

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
ENABLING ACTIVITY PROPOSAL

Country:	The Federal Republic of the Comoros
Project Title:	Comoros' National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, and Country Report to the COP
GEF Focal Area:	Biodiversity
Country Eligibility:	Convention ratified on 29 September 1994
GEF Financing:	US \$131,760
Government Contribution:	In kind
GEF Implementing Agency:	UNDP
National Executing Agency:	Government of the Comoros, Directorate General of the Environment (DGE)
GEF Operational Focal Point:	Directorate General of the Environment
CBD Operational Focal Point:	Directorate General of the Environment
Estimated Starting Date:	July 1997
Project Duration:	9 months

Background

The Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros is situated in the Indian Ocean, along the Mozambique Channel, between Mozambique and Madagascar. The country comprises three main islands of volcanic origin: Grand Comoros, Anjouan, and Moheli, but the archipelago of Comoros has a fourth island, Mayotte, which is still under French administration. The country has a land area of 1,659km². Its population, which is growing at the rate of 2.7% per annum, was estimated at around 550,000 in 1994. Comoros is among the most densely populated and least developed countries in the world with an annual per capita income of \$301. Natural resources are the basis of the economy of the country, which is particularly made of agriculture and tourism. Also maritime fisheries constitute one of the largest industries of the country. Export earnings depend largely on the production of vanilla, cloves, copra, and essential oils from ylang-ylang.

The Comoros have strong biogeographic affinities with Madagascar. Originally most of the islands were completely forested, particularly with lowland forests. Now some patches of forests survive on the islands of the archipelago. Grand Comoros still has forests and heath on the mountain slopes, and mangroves, scrub and baobabs in the lowlands. Montane forest survives on Moheli, but very little on Anjouan. On Anjouan (as well as Mayotte) very little natural vegetation survives, except on old lava flows and cinder cones, where herbaceous vegetation is sparsely distributed across the islands of the country (IUCN 1990). Littoral

and marine ecosystems contain diversified biota and habitats, consisting of mangroves, coral reefs, and algae and seagrass beds.

The Comoros have some of the least studied but most threatened biota of the Indian Ocean. There occur at least 935 vascular plant species, of which 416 are indigenous with at least 136 endemic (IUCN 1990). At least 3 fruit bat species occur, including the endemic Comoros fruit bat, *Pteropus livingstoni*, and *Rouettus obliviosus*. Four threatened bird species are endemic to Mount Karthala on Grand Comoros Island. Two species of marine turtle breed on the islands, as an example about 1,850 green turtles nest each year on Moheli. Also 16 species of freshwater fishes occur in Comoros, with a diversified, but little monitored, coral reef fauna. The coelacanth occurs only in Comoran coastal waters, which is threatened by a heavy trade to museums across the globe. Two threatened butterfly species occur in Comoros, and these may depend for survival on the fate of the forest on Mount Karthala.

Threats to biodiversity in Comoros come from compounded factors related to poor conservation measures, particularly for the forests and the coral reefs. These include human encroachments for agriculture and settlements, soil erosion, increased siltation in the waters, and excavation of reefs for building materials. Other threats come from unregulated trade of wild fauna and flora, particularly geckoes and coelacanth.

The government of Comoros started in 1990 to address environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity. UNDP, UNESCO, and IUCN assisted the country in developing a national environmental policy (PNE) and the determination in 1993 of priorities for an environmental action plan. PNE has established the country's commitment to assure conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, in general, and biodiversity resources in particular. PNE aims at reinforcing sectoral policies, and a national strategy to implement the PNE has been developed into an Environmental Action Plan (PAE), particularly to increase knowledge about the natural heritage of the country, to create a decentralized public sector, to train technical specialist, and to ensure a concerted management of this heritage. A joint UNDP-GEF and Capacity 21 project has been designed to implement the biodiversity conservation and sustainable use provisions of the PAE (UNDP 1997). An essential output of the project, which is due to start early 1997, will be the establishment of a network of protected areas in Comoros, including a national park at Mount Karthala on Grand Comoros Island. Also several legal, scientific, and educational initiatives have recently been launched in the country. As an example, campaigns to raise awareness and to involve villagers in environmental and biodiversity conservation endeavors have been initiated with several international NGOs and donor organizations.

