



## 1. Project Data

<b>Project ID</b> P159653	<b>Project Name</b> Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project	
<b>Country</b> OECS Countries	<b>Practice Area(Lead)</b> Environment, Natural Resources & the Blue Economy	
<b>L/C/TF Number(s)</b> TF-A5428	<b>Closing Date (Original)</b> 31-Dec-2021	<b>Total Project Cost (USD)</b> 5,946,089.45
<b>Bank Approval Date</b> 25-Sep-2017	<b>Closing Date (Actual)</b> 31-Dec-2021	
	<b>IBRD/IDA (USD)</b>	<b>Grants (USD)</b>
Original Commitment	6,300,000.00	6,300,000.00
Revised Commitment	5,946,089.45	5,946,089.45
Actual	5,946,089.45	5,946,089.45

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## 2. Project Objectives and Components

### a. Objectives

According to the Grant agreement (p. 7), the project development objective of Caribbean Regional Oceanscape Project (P159653) (CROP) was “is to strengthen capacity for ocean governance and coastal and marine geospatial planning in the participating countries.”

For the purpose of the ICR Review, the project objective is parsed into two parts:



(i) strengthen capacity for ocean governance in the participating countries

(ii) strengthen capacity for coastal and marine geospatial planning in the participating countries

In addition, the project also contributes to achieving the GEF-6 International Waters (IW) focal area "to promote collective management for transboundary water systems and subsequent policy reforms for the sustainable use and maintenance of ecosystem services."

**b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?**

No

**c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?**

No

**d. Components**

The project had three components:

**Strengthening Ocean Governance** (Appraisal: US\$4m; Actual: US\$3.94m). This component aimed at achieving strengthened ocean governance by supporting more informed decision-making over sustainable management of ocean spaces at both national and regional levels. The component supported measures that (i) improve decision making, planning and regulatory efficiencies of coastal and marine spaces, (ii) reduce conflicts over multiple uses and (iii) preserve ecologically and economically valuable ecosystem and functions and services. The component supported the development of coastal and marine spatial plans and associated training and national ocean strategies and policies for participating countries absent of such strategy or policy, as well as enhanced alignment of Eastern Caribbean Regional Ocean Policy (ECROP) with the 2030 Development Agenda and Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs).

**Strengthening Knowledge and Capacity** (Appraisal: US\$1.99m; Actual: US\$1.71m). This component aimed at strengthening knowledge and capacity of public, private, and civil society sectors for ocean governance by improving access to ocean data and ocean education and enhancing partnerships. The component supported (i) the development and use of innovative tools that aggregate and analyze marine data for improved decision-making over ocean assets, (ii) enhancing aggregation of, and access to educational content concerning the oceans, primarily via virtual approaches, (iii) strengthen partnerships within public and private sectors, as well as international organizations in the blue economy space and raise public interest in the blue economy.

**Project Management, Monitoring and Assessment** (Appraisal: US\$0.31m; Actual: US\$0.30m). This component aimed at supporting implementation of the project, including compliance with OECS and World Bank guidelines, monitoring and evaluation and stakeholder involvement and coordination.

**e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates**

According to the PAD (p.16) partners supported CROP in parallel with a total of US\$13.9 million, in addition to GEF funding: The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in the amount of US\$4 million, Virtual Educa Foundation in



the amount of US\$7 million, and in-kind OECS Commission and participating countries' contributions amounting to US\$2.9 million. The contributions of partners were not confirmed in the ICR.

According to the ICR, there were no major changes made to project design, financing, or dates.

