

PROTECTED AREAS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN MEDWETCOAST EGYPT

PROJECT MANAGER
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INTRODUCTION

The Mediterranean coastline (26,000 km) is an area of high biodiversity, where more than 50% of the 25,000 plant species are endemic to the region. It is also a very important area for migratory birds in the Africa –Palearctic flyway since its wetlands provide a crucial flyway stepping-stone on either side of the Mediterranean Sea and between the sea and the vast expanse of the Sahara desert to the South.

Major threats to the biodiversity of these wetlands and coastal ecosystems include uncontrolled development, urbanization, increasing national and international tourism, land based pollution, and overexploitation of its natural resources.

Aware of their common heritage, the Mediterranean States and European Union have developed common programmes and policies for the sustainable development and conservation of the coast since 1975. The Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP Regional Seas Programme), the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, METAP, LIFE, MedWet, Natura 2000 and MEDA (EU) are some of these regional initiatives.

The MedWet programme for the conservation of Mediterranean wetlands originated from the Grado Conference, with its initiative widening in Venice 1996 where all riparian States present endorsed a common strategy for the conservation of Mediterranean wetlands. In parallel, the Mediterranean Action Plan, Conservatoire du Littoral (France) and Ramsar Convention secretariat held a joint technical meeting on coastal zone management where 12 countries agreed on the need to develop land use policies for effective management of the coastal zone.

At present, the States of the Mediterranean region are at different stages in terms of economic and institutional development, and therefore, have different capacities to address biodiversity issues and to implement sustainable development. Funding is required to help them implement agreed regional policies in the field.

In 1999, a five-year regional project was launched to conserve biodiversity in wetland and coastal ecosystems in the Mediterranean region. The Wetlands and Coastal project includes six countries/ authority, namely Albania, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Authority.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

The project is based around three distinct and complementary actions:

At Local Level

- Implementing sustainable and intersectoral management in 15 pilot sites (threatened wetlands and coastal areas)

At National Level

- Developing innovative legal frameworks for removing the causes of biodiversity degradation.
- Reinforcing the institutions involved in the management of natural resources and promoting coordinated policies.

At Regional Level

- Strengthening capacities through training and technical assistance.
- Developing and sharing the Mediterranean experience through networking

THE NATIONAL COMPONENT

Egypt has signed the Ramsar, Biodiversity and Barcelona Conventions, and has expressed the wish to participate in the regional MedWet activity to help fulfill its obligations to the above-mentioned conventions. Three important existing protected areas were chosen to be the focus of the project, namely Zaranik in North Sinai, Burullus in the Delta, and Omayed in Matruh.

The National Project is funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA)/Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs (MSEA).

Nature Conservation Sector (NCS), an Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) sub-department, is the government body responsible for nature conservation and is the focal point for international agreements concerning the protection of nature. The Department is also responsible for overseeing the provisions of Law 4/1994, which concern hunting management. A National Biodiversity Unit (NBU) has been established at the department to collect and disseminate information concerning the nation's biodiversity.

THE SITES

Burullus

The National Working Group, established under the Project Development Fund (PDF) for the MedWetCoast Project chose the Burullus area for many reasons:

1. The value of the Lake as a breeding area for water birds is high, both in respect of an Egyptian standard and on an international scale.
2. Lake Burullus is the least disturbed wetland in the Nile Delta, and being the second largest lake, makes this area, relatively, important compared to other wetland areas in the Nile Delta.
3. The biodiversity of Lake Burullus is relatively high (more than 700 known species).
4. Burullus area has been declared a Reserve under Law 102/1983 in May 1998, with the lake and the sandbar included within the boundaries of the Reserve.
5. There are many threats to the site:
 - (a) A serious effect of increased flow of nutrients rich fresh waters from irrigation drains into the lake is the rapid encroachment of *Phragmites* along the southern shore, which has reportedly covered 25-30% of the lake area. Water hyacinth is present where the drainage canals reach the lake, however this species has low salt tolerance, which prevents it colonizing larger areas.
 - (b) Bird hunting is reported to be common, and quail nets are set along the length of coastal dunes.