Two ministries are responsible for the management of biological resources in the country. These are: (a) the Ministry of Agricultural Production, Maritime Resources and the Environment (MPARME); (b) the Ministry of Tourism (MT). In the MPARME, a Directorate General of Agriculture oversees fisheries and agriculture, and the Directorate General of the Environment (DGE) oversees wildlife, conservation, and the environment in general. The DGE is in charge of the PAE, and it has initiated the formulation of the

forthcoming joint UNDP-GEF and Capacity 21 biodiversity project. Also the DGE is the country's designated GEF operational focal point. On 31 January 1997, DGE requested assistance to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through UNDP to formulate Comoros' national biodiversity strategy and action plan (BSAP) and to draft the first Country Report to the Conference of Parties (COP).

Project Objectives and Short Description

The principal objective of this enabling activity is to assist Comoros in preparing a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP). The BSAP will define the current status of, pressures on, options for, and priority actions to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, and equitable share of its biological diversity. The project will build on the existing knowledge base to elaborate the BSAP through a process of participatory planning and stakeholder consultation. This will also enable Comoros to meet its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by preparing its first country report to the Conference of Parties (COP). The project will run in parallel with the joint GEF-UNDP-Capacity 21 initiative to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity resources in the Comoros. The two initiatives will reinforce each other.

The Government of Comoros will initially appoint a steering committee to supervise the BSAP process and provide overall direction and policy guidance. Members of the steering committee will be drawn, as a representative sample, from the full range of concerned biodiversity stakeholders. These will include representatives from the public sector (government and public institutions), the private sector (NGOs and local communities) and the donor community. Under supervision of the steering committee, a planning team will undertake the work of the enabling activity. Planning team members will be selected according to their biodiversity and planning expertise. Additional planning team members will be drawn to represent, on the one hand, decision and law makers, and on the other hand, biodiversity resource users.

The BSAP process will also draw from different sectors of the society. It will include the organization of 2 national and 3 regional workshops. Workshops will be attended by representatives from various ministries, public institutions, private sector, NGOs, tribal leaders, local communities, and the donor community. Also interest groups and biodiversity stakeholders will participate in the BSAP process, particularly during the national and regional workshops. The BSAP process will build on on-going national environmental awareness campaigns particularly to identify issues, priorities, and alternative strategies needed to meet these issues. Regional workshops will be organized for each of the 3 main islands of the country.

The planning team will be assisted by one lead national consultant, 3 national consultants, and 2 international consultants, one specialist of marine biology, and the other on Comoros terrestrial ecology. The lead national consultant will coordinate and facilitate project activities. With the help of the national and international consultants, the lead national consultant will run the two national workshops. Each international consultant will assist the planning team and the national consultants in stocktaking for respectively marine and

terrestrial ecology. Also the two international consultants will provide assistance in familiarizing the planning team in biodiversity planning, framing key strategies, drafting the BSAP and facilitating participation by all relevant biodiversity resources' stakeholders.

The planning team and consultants will initially undertake a review of WRI/IUCN/UNEP guidelines (Miller and Lanou 1995) for the preparation of national biodiversity strategy and action plan. They will then compile and summarize existing information on the status of, and threats to the nation's biodiversity. This information, along with summaries of the PAE, and other donor financed natural resource activities in Comoros, will be presented at the first national workshop.

With support from national and international consultants, the planning team will conduct the first national workshop, which will draw together the full range of actors and stakeholders relevant to biodiversity and the donor community. The workshop participants will analyze the results of the stocktaking and inventory to select objectives, identify key issues and options as well as actors and priority areas for review. In conjunction with the first national workshop and with the help of the lead national consultant, the international consultants will provide familiarization sessions in participatory methods, biodiversity analysis, strategic planning techniques and dissemination techniques to the planning team, particularly to the national consultants.

Following the first national workshop, a detailed analysis of the issues and options will be carried out during regional workshops, which will involve representatives from local communities and institutions, private sector, biodiversity stakeholders, and local government agencies. Regional workshops will develop regional strategies for each island.

The results of the national analysis and regional strategies will then be drawn together by the planning team assisted by the consultants, and a draft BSAP will be prepared with the assistance of the national and international consultants. A second national workshop will invite comment on the initial analysis and draft BSAP. New alternatives and options will be identified and developed to seek consensus among the stakeholders prior to the finalization of the details of the BSAP.

