

a:varinat 14.Jan 97

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
ENABLING ACTIVITY PROPOSAL

Country: Vanuatu

Project Title: National Biodiversity Strategy, Action Plan and First National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity

GEF Focal Area: Biodiversity

Country Eligibility: Ratified the CBD on 25 March 1993

GEF Financing: US\$ 207,360

Government Contribution: In kind and personnel

Estimated Total Budget: US\$ 207,360

GEF Implementing Agency: UNEP

National Executing Agency: Environment Unit (Ministry for Home Affairs) and Department of Forests (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forests & Fisheries - MALFF)

GEF Operational Focal Point:

CBD Focal Point: Environment Unit

Estimated Starting Date: February 1997

Project Duration: 18 months

I. Background/Context:

The Republic of Vanuatu is located in the Western Pacific Ocean. It is an archipelago of over 80 islands stretching 1,300 km from north to south with a combined land area of 12,190 sq.km. and a population of 154,000 (1992). The climate gradually changes from the tropical in the North to the sub-tropical in the South. Vanuatu is also uncommonly prone to natural disasters: volcanic activity, earthquakes, cyclones and the associated problems of land slides and tidal waves. With over 110 languages spoken, **Vanuatu has the highest ratio of languages to population in the world.** French and English are both widely spoken across the country. Bislama (Vanuatu pidgin, mainly derived from English) is the lingua franca.

Vanuatu is a geologically young country that has had neither the time nor land to develop the wide range of terrestrial species or subspecies found in neighbouring countries such as New Caledonia or the Solomon Islands. However, there is evidence that colonisation by plant and bird species, and sub-speciation are in process, both between islands and within islands. These processes are of scientific interest. **Little is known about the full range of plants and animals in Vanuatu.** Specialist studies invariably identify previously undescribed species, but **the wildlife and plants (other than trees) of many islands have never been surveyed in detail.** Consequently the species counts listed represent a minimum number of species present. The few plant and animal families that have been subjected to detailed study (orchids, palms, lizards, flying foxes) often demonstrate a significant number of endemic species.

Approximately 9000 sq. km. of Vanuatu, about 74% of total land area, is under natural vegetation. Since Vanuatu is geologically young and because of its isolation, forest ecosystems in Vanuatu are not as diverse as those found in other Pacific Asian countries. The vegetation structure has been influenced by volcanic activities, cyclones and by centuries of human interaction with the environment. Just over one third of the country is forested, with thicket formations approximately matching the forest cover. Forest types in Vanuatu have been described as: 1) lowland rainforest 2) semi-deciduous forest, 3) montane and cloud forests, 4) riverine and swamp forest 5) mangrove forest. Although the forest ecosystems are not as diverse as neighbouring countries, from an ecological standpoint several of the islands of Vanuatu are of conservation importance for Oceania as a region. Forests in Vanuatu are an important part of agriculture, housing, energy, medicine and the production of a wide range of material goods.

Vanuatu's Exclusive Economic Zone covers an area of sea 60 times larger than the country's land area. Comprising inter-tidal mangrove communities, sea-grasses, lagoons, coral reefs and open ocean, the marine resource is one of the most valuable to ni-Vanuatu (as the people of Vanuatu are known). With the migration to coastal areas there has been an increased reliance on reef fisheries for protein in the subsistence diet. More recently, reef fisheries have become an important source of cash income to village communities through marketing of shells, crustacea and fish from the outer reef slopes. In some coastal areas, the decline in shellfish and other marine resources can be attributed to habitat degradation. More commonly a decline in shell fish and other marine resources is due to over harvesting.

In general, Vanuatu's environment is relatively undisturbed, due to low population densities, and the limited degree of development. **However, this is beginning to change with the high rate of population increase and the high proportion of the population engaged in slash-and-burn agriculture and subsistence reef fishing.** Further, the concentration of the population in coastal districts, coupled with a reduced fallow period in the slash-and-burn cycle, has led to soil erosion. Large-scale agricultural developments and increased pressure from logging are leading to environmental problems, principally accelerated by forest clearance, soil erosion through poor pasture management and increasingly heavy use of pesticides and herbicides.

Thirty-seven habitats have been listed for Vanuatu, including several forest types, scrub, marsh, grassland, volcanic desert, freshwater and littoral features and various reef formations. **With the exception of the fringe reefs and some forested areas, none of these is effectively protected.**

II. Project Objectives and Short Description:

The principal objective of the project is to assist the Government of Vanuatu (GoV) to formulate a national biodiversity strategy and action plan in fulfilment of Article 6 of the CBD as stipulated in Decision II/7 of the Conference of the Parties (COP 2), in order to define priority actions to conserve and sustainably use its biodiversity within the context of socio-economic development. The preparation of the first national report to the CBD will enable Vanuatu to meet the obligations under Article 26 of the Convention as stipulated in Decision II/17 of the COP. This report will be submitted to the Secretariat of the CBD within the time frame agreed upon at COP 3.

