

Abstract

The Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem Programme – Implementation of an Ecosystem Approach to Ocean Governance

By

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The BCLME Programme is a joint initiative by the governments of Angola, Namibia and South Africa to manage and utilize the resources of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem in a sustainable and integrated manner. The programme is designed to improve the structures and capacities of the three riparian countries to deal with transboundary management issues in order that the ecosystem can be managed as a whole. The area stretches from Cabinda Province in northern Angola to Port Elizabeth in South Africa and extends from high water mark to the edge of the exclusive economic zones.

The BCLME Programme is a five year programme sponsored by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) which commenced in 2002. It is multi-sectoral involving eight ministries with responsibilities for fisheries, the environment, minerals, mines and petroleum. The operational framework of the BCLME and its activities originated from a comprehensive stakeholders transboundary diagnostic analysis (TDA) which was then formulated into Strategic Action Programme (SAP). Key components of the SAP include joint surveys and assessment of shared fish stocks, harmonising monitoring and management procedures, socio-economic analysis of regional fisheries, assessment of cumulative impacts of seabed mining activities, development of an early warning system for extreme events, harmful algal blooms, oil pollution contingency planning, assessment of vulnerable species and habitats and marine biodiversity conservation. The development and building of capacity throughout the sectors and institutions is a primary objective of the BCLME Programme. Considerable progress has already been made in this area and on increasing awareness amongst scientists and managers on the application of an overall ecosystem approach to resource management and ocean governance..

During the last four years, BCLME has allocated over US\$ 6 million in support of 75 projects and activities in areas of fisheries, productivity, environmental variability, pollution, ecosystem health, socio-economics and governance. The projects are being implemented by a wide variety of clients, including government institutions, UN agencies, universities, private consultancy companies and the regional marine science programme BENEFIT.

One of the most complex and yet successful projects to date has been the development and implementation of an ecosystem approach for fisheries (EAF) management in the

BCLME. This is an on-going joint project with the fisheries institutes of the three countries and FAO that is investigating the existing issues, problems and needs related to EAF and developing different options to achieve sustainable management of the fisheries resources at an ecosystem level.

Building and establishing regional and international partnerships and co-operation has been an important part of the BCLME Programme activities. These include the four other Pan-African LME's (Canary Current, Guinea Current and Aghulas-Somali Current), as well as GOOS-AFRICA, FAO, NOAA, IOC, GLOBEC, BENEFIT and UNEP-GPA Regional Seas. The results of BCLME project activities are contributing directly towards addressing the goals and targets of the WSSD, UNCED, MDG as well as New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

The main out come of the BCLME Programme will be the establishment of an Interim Benguela Current Commission (IBCC) which is expected to be formally endorsed by the countries later this year. The IBCC will operate primarily as an advisory body to the governments and will have a Secretariat, an Ecosystem Advisory Committee and various working groups to undertake the technical and scientific assessments. Once operational, the IBCC will require period of institutional strengthening and capacity building before being transformed into a permanent and sustainable Benguela Current Commission (BCC).