Upon approval by the project steering committee and the Government of Comoros, the BSAP will be disseminated widely within Comoros and a country report to the COP of the biodiversity convention will be prepared by the planning team. Because the First Country Report will not be available until March 1998, in November 1997 the planning team will draft an interim report that the Government of Comoros will present by the COP's deadline for reporting of December 1997.

Coverage Without Duplication

The BSAP will enhance dialogue and consultation among Government ministries on biodiversity issues, and it will build on existing legislation to ensure biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Also the BSAP will build on existing data to be compiled by national and international consultants under the guidance of the planning team.

Stocktaking activities will be undertaken, as there is need to synthesize the existing information from biodiversity related projects and to repatriate data from abroad, primarily from France. BSAP will fit and benefit from other past and ongoing activities, including donor funded projects, and the DGE within the Ministry of Agricultural Production, Maritime Resources and the Environment (MPARME) along with the BSAP Steering Committee will ensure that there is no duplication of efforts.

Time Plan and Sequencing

The project will follow the sequence of activities recommended in the WRI/IUCN/UNEP Guidelines, with variations as appropriate, based on lessons learned from early country experiences around the world (Miller and Lanou 1995). Activities will start in July 1997 and will last for 9 months.

Activity / Month									
Establishment of steering committee and planning team	x								
Stocktaking, inventory of information (digest)	x	x							
Training (familiarization) of planning team			x						
First national workshop			x						
Identification and analysis of options and 3 regional workshops				x	x	x			
Preparation of biodiversity strategy, action plan							x		
Second National Workshop								x	
Adoption of BSAP by the Government and dissemination									x
Preparation of interim report and submission to COP					x	x			
Preparation of first country report									x

Best Practice

The project will follow methodology recommended in the IUCN's "Guide to the Convention on Biological diversity" (Glowka, et al. 1994) and the WRI/IUCN/UNEP's "Guidelines for Preparing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans" (Miller and Lanou 1995). The BSAP will prepare the grounds and identify priority needs of activities in the fields of biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, and benefit sharing to be undertaken by follow up projects. All nine criteria for best practices will be addressed. The project will enforce the development of participatory approaches in Comoros, by incorporating inputs from all interested sectors of the society and practicing a decentralized multi-sectoral approach to mitigating biodiversity issues.

Project Financing

	Product	Process	Total
<i>Stocktaking and Inventory of Information</i>	7,000		7,000
- national consultants	2,000		2,000
- international consultants	3,000		3,000
- documentation, misc.	2,000		2,000
<i>Identification and Analysis of Options</i>	11,500	50,500	62,000
- national consultants	3,500	3,500	7,000
- international consultants	8,000	11,000	19,000
- first national workshop		14,000	14,000
- training (familiarization)		1,000	1,000
- regional workshops (3)		18,000	18,000
- travel and miscellaneous		3,000	3,000
<i>Preparation of Strategy and Action Plan</i>	12,500	32,500	45,000
- national consultants	3,000	4,000	7,000
- international consultants	8,000	9,000	17,000
- second national workshop		14,000	14,000
- travel and miscellaneous		3,000	3,000
- publication and dissemination	1,500	2,500	4,000
- <i>First National Report</i>	4,000	4,000	8,000
- preparation of interim report	1,500		1,500
- preparation of first country report	1,500	2,000	3,500
- publication of first country report	1,000		1,000
- dissemination and miscellaneous		2,000	2,000
<i>Coordination and Management Costs (8%)</i>	2,800	6,960	9,760
Total For Enabling Activity	37,800	93,960	131,760

Deviations from Criteria and Norms

The project does not deviate from GEF enabling activity criteria and norms.

Institutional Framework and Project Implementation

The project will be executed by the DGE with support from UNDP's country office. Under the guidance of the multi-sectoral Steering Committee, an inter-agency planning team will manage project activities with the assistance of national and international consultants. During its early meetings the Steering Committee will agree on a preliminary country's biodiversity vision, as well as on methodologies and indicators for assessing progress and performance.

The first country report will be prepared following the guidance provided by the Conference of the Parties in November 1996 and in the guidelines by Miller and Lanou (1995). The report will be developed in consultation with diverse governmental and non-governmental agencies, including both the private sector and community representatives. The report and the BSAP will be disseminated widely upon completion.