The enabling project will start by a stocktaking and assessment of existing information on the status of biodiversity using existing methodologies such as the UNEP Guidelines for preparation of biodiversity country studies. This stocktaking will be compiled by national consultants. The information gathered in this exercise will form the basis for discussions leading to the preparation of the NBSP by the rationalization of existing plans and strategies to establish an effective framework for the sustainable management of the biodiversity of Vanuatu within the overall context of the national socio-economic development of the country. The project will contribute significantly to the implementation of Articles 6 and 8 of the CBD as well as to laying the foundation for implementing Article 7 by adding to the effectiveness of policies and actions taken regarding developments adverse to sustainable utilization of biological resources in Vanuatu.

The process will be as participatory as possible. A multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral Task Force will be formed to co-ordinate the implementation of this project ensuring that public outreach is integrated in the process. A core Project Planning team of the Task Force made up of multi-disciplinary professionals from relevant government ministries, various concerned organizations including universities, NGOs etc. and consultants will be formed to carry out the activities under this project. An orientation session for the Project Planning Team and national consultants in biodiversity analysis and planning as well as in the use of the WRI/UNEP/IUCN Guidelines for biodiversity planning and other relevant documents will be conducted at the onset of the project.

Importance will be given to public awareness, sensitization and outreach activities to ensure that the views of all stakeholders including representatives of the different communities living in Vanuatu are taken into account. The project consultants and Task Force members will make use of the established public media, anthropological methods and other tested material to inform the communities on the importance of biodiversity and the objective of the project, and seek their views on the different options to meet the obligations of the CBD. This sensitization/consultation process will culminate in a first national workshop bringing together representatives of the different groups of stakeholders to identify and develop options and mechanisms to integrate biodiversity concerns in the national sustainable development activities. The workshop will be conducted by the planning team with assistance from national and international consultants. A national biodiversity strategy and action plan will then be developed by a team of national consultants assisted by international consultants, preferably from the region, under the close supervision of the planning team.

This NBSP will be based on the outputs and recommendations of the first national workshop and the different public outreach activities. A second national workshop will be convened bringing together government decision makers and other major groups representatives to adopt the NBSP.

Given the large marine dependence of Vanuatu, special attention will be accorded to coastal and marine biodiversity issues in the formulation of the NBSP. For this particular chapter, maximum use will be made of the existing information, capacity and networks developed by the South Pacific regional environment programme as well as the South Pacific biodiversity conservation programme.

III Operational Criteria:

i) Coverage without duplication:

The NBSAP will make use of existing capacity and information. The outputs, information and capacity generated by the various initiatives including that of the Vanuatu National Conservation Strategy, the Forest Resource Survey, the National Development Plan and the activities of NGOs such as IUCN, WWF, WCMC and Birdlife International will be utilized.

ii) Appropriate overall sequencing of activities:

The project will be conducted over a period of 18 months as reflected in the schedule shown in the following table.

	Activity/Month	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	17-18
1	Formation of Task force & Planning Team	x								
2	Training of Planning Team & Orientation of Consultants in BD Analysis & Planning	x								
3	Review of Existing Information		x	x						
4	Stakeholders sensitization/ consultations/public outreach			x	x					
5	First National Workshop					x				
6	Drafting of NBSAP					x	x			
7	Circulation of NBSAP for Comments							x		
8	Second National Workshop								x	
9	Finalization of NBSAP								x	x
10	Printing & Publication of NBSAP									x
11	Preparation of First National Report to COP*						x			

*-Because of the deadline of 1 January 1998 agreed upon at COP 3, an interim report will be submitted by that date. A final report will be prepared after completion of the BSAP.

iii) Best practice:

The methodology for the implementation of this project will be based on "Guidelines for preparation of biodiversity country studies" (UNEP 1993) and " Guidelines for Biodiversity Planning (WRI/UNEP/IUCN 1995). The lessons learned from other relevant projects and activities in Vanuatu will be fully utilized. The First National Report to the CBD will be based on the guidance provided in Decision II/17 of COP 2.

IV Institutional Framework:

The Environment Unit of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Department of Forests in the MALFF will be responsible for the execution of the proposal. Vanuatu became independent in 1980 and has strived to incorporate environmental concerns in national life from the beginning . In 1986 the Government established the Environment Unit, which was then under the Ministry of Natural Resources, with responsibilities to advise and provide information to the Government and people of Vanuatu on the environment and its related problems. In August 1995, following concerns for the status of Vanuatu's forests, MALFF established a Forest Conservation Unit within the Department of Forests. Within MALFF there are the Departments of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries who are also expected to coordinate the management of biological resources. A multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary **Task Force** comprising of representatives from relevant Government Ministries, Research and other institutions, Local Communities, NGOs and the Private sector will be established at the beginning to oversee the implementation of this project. A core Planning Team of this Task Force will be set up to co-ordinate the planning of all activities under the project.