- (c) Land reclamation for agriculture and for fish farms has reportedly affected 30% of the original lake area since 1970.
- (d) The inflow of drainage water has increased phosphate levels by 4 times between 1970 and 1987, and blooms of blue-green algae have been recorded at Baltim (probably linked to sewage outflows). The enrichment of the fish farms with waste, urea and super phosphates further increases fertilizer flows into the lake.
- (e) Analyses show that the fishery is over-exploited, with a very high percentage of small fish in the catch.
- (f) With the construction of the International Highway along the Mediterranean coast, there are plans for tourism development and agricultural reclamation along the sandbar of the lake, which could, without adequate mitigation measures, lead to further pollution of the lake and destruction of sensitive habitats for fauna and flora.

Zaranik

Established in 1985, Zaranik is the second oldest protected area in Egypt. The reasons for selecting this site so early in the history of nature conservation in the country are manifold. As part of Lake Bardawil, the site encompasses a relatively large number of unique aquatic and terrestrial habitat types, which are almost entirely pristine. The Lake is the cleanest marine oligotrophic water body in the country, and the vast hypersaline mud flat (known as sabkhat El-Bardawil) occupying the eastern fringes of the Lake is also the largest in the country. These habitat types are home for a wide variety of rare and endemic species of fauna and flora.

As part of Northern Sinai, the area of Lake Bardawil has a long history of being a bridge between Africa and Asia. It is estimated that no less than 40 armies have crossed this area either to invade Egypt or to fend off conquests. Relicts from various eras can still be found in the area and further excavations are likely to reveal more.

Even more significantly, perhaps, is the fact that the Zaranik Protected Area is an important bottleneck and staging area for migrating Palaearctic waterbirds and an important wetland for wintering birds. Consequently it has been designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by BirdLife International as well as being a Ramsar site. For these reasons the Zaranik Protected Area is often classified as a "bird reserve".

It is therefore remarkable that despite the lapse of 17 years, no management plan has been formulated for the Zaranik Protected Area, till now. It is worth pointing out, however, that some management activities aiming at keeping the fish productivity in Lake Bardawil at an optimum level were practiced in co-ordination with the Director of the Lake and the Local Authority (such as the annual decisions to determine the fishing techniques allowed, to define the fishing calendar and to determine the number of fishing days per week in the Lake). A comprehensive management plan was urgently needed in order that the Protected Area should fulfill its given mandate in conserving its resources.

Omayed

The area of Egypt is about one million km², and according to Boulos (1995) the flora of Egypt consists of about 2088 species of flowering plants. Nearly 1000 of these species are recorded in the coastal strip stretching between Alexandria and Matrouh, including the Omayed Protected Area (OPA). The flora of the OPA itself consists of 253 species of flowering plants. This means that from a floristic standpoint, about 12% of the entire angiosperm flora of the country is found in only 0.07% of its total area. As such, the

Mediterranean coastal strip (and consequently the OPA site) is reputed to be the richest phytogeographical region in Egypt.

Species richness is not the only criterion for selection of this site for protection. Other criteria include: (i) no less than 45 of the species are rare or very rare in Egypt, 18 of which are restricted to the Mediterranean coastal strip, (ii) 17 of the species in OPA are rated as endangered or threatened, and (iii) OPA is one of the few spots left where the endemic and highly endangered species *Helianthemum sphaerocalyx* and *Zygophyllum aegyptium* can still be found.

Endemism is represented in the fauna of OPA by 4 subspecies of birds and a species of rodents (the Pallid Gerbil *Gerbillus perpallidus*). Endangered, threatened and vulnerable animal species include 8 species and subspecies of reptiles, 3 species of invertebrates and a subspecies of rodents (*Jaculus orientalis orientalis*).

