actions in line with the proposed solutions to assist the bordering countries of YSLME to implement provisions of the CBD, Ramsar and other conventions at a regional approach;
5. Facilitate the conduct of a Biodiversity Conservation Planning Workshop to be conducted in November 7-10 in Rudong China for consultation, validation and refinement on different elements of a conservation plan with different stakeholders;
6. Incorporate comments and submit a final draft YSLME Biodiversity Conservation Plan (2018-2020) in hard copy (in English) and electronically.

Output 2: A proposal for an YSLME management-based MPA Network to be established on the basis of agreed selection criteria, areas of connectivity, common goals and objectives, cross management strategies applicable to all MPAs in the network, sustainability and lessons learnt in similar networks;

1. Review MPA network of China, RO Korea and DPR Korea, to the extent possible, in YSLME;
2. Using EBSA criteria to assess the relevance of the key biodiversity areas of YSLME in particular 23 Potential Priority Areas (PPAs) of the WWF YSLME ecoregion project, to identify and/or confirm the key conservation focus of biodiversity in the region. Special considerations should be given to the following categories: 1) habitat type and area (i.e. characterization and delineation of habitats); 2) ecological value of habitat (i.e. habitat-specific species abundance, growth, mortality, reproduction and production) and the functional relationships within and among habitats; and 3) habitat status or condition;
3. Identify areas of connectivity among the existing MPAs in the three countries in particular the 23 PPAs;

4. Using the criteria for selection of MPAs for networking, taking into account of both social and cultural context as well as assessment results, propose a network of MPAs at regional level for improved management effectiveness;
5. In order to achieve consistency and coordination to enhance management effectiveness on a larger ecosystem-based spatial scales of the proposed MPA network, propose program areas (such as research and monitoring, education and awareness building) and regulatory tools (regulations, permits, enforcement, ICM plan, etc) as areas of collaboration and coordination;
6. Consolidate the assessment results into a concrete proposal for strengthening the YSLME MPA Network;
7. Present the proposal at the YSLME Biodiversity Conservation Planning Workshop to be held on Nov 7-20, in Rudong, Jiangsu of China, and facilitate a discussion on proposal;
8. Taking into account the comments from the workshop, revise and develop the proposal into a program for the YSLME MPA Network review by RWG-H and Project Management Office.

Inputs

UNDP/GEF YSLME Phase II Project management Office (PMO) will provide the background information and documents, and will be responsible for providing financial support and the logistics support to participation in the Biodiversity Conservation Planning Workshop by the PMO.

Timing

The consultancy will begin in mid-September 2017 and complete in 31 December 2017.

Reporting

The consultant will produce the following reports within the specified timeframe:

- By September 30, submit a draft framework plan for YSLME biodiversity conservation (2018-2020);
- By October 16, submit the working document of the YSLME Biodiversity Conservation plan (2018-2020);
- By October 30, submit a draft proposal for strengthening the YSLME MPA Network;
- By November 30, submit the final YSLME Biodiversity Conservation Plan (2018-2020);
- By December 15, submit the Program of YSLME MPA Network

The consultant can submit reports electronically to the PMO. All reports should be submitted in English.

Competencies

- A good understanding of development and biodiversity contexts of North East Asia
- Advanced university education at MSc or Ph.D. level with expertise in the area of biology, marine sciences or natural resource management

- At least 7 years of professional experience in coastal and marine ecosystems
- Strong skills in analysis and evaluation, and experience in implementing environmental projects
- Ability to produce high quality reports, publications in English
- Previous experience with GEF projects and environmental planning is an added plus

Payment and Submission

The consultant will be paid for a lump sum of USD 16,000 for consultancy upon submission of the report to Mr. Yinfeng Guo, CTA/Manager at email: yinfengg@unops.org. Costs for participation in the YSLME Biodiversity Planning Workshop will be covered by separate project budget.