### 3. Relevance of Objectives

#### Rationale

#### Relevance to country context:

- **The OECS countries that are member countries of the WBG include Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.** The OECS countries are Small States with a combined population of approximately 625,000. Small size limits access to economies of scale, which in turn shapes the structure of the economy by limiting diversification and the composition of international trade, and increases exposure to volatility, natural disasters, and other shocks. Size also affects returns to scale in the public sector, which has implications for government capacity and the organization and financing of service delivery. Economic growth in the OECS has been volatile due to the concentration of activities in a few sectors, primarily tourism, and the impact of natural disaster shocks.
- **The OECS is heavily reliant on tourism, which accounts for 35 percent of GDP on average and provides more than half of all jobs.** As a result, economic performance is heavily influenced by developments in the tourism sector as well as the business cycles of the tourism source markets.
- **OECS countries are among the countries in the world that are most exposed to natural hazards in terms of GDP and population at risk.** The annual formation of tropical depressions, storms, and hurricanes, causing floods and landslides is associated with the greatest sources of damage and loss in the region. The region is also at significant risk of storm surges, earthquake, drought, and volcanic eruptions.
- **At the time of appraisal, the OECS countries had been trapped for years in low growth, high debt, and limited fiscal space, exacerbated by a number of external shocks.** The sluggish economic recovery from the Global Financial Crisis had implications for revenue performance, while OECS countries implemented fiscal stimulus packages that led to a surge in current expenditures. Structural fiscal problems, combined with external shocks, resulted in a sizable accumulation of debt in the region.
- **Economic growth in OECS had been coupled with overuse and exploitation of the ocean resources** (Patil, et al., 2016). Rapid growth in coastal development had negatively affected the natural barriers against tropical storms, contributed to soil erosion and coral reef degradation, increased marine and coastal pollution, as well as competition for space and resources. In addition, the region's fisheries were increasingly threatened by unsustainable fishing practices. These threats were compounded by the impacts of climate change and increased uncertainty, expected to increase the frequency of natural disasters. The unsustainable situation posed a threat to tourism and fisheries sectors, the most important for the region, and future economic growth. Recognizing the need for a well-coordinated national and regional response to this challenge, the OECS Heads



of Government approved the Eastern Caribbean Regional Ocean Policy (ECROP) and countries sought support from public, private and civil society organizations as well as the World Bank to help them transition to a blue economy. CROP was designed to support the realization of the shared OECS vision of more integrated ocean governance.

- **At the time of closing, economic activity in the region had contracted sharply in 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and recovery in 2021 was slow.** In addition to the health impact of COVID-19, the pandemic's socioeconomic impact on the OECS countries was severe, pushing the region into a deep recession. OECS countries were estimated to have contracted by 13.9 percent in 2020. The region's tourism industry was losing competitiveness relative to other parts of the world and contributes to environmental degradation. International tourist arrivals to the OECS had grown by an average annual rate of 0.6 percent between 2005 and 2017, compared to a world average of 4.2 percent, and 6.4 percent in Asian and Pacific countries.

#### Relevance to bank strategies:

- **The development challenges that CROP is focused on tackling are disjointed planning and unsustainable coastal development practices, overexploitation of marine resources, pollution, and increasing vulnerability to natural disasters and other external shocks.** According to the PAD (p. 10), the current mechanisms in the OECS for planning coastal and marine development as well as for addressing user conflict and unsustainable practices are disjointed and often lack a cohesive common goal. It further states that the disjointed planning is further limited by: (a) incomplete information regarding the overall impact on the marine and coastal resource base (from all sectors and users); (b) inadequate internal capacities and skills; and (c) underdeveloped and often inadequate planning tools. CROP was designed to address these three limitations by strengthening capacity for ocean governance and coastal and marine geospatial planning across the OECS region.
- **The focus on developing the blue economy is well-aligned with World Bank strategies and the relevance was strengthened between the Regional Partnership Strategy (RPS) FY15-FY19 and the RPS FY20-FY25.** At appraisal, the PDO was aligned with Outcome 2, focused on enhancing the competitiveness of the tourism industry, which included support to improving management of marine resources (RPS FY15-FY19, Report No. 85156-LAC, p. 33). The PDO also indirectly contributed to Outcome 9, increased capacity to manage natural hazards (p. 36) and Outcome 1, improved investment climate (p. 31). At closing, the relevance of the PDO had significantly strengthened, as reflected in the RPS FY20-FY25. Preserving the region's natural capital, reducing the negative effects of climate change and marine pollution, and developing the blue economy were placed at the center of the COVID-19 recovery and long-term development agendas (RPS FY20-FY25, Report No. 160349-LAC, p. 13). The PDO was strongly aligned with Objective 1, enhanced environmental protection and climate change response, for which the bank strategy includes strengthening regional and national policies and institutional frameworks to bring back, among other priorities (p. 19). In addition, the PDO was also strongly aligned with Objective 5, enhance the enabling environment for businesses, for which the importance of developing the blue economy is highlighted and relevant bank supported strategies include developing infrastructure and management skills to underpin biodiversity conservation, and strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations to help protect the Eastern Caribbean's biodiversity (p. 25).
- **Finally, the implementation approach of CROP, combining regional and country level engagement, is aligned with the RPS FY20-FY25.** The RPS recognizes the importance of



optimizing impact by combining regional and country-level support, based on lessons learned from previous engagement in the region.

**Consistency with government strategies:** CROP is aligned with two of the three main priorities of the OECS development plan, namely environmental sustainability and climate resilience and economic growth and competitiveness (RPS FY20-FY25, p. 15). CROP contributes directly to ECROP and its strategic plan, which provides the framework for enhanced coordination and management of ocean resources within the Eastern Caribbean.