OPA is situated on one of the internationally important flyways for birds migrating between Eurasia and Africa, with the greatest numbers and species diversity occurring in the autumn when millions of migrants pass through the region.

The site is endowed with a notable diversity in habitats and microhabitats attributed mainly to the prominent geological, geomorphological, topographic and edaphic spatial variations. Microclimatic diversity within the site is induced by proximity to maritime influence and by topographic variation. Conceivably, such climatic and habitat diversities have produced a parallel diversity in plant and animal communities.

Historically, the western sector of northern Egypt witnessed highly prosperous times during the Graeco-Roman periods that extended for 8 centuries from 400 BC to 400 AD. It is generally acknowledged that this sector was studded with 17 lively cities and towns strung along the Mediterranean coast as well as with vast acreages of vineyards and wine factories which supplied the Roman Empire and other nations of the Mediterranean basin with some of its finest brands. Despite the wholesale habitat destruction, and the burial of relicts of these periods under the newly established seaside resorts and summer villages all along the coast, the only site with ruins of these periods that miraculously escaped burial under these resorts is situated within the boundaries of OPA.

Two major research projects were initiated in the Mediterranean coastal belt of Egypt under the supervision of the Late Prof. M. Ayyad of Alexandria University. The first project was entitled "Systems Analysis of Mediterranean Desert Ecosystems of Northern Egypt" or SAMDENE, which was conducted in 1975-1979. This was part of the "desert biome" studies under the International Biological Programme (IBP). The second project was entitled "Regional Environmental Management of Mediterranean Desert Ecosystems of Northern Egypt" or REMDENE, and was carried out in 1980-1983. Both projects yielded copious information about the various biological, ecological and socio-economic aspects of the region by numerous experts. As a result of these immense efforts, the Omayed site was included in 1981 as a Biosphere Reserve in the global network of the "MAN AND BIOSPHERE" Programme of UNESCO.

ACHIEVEMENTS

MedWetCoast Egypt has adopted sustainability as its vision in realizing its objectives and in its integration within relevant structures:

Promoting inter-ministerial coordination and policies at local and national level to address root causes of biodiversity loss is a priority action crucial to develop intended management structures. One of the major achievements of the project was designating and

activating National and local Committees- comprising all important stakeholders - with their recommendations well integrated in the project work plan.

The project is promoting an integrated approach for biodiversity conservation. It is cooperating with local stakeholders to understand the functioning of the sites and is providing technical advice to address the short-term and long-term impact of actions recommended by the local actors. Examples of integrated recommendations include: the dredging and clearing of inlets and outlets of Lake Burullus, Burullus Local Advisory Committee; the selection of the income generating activities for the local communities as an incentive for wise use, Omayad & Zaranik Local Advisory Committees; Decision, based on the project recommendation, for the National Wetland Committee to stay on after the project's duration as the National Wetland Committee for Ramsar.

The project has completed a very important milestone by completing and validating the management plans for the three sites. Urgent field actions were also undertaken in the three sites. Integration of local communities and other relevant stakeholders in the planning and implementation process have been a priority at this project phase. Rather than focusing on symptomatic causes of biodiversity loss, the project is tackling socio-economic issues and public participation. Additionally, the project has launched a public awareness campaign and community/economic development initiative through the project's resources and through partnerships and synergies with different national and international entities.

Effort in capacity development at the local level include recruiting, training, and contracting seven rangers for the three sites; training protected area managers on developing management plans & monitoring systems, and putting them in the center of the management planning process.

Activating the National Wetland Committee

The National Wetland Committee (Chaired by the Executive Director of EEAA, Comprising the Director of Nature Conservation Sector, the Project Manager, and representatives of all relevant ministries) has been formed by request of the Minister of State for Environmental Affairs. On occasions, the Minister of State for Environmental Affairs attends the meetings. Additionally, for transparency, UNDP /GEF representatives, and local Governorate representatives also participate to the biyearly meetings. As mentioned above, the project has recommended that this Committee stay on after the end of the five-year period of the project as the National Wetland Committee for Ramsar.