Activity Matrix

Commitment	Enabling Activity	Output	Capacity Building		Public Participat.	Comments
			Inst. Strength	Training		
	<i>Stocktaking and Assessment, based on Existing Information</i>					
	- biodiversity & biological resources	x				1
	- cross-sectoral issues	x				1
	- policy and regulatory framework	x				1
	- institutional and human capacity	x				1
	- analysis of root causes of BD loss	x				1
	- technologies for conservation and sustainable use	x				1
	- activities with adverse impacts	x				1
	- existing measures and programmes	x				1
	- preliminary statement of objectives	x				1
	- identification of gaps	x				1
	- assessment of existing needs					
	<i>Identification and Analysis of Options to Meet the Objectives of the CBD</i>					
	- strategies for conservation	x	x	x	x	2
	- strategies for sustainable use	x	x	x	x	2
	- strategies for benefit sharing	x	x	x	x	2
	<i>Planning and Preparation of a Strategy and Plan</i>					
	- national strategy	x	x	x	x	3
	- national action plan	x	x	x	x	3
	<i>Preparation of the first National Report</i>					
	- interim report to COP	x				
	- first national report	x			x	

Notes on the Activity Matrix

1. The BSAP stocktaking will build on the base of information which exists as a result of initiatives and projects by CNDRS (Centre National de Documentation et de la Recherche Scientifique), Coelacanth Conservation Council (CCC), Smith Institute of Ichthyology (SII), Max Plank Institut fur Verhaltensphysiologie (MPIV), JWPT, Fauna and Flora Preservation Society (FFPS), IUCN, GEF/UNDP, and UNDP Capacity 21. However, existing information needs to be summarized and reorganized to fit into BSAP process. Some significant conservation and development projects related to biodiversity resources include:

- (a) the CNDRS joint program for coelacanth conservation with CCC, SII, and MPIV;
- (b) the JWPT projects on recovery and captive breeding for the Comoros fruit bats;
- (c) the FFPS endeavors to assess status of Comoros fruit bats, mongoose, lemur, and Grand Comoros scops owl.

(d) the joint GEF UNDP-Capacity 21 project on conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development in the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros; and

(e) the Environmental Action Plan (PAE) and the National Environmental Policy (PNE).

2. This project will build on and share structures and manpower with the joint GEF-UNDP-Capacity 21 biodiversity conservation and sustainable use project which will run in parallel. DGE will coordinate both efforts and will ensure that there is no duplication.
3. The BSAP will effectively complement and enhance the provisions from existing plans and strategies. There will be no duplication as the DGE will ensure integration of the above mentioned programmes and other existing plans, such as PAE, into the BSAP process.

References

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**REPUBLIQUE FEDERALE ISLAMIQUE
DES COMORES**

Moroni, le 31 Janvier 1997

**MINISTERE DE LA PRODUCTION AGRICOLE, DES
RESSOURCES MARINES ET DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT**

DIRECTION GENERAL DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Le Directeur,

**B.P. 41
Moroni-Comores**

Fax : (269) 73.13.57

Réf: 96/ 007 /MPARME/D.G.E

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**Monsieur Dr. Trinto Mugangu
UNDP/GEF Coordination**

Fax : (212) 906 6362

Objet : Assistance du FEM en vue de la préparation du rapport national sur la diversité biologique.

Monsieur,

Je voudrais attirer votre attention sur la difficulté pour la République Fédérale Islamique des Comores, pays en développement, à faire efficacement face aux engagements souscrits, aux termes de la convention sur la Diversité Biologique, à laquelle elle est partie depuis Octobre 1994.

Soucieux de préserver ses richesses naturelles et convaincu que leur gestion rationnelle conditionne la réussite de toutes les autres interventions sectorielles, le Gouvernement de la République Fédérale Islamique des Comores souhaiterait bénéficier de l'assistance du P.B.M. pour élaborer le rapport national et pour préparer les stratégies, programmes et plans d'action en vue de la conservation et l'utilisation durable de la Diversité Biologique.

Comptant sur votre précieuse collaboration, Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, les assurances de ma considération distinguée.

c.c: .. PNUD Moroni
.. MSALAU A.
.. Régional Coordinator
.. UNDP/GEF New York.

Le Point Focal National du FEM
ABOULHOU DA YOUSEUF