## Rating

Substantial

## 4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

### OBJECTIVE 1

#### Objective

Strengthen capacity for ocean governance in the participating countries

#### Rationale

The project's original design included a results framework in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD), but did not include a theory of change (ToC) because it was not required at the time the PAD was written. The ICR reconstructed a ToC for the project, laying out core outcomes and project components (ICR, Figure 1). The ICR figure highlights the rationale for and operational logic of objective 1 to help achieve sustained improvement in ocean and coastal natural resource management.

**Theory of change:** The prioritized interventions with respect to objective 1 included: (i) developing national and regional strategies/policies to build consensus on policy vision through stakeholder engagement, (ii) updating ECROP to align better with the 2030 Development Agenda and Multilateral Environment Agreements (iii) expanding marine data aggregation and analytical tools to improve ocean data coverage and ocean education access and support improved decision-making on ocean assets, (iv) enhancing access to educational content on the oceans and (v) forging investment and knowledge partnership.

#### Outputs (ICR, Annex 1):

- i. Share of stakeholder groups participating in consultations: Original Target: 90%; Actual: 100%; 111%
- ii. National policies developed in support of ocean governance: Original Target: 5; Actual: 5; 100%
- iii. Decision makers sensitized on how to transition to the Blue Economy: Original Target: 75; Actual: 93; 124%
- iv. Knowledge partnerships formed to develop and/or deliver training and data on the blue economy: Original Target: 4; Actual: 4; 100%



v. Learning products developed on the blue economy: Original Target: 4; Actual: 28; 750%

**Outcomes:** The project sought to strengthen the capacity for ocean governance through (i) strengthened capacity of decision makers/marine users on marine and climate data to plan and manage resources, and (ii) enhanced access to educational content concerning the oceans. Each one of these elements is discussed:

- i. **Strengthened capacity of decision makers/marine users on marine and climate data to plan and manage resources.** The outcome indicator associated with these outcomes was achieved: Improved OECS ocean data coverage and access to ocean education on existing platforms (Original Target: Yes; Actual: Yes; Target achieved). The indicator did not capture whether capacity on ocean governance had actually been achieved. One of the main outcomes of CROP is that it legitimized and strengthened the OECS Commission's role as a leader in the ocean governance and blue economy space. This will benefit the regional integration of ocean governance and hopefully also trickle down to the national level capacity of decision-making institutions, where capacity remains weak. Beyond the institutions directly involved in ocean governance, the project also helped raised awareness of the blue economy issue among the public and decision makers, which helped generate support for the finalization and endorsement of the national policies on ocean governance. According to the ICR (p.17) "the project has promoted awareness on marine areas to government stakeholders, with all OECS countries adopting the Eastern Caribbean Regional Ocean Policy (ECROP) and strategic plan". The activities also improved knowledge on data and tools related to coastal and marine planning that are now available to decision makers. According to the training impact survey conducted by the Project's evaluation firm contracted to measure impact, the majority of Project beneficiaries found that their knowledge about MSP principles improved following the training offered and that they felt better informed about the role MSP plays in terms of sustainable resources management. This training was deemed impactful by the Project's evaluation team as Project beneficiaries, who attended the Project training, reported that they were able to expand their knowledge about MSP and ocean governance which are both critical elements to successfully applying MSP knowledge in decision-making processes. The project also forged and fostered partnerships that will continue to generate results and promote awareness of the blue economy across the Eastern Caribbean.
- ii. **Enhanced access to educational content concerning the oceans.** This outcome was not associated with any outcome indicator. However, the project delivered a broad range of educational products on the Caribbean Sea and the blue economy. Interactive maps on the value of natural assets such as coral reefs for tourism were produced for the CROP countries as well as spatial planning tools and applications. A series of webinars and in-person training were also delivered. These education and knowledge products have served to sensitize communities and decision makers on the importance of the blue economy.

Given the limited budget and length of CROP, the evidence presented supports that the objective was achieved at a substantial level.

**Rating**  
Substantial

**OBJECTIVE 2**  
Objective



Strengthen capacity for coastal and marine geospatial planning in the participating countries

### **Rationale**

In contrast to Objective 1, the rationale for Objective 2 is not well-reflected in the project's original design nor in the ToC, that was reconstructed in the ICR (Figure 1, p.8). It is not clear from the ToC what activities and outputs that are supporting strengthened capacity for geospatial planning. However, since it is one of the objectives of the PDO, this section intends to highlight the activities, outputs and outcomes that are related to Objective 2 and that have contributed to its achievement.