Activating the Local Advisory Committees

To show their commitment, the Governors of the three sites have given the local Committees legal status through Governorate decrees - issued with their structures and functions. The Governors chair the local Committees, comprising all relevant local stakeholders. These Committees ensure the participation and the involvement of concerned stakeholder groups in the decision making process. The Burullus Advisory Committee provide an example of a success story, where mobilizing financial and human resources through the different government institutions to address some of its problems was only possible through the involvement of all stakeholders in the decision making and in enforcing needed urgent actions, based on site diagnosis results.

Close linkages with EEAA/MSEA

In general, with institutionalizing the project outputs in mind, close linkages between the project and EEAA was ensured from the project onset. The Director of NCS is the project's focal point. Members of the National Biodiversity Unit (NBU), NCS have also been well integrated in the project. They are involved in the GIS (Geographical Information System) process and are expected to take on this process once the project is complete. The project will ensure that the data gathered through the site diagnosis studies are compatible

and are fed into the NBU. The fact that the site diagnosis studies have been compiled using the MW Inventory methodology will allow enriching the NBU database.

Completion of Site Diagnosis Phase

The second year of the project marked the end of the diagnostic phase of the project. All site diagnosis thematic studies, MedWet inventory data sheets, database, and base maps were completed. Consolidated reports including recommendations for monitoring, urgent management actions, and complementary studies were developed through several brainstorming meetings between the National, International experts, and Protected Area Managers. Validation of the propositions with all stakeholders through participatory approach was ensured to be able to guide the management-planning phase on the basis of the outcomes of the site diagnosis.

Management Planning

A. Process

All efforts were exerted towards developing management plans for the three sites. Working groups, comprising thematic experts and protected area managers, has identified and completed the first phase of the process; complementary raw data and studies that form the skeleton of the plans. A second phase entailed evaluation of the sites, identification of conservation objectives and priority actions.

In general, the year 2002 for the MedWetCoast Egypt project was the year for developing management plans- using participatory approach - for the project's three sites that include socio-economic aspects in addition to the ecological dimension, and initiatives to integrate local communities and other relevant stakeholders in the planning and implementation processes. Actions heeded urgent by site diagnosis studies and local advisory committees were also undertaken in the three sites.

In planning and implementation, the project is focusing on addressing the root causes of biodiversity loss. Rather than narrowly focusing only on symptomatic causes of biodiversity loss, the project is also working on tackling socio-economic issues and public participation. Socio-economic and land use reports formed an important basis for the management plan development. Additionally, the presence of the site Community Development Advisors and the Protected Area Manager in the weekly management plan meetings, and the validation of all steps of process with local stakeholders ensured the proper representation of the latter's view in the planning.

B. Validation

Three workshops were held namely in Kafr El Sheikh in April 2003, North Sinai in May 2003, and Matrouh in July 2003. The objectives of these workshops were to validate the Burullus, Zaranik, and Omayed management plans, respectively. Stakeholders included the Minister of State for Environmental Affairs, the Governor, UNDP/GEF representative, representatives of relevant ministries, national wetland committee members, local advisory committee members, local governorate officials, and representatives of the local communities. Based on the recommendations of these workshops, the management plans were updated, and management committees were formed in Zaranik and Burullus. The designation of Omayed management committee will follow.

C. Field Activities

Burullus

- Surveillance activities: water quality, sedimentations & physical properties by the Institute of water analysis, Ministry of Irrigation.
- Field verification mission by GIS team, May 2002.
- Construction of visitor's center completed 2003.

- Dredging of Bughaz and canals, recommended by Hydrology expert, undertaken by Local Advisory Committee.
- Removal of solid waste disposed on lakeshore, undertaken by local advisory committee.
- Allocation of a 52 feddans for solid wastes, through the coordination with EEAA and the Governorate of Kafr El Sheikh.
- The banning of Frye fishing in the Lake enforced by the Water Surface Police, undertaken by Local Advisory Committee.
- Launching of socio-economic initiative.

