



## Piloting the Development and Implementation of National-Level Joint Activities between the Rio Conventions in Support of Ecosystem-based Approaches to Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

The project built the capacity of pilot countries to identify and capitalize on opportunities to enhance links between three interconnected environmental issues (biodiversity, climate change and land degradation) and related processes. It helped identify actions needed to implement three Rio conventions – the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – in an integrated manner fostering synergies through the development and use of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation.



## Project activities

The project built the capacity of pilot countries, specifically New Caledonia and Bermuda, to identify and capitalize on opportunities to enhance links between these three interconnected environmental issues and processes. Through knowledge exchange with other countries and direct consultations with experts, representatives from New Caledonia and Bermuda received guidance on issues such as impacts and vulnerability, ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation and climate change and invasive alien species. The representatives of the overseas countries also shared their own experiences with regards to helping species to adapt to climate change and implementing blue carbon projects and developed a list of planned actions to enhance synergies in upcoming projects including the development of a climate change adaptation plan and the listing of a World Heritage Site.

A capacity building workshop for pilot countries was held in Vietnam from 29 October to 2 November 2012 and was attended by 18 participants. The workshop built knowledge and awareness on biodiversity – climate change – land degradation links and the potential benefits to be achieved from joint activities. The workshop helped in the development of training material with partners and the compilation of case studies on relevant completed activities or activities under implementation within the pilot countries. The workshop also facilitated the exchange of experiences among pilot countries who were able to share and learn from the implementation of relevant projects. As one example, at the request of Overseas Countries or Territories and Outermost Regions (OCT/OR) participants, an expert from Vietnam presented on the use of geographic information systems (GIS) to map vulnerability to climate change in coastal zones, a task that will soon be undertaken in the EU OCT/OR pilot participants.

More broadly, pilot OCTs/ORs also discussed how their relationship with EU countries could be strengthened in order to better reflect the OCT/OR views in international negotiations on climate change – biodiversity links. They drew on experiences from the different regions participating in the pilot project and benefited from a summary of relevant decisions and planned processes under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

One of the main messages from the discussions during the workshop was that ecosystem-based approaches offer opportunities to enhance the resilience of both people and ecosystems to the negative impacts of climate change. In order to be successful, however, ecosystem-based approaches must be framed within broader adaptation plans and programmes and analyzed based on the costs and benefits of ecosystem-based approaches compared to other approaches. Capturing the concept in a clearer way for decision-makers was also identified as an important step. Regarding mitigation, one of the main messages was that achieving synergies through REDD+ requires the careful consideration of relevant safeguards and planning and monitoring to achieve co-benefits as well as an understanding of tradeoffs between carbon sequestration and other ecosystem services. In order to ensure that the pilot partnership continues to deliver benefits to the pilot countries, a discussion was held on gaps, needs and next steps.

Each pilot country began the process of identifying gaps preventing the enhanced implementation of synergies among the Rio conventions such as: the lack of baseline biodiversity data (especially from remote islands), the lack of studies on impacts and vulnerability of biodiversity to climate change, poor two way communication between policy-makers and scientists, and a lack of resources (human and financial) assigned to coordination and collaboration. Various tools were presented to help in addressing the identified gaps and contact information was shared with experts in the region who could provide additional support. For example, following the identification of challenges, an expert in governance from IUCN was contacted and was able to join the meeting via teleconference in order to answer questions from workshop participants. Such flexibility in programming as well as the broad range of experts available “on-call” to contribute made the workshop especially unique.

## Project achievements

The links between biodiversity, climate change and land degradation are particularly relevant in islands, where systems are so interconnected, vulnerability to change is high, and resilience is typically low. As such, enhancing synergies between the three Rio Conventions – the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – in European overseas countries and territories is essential if European Parties to the Conventions are to meet their international obligations.



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