**Theory of change:** The activities that can be linked to Objective 2 included: (i) developing marine spatial plans and associated training to support improved decision-making on coastal zone and EEZ use and to reduce conflict between resource users, improve planning, and support preservation of ecosystem functions and services and (ii) developing coastal master plans in a participatory manner and associated training, to support improved decision-making on coastal zone and EEZ use.

### **Outputs (ICR, Annex 1):**

- i. Coordinating bodies formed and actively oversee the development of the national and regional level marine and coastal spatial plans: Original Target: 6; Actual: 6; 100%

Outcomes: The project sought to strengthen the capacity for geospatial planning through (i) improved decision-making over coastal zone and EEZ use, (ii) decreased user conflict, improved planning and regulatory efficiencies, and preserved ecologically/economically valuable ecosystem functions/services.

1. **improved decision-making over coastal zone and EEZ use.** The outcome indicators associated with this outcome were achieved: Marine spatial plans (a) developed in a participatory manner, and (b) endorsed at ministerial level by participating member states and by the OECS Commission (Original Target: 5. Actual: 5; Target achieved) and Coastal master plans (a) developed in a participatory manner; and, (b) endorsed at ministerial level by participating member states (Original Target: 5. Actual: 5; 100%). Five National Ocean Governance Committees (NOGCs) were established by each participating country to provide a national entity for geospatial marine planning. In addition to the marine and coastal plan, the project supported development of data and tools. Much of the data collated and tools developed under Component 2 can support decision making in geospatial planning. For example, the Mapping of Ocean Wealth is a multi-layered geospatial resource that allows users to drill down into data on intensity, distribution, and value of blue economy sectors, such as tourism, recreational fishing, and coral reef fisheries, etc. According to the ICR (p.14), these geospatial tools have “democratized access to data and information, and help decision-makers to make better informed resource management choices”. While the activities have clearly contributed to a more enabling environment for informed decision-making over coastal zone and EEZ use, there is no evidence in the ICR showing that the activities have supported decision-making in any of the participating countries. There is some evidence on the effectiveness of training of government officials on improved capacity for marine spatial planning. Survey results from the training found “100 percent of the respondents reported that their knowledge of marine spatial planning (MSP) principles and approaches had improved after the training, 96 percent had improved awareness of practical MSP and ocean governance related solutions, and 96 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt better informed on the role of MSP in helping their country to deliver [national ocean policies] and [strategic action program]”. The ICR also suggests that the plans developed under the project “provided proof of concept” and helped leverage a set of new investments and projects in the region



that will further build capacity of relevant institutions and improve tools and resources available for geospatial planning and that the CROP project “served as a statement of intent to global blue economy stakeholders, demonstrating the Caribbean’s commitment to firmly establish a strong, well-managed blue economy”.

2. **Decreased user conflict, improved planning and regulatory efficiencies, and preserved ecologically/economically valuable ecosystem functions/services.** There was no outcome indicator associated with this outcome and there is limited evidence presented in the ICR on the achievement of this outcome. Considering the limited budget and time allocated to this project, it may have been difficult to capture any impact related to reduced user conflict or regulatory efficiencies, which are more long-term outcomes.

**Rating**

Substantial

**OBJECTIVE 3**

**Objective**

GEF-6 International Waters (IW) focal area "to promote collective management for transboundary water systems and subsequent policy reforms for the sustainable use and maintenance of ecosystem services."

**Rationale**

The project was also designed to “promote collective management for transboundary water systems and subsequent policy reforms for the sustainable use and maintenance of ecosystem services” and specifically the objective 1 of GEF-6 to “catalyze sustainable management of transboundary water systems by supporting multi-state cooperation through foundational capacity building, targeted research and portfolio learning”, and to Biodiversity Objective 4 of GEF-6 to “mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production seascapes and sectors”

The project has made clear contribution to objective 1 of GEF-6 by strengthening the capacity and role of the OECS Commission in the blue economy space. This is clearly supporting multi-state cooperation since the OECS Commission supports the entire region. It would also be possible to argue that the project has supported mainstreaming of conservation and sustainability practices into production seascapes since the project has helped raise awareness of blue economy issues among decision makers and improved availability of data and tools that can support decision-making regarding conservation of production seascapes and other coastal and marine assets.

**Rating**

Not Rated/Not Applicable

**OVERALL EFFICACY**



### **Rationale**

For the first objective, the evidence in the ICR point to the success of the project in achieving strengthened capacity for ocean capacity, given the budget and scope of the project. The project achieved all PDO indicators linked to Objective 1. While evidence on actual strengthened capacity for ocean governance is lacking, the evidence presented suggest that activities have contributed to creating the conditions for improved decision-making and ocean governance. The rating of efficacy of Objective 1 is therefore Substantial.