Omayed

- Control of grazing and banning of quarrying by site personnel.
- Rehabilitation of roman wells for water conservation.
- Conducting clean up events, organized by Community Development Advisor and site personnel, with the help of the local communities.
- Coordination with EEAA to allocate an environmentally suitable area for solid waste disposal, at site and central level of the project.
- Conducting literacy and awareness raising classes targeted for women, a need expressed by the local communities.
- Motivating local communities to form organizations for the development of local society.

Zaranik

- Surveillance activities: water quality, sedimentations & physical properties by the Institute of water analysis, Ministry of Irrigation.
- Survey/ collection of data concerning socio-economic setting and population structure by Community Development Advisor with the help of local communities through participatory approach.
- Coordination with different sectors to promote eco-tourism by setting up a "bird land" center on the eastern border of Zaranik, by the project at the site and central level.
- Purchasing engines for the fishermen's association's motorboats, a need expressed by the local communities. Coordination with several entities to address problems faced by the fishermen of Zaranik, namely El Nasr Salinas to undertake Necessary measures to fix deteriorating filtering system of El Nasr Salinas to overcome adverse affect on the Zaranik fish stock.
- Planting of Acacia trees at the southern boundary of Zaranik, as an alternative source of grazing.
- Motivating local communities to form organizations for the development of local society.
- Organizing veterinarian and health campaigns targeted to the local communities.

Capacity Development

A. Training Programmes at the regional and national levels:

At the regional level:

- Six regional meetings convened:
 - Regional meeting in Barcelona, October 1999
 - Site diagnosis meeting in Tunisia, February 2000
 - Regional Training meeting in Camargue, February 2001.
 - Regional Advisory Committee meeting in Rabat, March 2001
 - Regional Advisory Committee meeting in Tour-du-valat, June 2002
 - Technical exchange in Oujda, Morocco in May 2003.
- Four regional trainings programmes has also been completed:
 - The Socio Economic Evaluation for Natural Site Management in Tunis, March 2001

- Management planning training in Amman, March 2002
- Geographic Information System in Lisbon February 2002, and
- Monitoring for Biodiversity and Environmental Change in Mallorca October 2002.

- In addition to a technical seminar in Zaranik November 2001

At the local level:

- Five training programmes were completed:
 - Three GIS trainings (Auto Cad- Erdis Imagine – DAK/Data Automation Kit)
 - Public awareness programme November 2000
 - Surface Hydrology programme July 2001
- Two workshops were completed:
 - Workshop for eco tourism potential of Zaranik was held in July 2002.
 - Workshop for Burullus NGOs' potential contribution in conservation efforts.

The national component has actively participated to all meetings.

B. Recruitments and Equipping of Sites

- The national component strongly believes that for the project to succeed, it is vital that a large team of local personnel is present at the sites early on in the project to benefit from the training programmes and interchange of knowledge. The project has pushed for the recruitment and contracting of seven rangers for the three sites by EEAA They attended computer, English, and on the job trainings. The project also works on empowering the protected area managers by placing them in the center of operation and promoting their responsibilities and capacities.
- Through the project's resources, sites were equipped with computers, laptops, printers, overhead projectors, slide projectors, GPSs, and mobile phones. Two pick up vehicles and off road motorbikes were purchased for Zaranik and Omayad. Three Zodiacs were purchased for Zaranik and Burullus. Informative signposts were set up in all sites. The construction of the Burullus visitor's center was completed, and design phase was initiated.
- To respond to the national component's needs, the project has contracted experts at the local, national and international level in all relevant fields. These needs included site diagnosis studies, management plan process, Communication/Socio-economic initiative, Cultural heritage, GIS & data entry, designers, data collection, and law & legislation. This process of intensive interactions produced valuable plans for operation and management of three nature reserves. Equally valuable are the experiences and expertise developed by the team of 25 Egyptian Scientists and practitioners who shared the work. This team is now available to do the basic ecological surveys and the planning for management of the existing and the future reserves.

