

Sustainable management of marine biodiversity through capacity development

Management of Natural Resources



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Background

The current of plenty: The Benguela current large marine ecosystem

The Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME) is situated in the southeast Atlantic,

stretching along the coast of southern Angola, the entire Namibian coast and the west and southern coasts of South Africa as far as Port Elizabeth in the east. It is one of the most productive ocean regions in the world with unique and abundant biodiversity.

Sharing is caring: The Benguela Current Convention

In recognition of their exceptional trans-boundary natural capital, the governments of Angola, Namibia and South Africa founded the Benguela Current Commission in 2007 to promote the trilateral management of the shared ecosystem. The three member states recognised the need to take cooperative action under the Commission in order to achieve ecosystem-based management and governance of the BCLME's marine biodiversity and natural resources. The aim is to realise a holistic vision that best enhances the socio-economic development potential of their ecologically unique ocean space so that tangible and lasting benefits are provided to



Marine Spatial Planning provides guidance to the sustainable use of the ocean by all sectors for a sustainable growth of a Blue Economy.

all industries and the countries' societies. With ratification of the Benguela Current Convention (BCC) by the three countries in 2015, the Commission is now empowered and institutionalised as the regional organisation responsible for implementing the intergovernmental agreements for the conservation and sustainable use of the BCLME.

Cooperation for sustainable ocean development: The MARISMA project

The MARISMA project is a partnership between the BCC, its contracting states Angola, Namibia and South Africa and the government of Germany in pursuit of the sustainable development of the BCLME. Unlocking the BCLME's economic potential for sustainable growth is essential to achieving the regional development goals. The cooperation project therefore supports the BCC and its contracting states in maximising socio-economic benefits whilst ensuring the safeguarding of the marine ecosystem's health and services provision.

Our Approach

MARISMA: Enabling sustainable ocean use

The project's approach to enable sustainable ocean use in the BCLME focuses on imple-

menting "Marine Spatial Planning" (MSP). MSP is a decision-making process that guides where and when human activities occur in the ocean. Making sure the correct activity takes place in the right place helps the region's ocean economy to grow sustainably – benefitting humans and the environment alike. MSP helps sectoral decision-makers to plan in a more complementary way. It reveals spatial conflicts and synergies between uses, and it encourages the shared use of marine areas to benefit as many industries as possible.

MSP is an integrative process that engages a wide range of stakeholders. Government, industry, NGOs and communities cooperate in working towards an agreed marine spatial plan that is supported by as many stakeholders as possible and implemented by public authorities.

Key Milestones

1. Implementing and institutionalising MSP

MARISMA supports the development of a common understanding of MSP, its implications and benefits. Regional and national MSP frameworks guide implementation of MSP in the BCLME. Current Status Reports have been finalised for each country to establish the knowledge baseline for developing a marine plan.

"The process of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is new and just a few years ago was completely unknown in the region. Today, thanks to the ongoing support of the MARISMA project, the contracting parties of the Benguela Current Convention, Angola, Namibia and South Africa, are globally acclaimed for their progress in using MSP to enhance their Blue Economy. We are proud to have come so far and look forward to continuing this successful partnership."

Thandiwe GXABA, Acting Executive Secretary of the Benguela Current Convention

Photo left: Conservation and sustainable use are closely linked in the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem.

Photo right: The ecosystem stretches along the coast of Southern Angola, the entire Namibian coast and the West and Southern coast of South Africa.



The project applies a “learning-by-doing” approach that comprises multi-level interventions. Thereby providing concrete learning opportunities and experiences through the practical implementation of MSP at sub-national scales. Based on the analysis and mapping of the current and potential future spatial and temporal distribution of human activities, marine spatial management plans are being developed in priority ocean areas. These draft plans are close to completion.

The learning output of this “prototype/pilot planning exercise” is linked with the development of an enabling governance environment at national and regional levels. MSP legislation has been passed by Parliament in South Africa and endorsed by the President. In Angola a Presidential decree institutionalises MSP. In Namibia MSP is prioritised in its National Development Plan 5. A regional MSP strategy to ensure coherence in trans-boundary planning has been adopted by the three countries at BCC level.

2. Where are the ecologically special ocean spaces?

The project has supported the BCC contracting states in identifying and updating descriptions of its “Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs)”. In total 16 EBSAs have been reviewed and improved and 12 new EBSAs described. EBSAs are those areas of the BCLME that have special ecological properties and may require enhanced risk aversion in the management of human activities. The descrip-

tion of the BCLME’s EBSAs and assessment of their status is an important layer of information in the development and implementation of MSP.

The development of marine plans in priority ocean areas are linked to and coincide spatially with the identified EBSAs. This will enable the countries to move EBSAs from scientific information to management – or: “from maps to action”.

3. Developing capacities, enhancing awareness and enabling learning and collaboration

As elements crosscutting the MSP and EBSA activities, MARISMA is:

- Implementing a regional capacity development strategy that ensures all EBSA and MSP activities are designed in a way that capacities are enhanced and developed, and existing competencies are used.
- Implementing a strategy for communication and public awareness raising to increase appreciation of the benefits that come with MSP.
- Identifying lessons learned and enabling the sharing of knowledge about successes and potential pitfalls across the region and globally.

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