For the second Objective, the PDO indicators were achieved. The evidence provided in the ICR suggest that while evidence on actual strengthened capacity for geospatial marine planning is lacking, activities have at least contributed to creating an institutional environment that is better placed to support geospatial marine planning and the coastal and marine plans developed under the project enable better decision-making and planning of coastal and marine areas. Achievement of objective 2 is considered substantial.

The overall rating of efficacy is therefore Substantial.

### **Overall Efficacy Rating**

Substantial

## **5. Efficiency**

Overall Efficiency is rated Substantial. The project met and/or exceeded all indicators, and achieved them cost-efficiently, either at or below all estimated Component costs. Design and implementation efficiency was strong. Although the borrower's self-evaluation highlighted that the project was highly ambitious given the timeline. The project benefitted from the convening power of a well-resourced and respected regional body in the OECS Commission and common goals were clearly articulated in the project design.

At the same time, there were factors throughout implementation that raised transaction costs resulting in some inefficiencies during certain periods of implementation, particularly the delay in recruiting the PMU and the COVID-19 pandemic, both slowing down implementation in the first year. The small size of the PMU led to pressure on OECS colleagues to review high volumes of deliverables. Delays in finalization of some deliverables may also have resulted in some missed opportunities for CROP to advance uptake across the region. Again, the borrower's self-evaluation reemphasized this by stating (p.58) that "As originally designed and structured, the project was highly ambitious [...] a) the project's timeframe of four years, which is short considering what the project sought to achieve; b) the fact that the time for project execution was effectively reduced by a year, because of the time needed, at inception stage, for recruiting the Project Coordinator, for finalizing terms of reference and for contract negotiations; and, c) the fact that the Project Implementing Unit (PIU) consisted of only one person fully assigned to the project." However, since all the targets of the project were met, potential flaws in project design did not seem to have affected efficiency enough to consider a lower rating than Substantial.

The Project Appraisal Document (p.27-28) did not compute an economic rate of return (ERR). The ICR (p.16) did not estimate an ERR for the full project either, or for any of the project components noting that economic



benefits are difficult to quantify given the project context and absence of quantitative indicators to better value the benefits generated by the project.

### Efficiency Rating

Substantial

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

\* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

### 6. Outcome

The project development objectives were relevant to the Region's challenges related to rapid development and degradation of coastal areas, putting livelihoods and natural assets at risk, and the lack of regional coordination on coastal and marine planning and in promoting the blue economy. The project's objectives were also consistent with the Region's priorities and the Bank's regional strategy. Relevance of Objectives was therefore rated Substantial. All of the intermediate and outcome indicator targets were met or exceeded. The ICR makes a strong case for the importance of developing the spatial plans, national policies, as well as the learning and capacity building exercises for strengthening ocean governance and planning capacity of participating countries. As a result, despite lack of evidence directly linking project activities to strengthened capacity of ocean governance or geospatial planning, the achievement of objectives and overall efficacy can still be considered Substantial. Efficiency was rated Substantial since all the targets were met on time and at or below expected cost.

There were only minor shortcomings in the project's relevance, achievement of objectives or efficiency and, therefore, the overall outcome of this project is rated Satisfactory.

a. **Outcome Rating**  
Satisfactory

### 7. Risk to Development Outcome

The following risks to the development outcome have been identified in the ICR:



**The main risk to development outcome is the lack of capacity in the institutions responsible for implementation and mainstreaming of ocean governance and the blue economy at the national level.** The ICR highlights (p.30) the general risk associated with “lack of institutional capacity in small island states in which, civil servants play multiple roles and can be overstretched.” In addition to the typical challenges associated with capacity gaps in small island states, the Review has identified particular risks to development outcome linked to the institutional arrangement introduced by the project at the national level. As highlighted in the summary of borrower self-evaluation (p.59) the “National Ocean Governance Committees (NOGC) form the basis for effective ocean governance and blue economy implementation in the participating countries.” These committees were developed under the project and the sustainability of results will depend on their capacity to use the resources and tools developed under the project and advocate for change in their respective countries. However, according to the borrower, capacity of the NOGC remains weak. In addition, according to the PAD (p.51), the mandate of the NOGC is to “provide advice to each member state on the implementation of its policy and broader aspects of ocean governance and to coordinate policy relating to the management of the maritime space under the jurisdiction of the member state.” As a result, the ability of the NOGCs to generate change will also depend on the willingness of national institutions to enable cooperation and take their advice on board. According to the ICR (p.29), Bank-executed Technical Assistance (TA) was provided to the OECS Commission to help address lack of capacity. However, the main concern at the regional level in relation to project implementation was related to bandwidth (limited staff) rather than capacity. Perhaps the TA would have been better allocated to the NOGCs.