V Project Financing**Project Budget (US\$) Vanuatu NBSAP**

Activity	Product	Process	Total
1. Assessment of Existing Information*	15,000		
- National consultants (4p/m)	10,000		
- Documentation and miscellaneous	5,000		
2. Identification and analysis of options	10,000	85,000	95,000
- Training for Planning Team		8,000	
- Public awareness/outreach activities			
- 1st National workshop (travel, per diem, facilities)		35,000	
- International Consultants (3p/m)		26,000	
- National Consultants (8p/m)	3,000	12,000	
- Reports	4,000	4,000	
- Miscellaneous	2,000		
	1,000		
3. Preparation of NBSAP			
- National Consultants (7p/m)	25,000	46,000	71,000
- International Consultants (2p/m)	6,000	8,000	
- 2nd National Workshop	4,000	6,000	
- Dissemination, Public awareness		25,000	
- Printing & Publication of the NBSAP report (in 3 languages)*		7,000	
- Miscellaneous (Task Force consultations, etc.)	12,000		
	3,000		
4. Preparation of First National Report			
- National Consultant (2p/m)	11,000		11,000
- Printing, Publication & Translation	4,000		
	7,000		
5. Co-ordination & Management Costs (8%)	5,000	10,360	15,360
Total	66,000	141,360	207,360

* Vanuatu has three official languages - Bislama, French and English; thus information will have to be made available in all three languages

VI Deviations from norms and criteria: None.

TABLE A: Dimensions of Enabling Activities (Standard Activity Matrix), Vanuatu

Enabling Activity	Out-put	Capacity Building		Public Participation *2	Comments (To see footnotes)
		Institutional Strengthening	Training *3		
Stocktaking of existing information	NCS, FRS, NDP, IUCN, WWF, WCMC, BirdLife International, x				1
Identification and Analysis of Options to Meet the Objectives of the CBD - strategies for conservation - strategies for sustainable use - strategies for benefit sharing	NCS, x x x	x x x	x x x	x x x	
Planning and Preparation of NBSAP - national strategy - national action plan	x x	x x	x x	x x	
Preparation of the First National Report - First National Report	x	x	x		

x Activity to be accomplished under this project.

1. Data gathered and experience gained during the preparation of the Vanuatu National Conservation Strategy (NCS), the Forest Resource Survey (FRS), the National Development Plan (NDP) and other relevant work in the country, especially those of visiting expeditions and groups of experts, regional and international NGOs (IUCN, WWF, WCMC, BirdLife International) will be of great value to this project
2. Public outreach will be an integral part of the project to ensure that the views of all major stakeholders in the country are taken into account. This will enhance the national authorship and ownership of the BSP.
3. A training session for the Project Planning Team in biodiversity analysis and planning as well as in the use of the WRI/UNEP/IUCN Guidelines will be conducted at the onset of the project.

GOUVERNEMENT
DE LA REPUBLIQUE
DE VANUATU

GOVERNMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF VANUATU



DEPARTEMENT DES
AFFAIRES ETRANGERES

DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

5 December 1996

O/Ref: DFA/14/24/0/sa

Mr Ahmed Djoghlaif
Executive Coordinator
UNEP/GEF Coordinator Office
Nairobi, KENYA

Fax: (2542) 520825

Dear Mr Djoghlaif

Subject: Revised Biodiversity project proposal - Vanuatu

Further to your fax of 29 October 1996 concerning the above mentioned-project, I am pleased to attach herewith a copy of the revised biodiversity project proposal for the development of a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and the First National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity for Vanuatu. The original copy is also being mailed to.

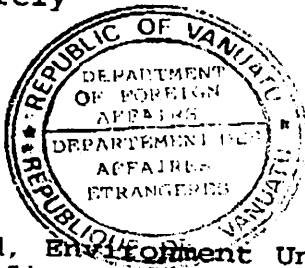
Please kindly note that the revised proposal was prepared based on your draft proposal and GEF format and criteria you forwarded to us on 29 October 1996.

I therefore officially pledge Vanuatu's endorsement of the said project and hereby submit it to your good office for your consideration and appropriate action.

Your approval and confirmation to us at your earliest will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely


for Jean SESE
Director



cc: The Head, Environment Unit, Attn: Mr R. Nari, Protected Areas Officer

UNEP
GEF UNIT
FAX MESSAGE RECEIVED 9611423

ACTION REQUIRED
NO YES

20 DEC 1996

WHAT
WHO *CS*
WHEN COMPLETED

CIRCULATE NO YES

FILE IN