**Lack of institutional uptake of the marine spatial plans, coastal master plans and national ocean policies produced under Component 1.** According to the ICR (p.29), there are promising signs of institutional uptake since edits and updates have been done to the plans since the closure of the project.

**Uptake and use of knowledge resources generated under the Component 2.** While there was a significant effort to promote uptake, it is unclear the extent to which additional uptake will take place moving forward. According to the ICR (p.29), the OECS Commission continues to promote uptake activities and is in charge of monitoring and operating online platforms including Ocean Explorer app, OECS Academy and Ocean Explorer Board Game.

## 8. Assessment of Bank Performance

### a. Quality-at-Entry

The project objectives were highly relevant and well-aligned with regional and bank strategies (see section 3 for more details). By aligning the project with the mission and strategy of ECROP, the project built on ongoing engagement in promoting improved regional integration in the ocean governance and blue economy space.

The project design and the development challenge the project sought to address were targeted and clear. Yet this was not well reflected in the PDO (see section 9 for more details). The PDO could have better reflected project components. With this in mind, the project components were relevant to address the development challenge. The focus of Component 1 was on developing coastal and marine geospatial plans, which is crucial for ocean governance. Developing them in a participatory and consultative way was relevant for buy-in and elevating the quality and relevance of the product. Component 2 included



knowledge and capacity strengthening, which was key to sensitize decision makers on the relatively new concept that is the blue economy and to introduce the wealth of data synthesized under the project. The activities reflected well the capacity of implementing agency, as well as their mandate. Project design was built on ongoing engagements and lessons learned from ongoing and previous projects, as well as relevant analytical work.

In addition to GEF funding, partners supported the initiative with a total of US\$13.9 million: The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in the amount of US\$4 million, Virtual Educa Foundation in the amount of US\$7 million, and in-kind OECS Commission and participating countries' contributions amounting to US\$2.9 million. The project also helped leverage several new projects and grants, including Unleashing the Blue Economy in the Caribbean (UBEC) Project, the \$US60 million IDA and PROBLUE funded project approved in FY22.

The project focused on upstream development and capacity building. Thus, the effects on poverty, gender and social development, while relevant, are likely to emerge in the medium to longer term. As the ICR notes, this is an intended emphasis in the follow-on UBEC program which will specifically invest in supporting expansion of women-owned and managed businesses in the blue economy through roll out of a regional Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise matching grants program to help address this imbalance in industry participation. Thus, CROP is likely to have a follow on effect on important gender considerations in the Blue Economy in OECS countries.

The policies and reforms supported by the project were expected to have a positive effect on the participating countries' coastal and marine environment, as they promoted improved environmental management. The project had no direct impact on the environment since it did not finance construction. However, since the resources developed under the project were expected to inform decisions about environmental management, as well as the people who live there, appropriate safeguards concerning the social and environmental impacts were triggered, and a regional Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) was conducted. The project complied with environmental and social safeguards.

Implementation arrangements were appropriate. The regional focus of implementation arrangements enforced the OECS Commission as a driving force in the regional integration of ocean governance and the blue economy and was aligned with ECROP. The ICR mentions (p.24) that "the project may have benefitted from a Project Preparation Advance to facilitate early implementation and upstream establishment of the PMU". This would have mitigated the delays caused by the recruitment process for the PMU. M&E arrangement were appropriate. However, there were shortcomings in M&E design (explained in section 9). The risks identified at entry were appropriate (institutional capacity, fiduciary risk, and stakeholder risk). The Review believes more emphasize could have been put on the mechanism to mainstream resources and tools at the national level and on strengthening the main institutions supporting ocean governance at the national level, namely the NOGCs. While strengthening these institutions technically and by defining a clear mandate at the national level would have been outside the scope of the project, it seems too important for the development outcomes of the project and sustainability of results to not consider in project design.

Overall, quality at entry is rated Satisfactory with minor shortcomings identified in preparation, related to M&E design and risk mitigation.



## **Quality-at-Entry Rating**

Satisfactory

### **b. Quality of supervision**

According to the ICR, the World Bank team provided proactive support to the PMU throughout project implementation, including trainings. Interactions with the PMU and the OECS Commission were regular and helped address issues as they arose. Project ratings and details in the ISR reports were candid. The ISRs, progress reports and Aide Memories described the issues encountered in sufficient detail, and urgent issues were promptly brought to management's attention. Issues raised at the MTR were addressed in a proactive manner. The bank team helped the PMU adapt its stakeholder engagement strategy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a change of Task Team Leader toward the end of the project, but the handover was smooth and rapport with the client was swiftly established.

## **Quality of Supervision Rating**

Satisfactory

## **Overall Bank Performance Rating**

Satisfactory

## **9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization**

### **a. M&E Design**

At appraisal, the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) did not require a Theory of Change (ToC) or results chain. Nevertheless, the ICR included a ToC that was re-constructed based on activities, outputs, outcomes and the PDO. The ToC did not clearly reflect the inputs, outputs and outcomes related to Objective 2 (strengthened capacity for coastal and marine geospatial planning) but was otherwise sound. The Review agrees with the ICR that having developed a ToC at the design stage would have helped the project make the connection between the PDO, outcomes and indicators more clearly.

The PDO was composed of two objectives: strengthen capacity for ocean governance and strengthened capacity for coastal and marine geospatial planning. Since strengthening geospatial planning would support governance, these two objectives could be considered part of the same development challenge and the activities supporting ocean governance and coastal and marine geospatial planning in the project design were closely intertwined. A clearer PDO statement would have been, for example, "to strengthen capacity for ocean governance for participating countries by improving access to coastal and marine geospatial data and enhancing knowledge and learning on the blue economy".

The PDO was to be assessed through three PDO level indicators.

1. Marine spatial plans developed in a participatory manner and endorsed at ministerial level by participating member states and by the OECS Commission (number);
2. Coastal master plans (a) developed in a participatory manner; and, (b) endorsed at ministerial level by participating member states (number);



3. Improved OECS ocean data coverage and access to ocean education on existing platforms (Yes/No).

The Review agrees with the ICR that the PDO indicators were output oriented and did not capture any change in the outcomes associated with the activities and outputs. The PDO indicators were also not clearly aligned with the parsed objectives. The Review linked PDO indicator 1 and 2 to Objective 2 and PDO indicator 3 to Objective 1 (see section 4).

The Results Framework (RF) included six intermediate results indicators. The indicators were specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound. Indicators had clear targets and baselines were reflected in the RF. However, similar to the shortcomings of the PDO indicators, the results indicators could have been better linked to the PDO.

Since it was a priority of the project to make sure traditionally excluded populations, such as women and indigenous populations, were consulted in the stakeholder consultations and since it had been observed that the OECS Commission and composition of the Ocean Governance Team (OGT) were overwhelmingly male, the RF would have benefitted from indicators monitoring gender and/or other identify of stakeholders consulted, and/or the decision-makers sensitized through the project.

## **b. M&E Implementation**

According to the ICR (p. 26), “the Commission provided the Bank with quarterly reports that gave a complete picture of implementation progress, including progress against indicators.” There was continuous communication between the PMU and the World Bank team on the implementation status. M&E reporting was provided to the OECS Commission and used in decision making. A lessons learned workshop was carried out toward the end of the project with broad participation where lessons from project implementation were captured and steps to ensure sustainability of outcomes were identified.

## **c. M&E Utilization**

According to the ICR (p. 27) the “information from the M&E process has been utilized by the World Bank, project management, and decision-makers to monitor progress, identify issues regarding implementation progress.” The M&E data collected, and the lessons learned captured from the project have been used to inform the design of the UBEC Project.

**Conclusion:** The quality of M&E is rated Modest, driven primarily by the poor alignment of the indicators and the outcomes of the project, resulting in lack of evidence towards the achievement of the project as a whole. The implementation and utilization of the M&E system were otherwise sound.

### **M&E Quality Rating**

Modest

## **10. Other Issues**



## a. Safeguards

The project was classified as an environmental Category B. It triggered OP/BP 4.01 Environmental Assessment, OP/BP 4.04 Natural Habitats, OP/BP 4.10 Indigenous Peoples, OP/BP 4.12 Involuntary Resettlement and OP/BP 4.36 Forests. Since this was a TA, it follows the Guidelines on the Application of Safeguard Policies to Technical Assistance in World Bank-financed projects. As a result, analyses of environmental and social impacts were considered outputs of the project rather than prerequisites.

Since the project supported spatial planning covering protected and unprotected areas, including coral reefs and forests, a regional Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) was conducted. The SESA focused on the impacts of natural habitats, forests and other environmental assets. The SESA informed the spatial planning process and had the buy-in of participating stakeholders.

Since the project included significant stakeholder engagement, including with the Kalinago Indigenous Peoples, an Indigenous People's Planning Framework and associated Social Assessment were prepared under the SESA. Since studies and outputs prepared under the project includes recommendations related to spatial planning, including the establishment of protected areas, construction of infrastructure projects, etc., an Involuntary Resettlement Policy Framework and Process Framework were prepared, which "outlined the process and tools by which stakeholders, particularly those at risk of potential disruption to livelihoods, would be actively engaged during the coastal and marine planning process" (ICR, p.27).

Compliance with Environmental and Social Safeguards: At closing, the project had no outstanding issues. All the instruments were consulted, disclosed and used to inform the project throughout implementation. According to the ICR the project "met the target with respect to categories of stakeholders consulted and exceeded the target with respect to engagement with decision makers." The ICR also states that a "Grievance Redress Mechanism was set up and widely promoted". No grievances were received.

## b. Fiduciary Compliance

**Financial management:** According to the ICR (p.27) the OECS Commission "maintained satisfactory financial management performance throughout project life". Project Interim Financial Reports were submitted on time, except for a slight delay in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19.

**Procurement:** With respect to the procurement process, the ICR states that (p.28) "Most of the activities in the procurement plan were completed." And that "No irregularities have been identified".

## c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

Positive regional spillover effects: stakeholders in OECS countries that were not part of the CROP expressed how relevant the project was in assisting them move forward their approaches for enhanced ocean governance. Non-participating country stakeholders interviewed also noted that they had used the revised ECROP and draft NOPs produced under CROP to define their own national plans.



**d. Other**

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**11. Ratings**

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Quality of M&E	Modest	Modest	
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial	

**12. Lessons**

The ICR included nine lessons learned. The following two lessons are highlighted since they have broader application. The language has been adopted and some related lessons have been consolidated.

**Institutional buy-in is critical to ensure the sustainability of the coastal marine spatial plans and other initiatives on blue economy and can be achieved with an effective and targeted communication strategy.** To obtain the right level of support, the institutions and decision makers must have a clear vision and expected outcomes of project deliverables. Communication strategy plays a pivotal role in promoting blue economy concept and helps shape a common vision and goals of the project amongst all relevant target groups. And since the blue economy concept is relatively new to many stakeholders, developing a communication strategy early on could lessen the risk of leading to diverging interpretations and shape a collective vision from the beginning of the project. For example, concise summaries of Coastal Master Plan and the Marine Spatial Plans would have been helpful for decision makers to capture the key information, accompanied by in-depth analysis for technical staff. Achieving buy-in and endorsement of the coastal marine spatial plans and other initiatives of blue economy were critical factors in sustaining the project.

**Monitoring and Evaluation of these projects need to be thoughtful, pragmatic and focused on looking for where the project has added outcome oriented change.** There was the poor alignment in the results framework's indicators and the intended outcomes of the project, resulting in a lack of evidence towards the achievement of the project as a whole. Focusing less on what can be measured and what needs to be measured is essential to better understanding what these diversified projects actually contribute to the regions where they are being implemented.

**13. Assessment Recommended?**

No



## 14. Comments on Quality of ICR

**Quality of Evidence.** The ICR used both the results from the indicators, as well as survey results from trainings and interviews to support the analysis and fill in gaps in the evidence base. The ICR did not use the borrowers self-evaluation as much as the Review deemed necessarily considering some of the points raised there that contradicts or at least weakens the arguments made in the ICR.

**Quality of Analysis.** The ICR underpinned conclusions with evidence and made well-supported arguments. The use of multiple sources and types of data helped build a strong case.

**Lessons.** The lessons reflected the project experience and were based on evidence and analysis in the ICR.

**Results Orientation.** The ICR included a discussion on the achievement of the PDO. Due to the shortcomings of the M&E design, the ICR could not provide strong evidence on the achievement of objectives. Despite this challenge, the ICR was able to clearly outline how the project contributed towards the achievement of objectives and report on some results, by, for example, using data collected after trainings.

**Internal Consistency.** The ICR was internally consistent and logically linked and integrated.

**Consistency with guidelines.** The ICR was not clearly aligned with the objectives of the PDO. For example, when looking at achievement of objectives, it discussed achievements under each component of the project instead of achievement towards objectives. As a result, Objective 2 was not clearly evaluated in the ICR since this objective did not have an corresponding component like Objective 1 had. Since the PDO objectives were not clearly aligned with the project components, structuring the analysis around the objectives would have required additional work (in mapping activities and outputs to each objective) so the Review understand the rationale of the ICR design. However, it did not follow ICR guidelines.

**Conciseness.** The ICR was well-written and concise. There were a few long detailed tables that did not have to feature in the report, Table 1 and Table 2, which would have shortened the ICR (now at 32 pages). The Lessons section could have been significantly shortened as well.

Overall, the quality of the ICR is rated Substantial with modest shortcomings.

### a. Quality of ICR Rating Substantial