C. Management Plan Six-Months Trainee in Tour-du-Valat

Based on the project's Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU)'s recommendation, an Egyptian trainee joined the RFU of the MedWetCoast project as a trainee for six months (March – August 2002) of a work experience scheme. Under the supervision of the Regional Facilitator of the MedWetCoast Project, he participated in the work of the RFU in following the development of the management plans of the sites implicated in the project.

Socio-Economic Initiative

A. Public Awareness Campaign

Towards raising awareness and mobilizing people on both the local and national level, a public awareness campaign was launched, utilizing different media:

- Recruitment of Experts through the project's resources:
 - Three local media officers for the three sites.
 - A National Information Officer.
 - Three Community Development Advisors for the three sites.
- Different media was utilized for raising people's awareness:
 - Media Coverage: more than 92 articles in local and national newspapers, 43 radio programmes, 13 TV programmes.
 - 19 symposiums, 22 seminars, 36 lectures, 10 presentations, 15 exhibitions, 16 competitions, 33 fieldtrips to the protected areas.
- MedWetCoast Egypt publication including project's objectives, information on the three sites, and project's achievement are disseminated appropriately at the local, national and international level.
- A newsletter is produced biyearly by the national component including information on the human elements involved in the project, species of importance, and the project achievements. It has been distributed to relevant entities at the local, national and international levels.
- In addition to two posters produced on the sites in general, two posters highlighting the cultural heritage of Zaranik and Burullus were produced. The latter were based on a cultural heritage survey undertaken by the project. The posters were presented in the Ramsar Convention in Valencia, where the project manager participated.
- A documentary film that covered the Zaranik Protected Area and the First Regional Technical Seminar in Zaranik was produced.

B. Socio-economic Activities

Effective implementation of conservation policies can only be reached through the involvement of stakeholders and local communities. The promotion of public participation and empowerment of the local communities has been done through three complementary actions: translating scientific information into concepts and messages that appeal to the local communities, exerting a lot of time and commitment towards developing trusting relationships between communities and conservationists, and the use of expertise and social science professionals to understand the different perceptions that exists among different stakeholders.

The national component has identified community/economic development as one of the management plans urgent actions. The following activities were launched:

Burullus

- 1- During the past year, due to the complexity of the Burullus site and the huge population dependant on Lake Burullus for daily earnings, considerable time was spent on exploring the site and assessing people's views and needs. This step is crucial to ensure a positive link and confidence between MedWetCoast and the local communities. This task, undertaken by the Burullus Community Advisor, is underway.
- 2- 80,000 L.E., through the project resources, were allocated for income generating activities for Burullus' local communities. Based on the Burullus local advisory committee's recommendations, these resources will be utilized in purchasing fishing gears, abiding by legal fishing specifications, for the fishermen dependent on Lake Burullus for their daily fishing. A sub committee of the local committee was formed and has set the selection criteria and all other necessary administrative details.

- 3- Four potential project proposals were submitted to GEF small grants programme to be done by four different NGOs in Burullus. Technical support was given by the community development experts of the project.
- 4- Community Development activities targeted towards a pilot site: Mastarouh, has been initiated.

Omayed

During the past year, considerable efforts have been exerted by the Community Development Advisor for Omayed to help develop and target several conservation and social issues that the local communities of Omayed deemed as priorities:

1. Illiteracy and public awareness classes targeted to women were set up in the existing school in Awlad Gebril village. A celebration was organized for a group of women who passed the illiteracy test.
2. Issuance of badly needed Birth Certificates.
3. Negotiations with different entities to develop traditional handicrafts that existed in the area but have been neglected by the new generations.
4. Setting up an NGO in Awlad Gebril village representing all factions of the village.
5. Identify a fixed site for wastes disposal in the area
6. Cleaning and restoring roman wells for water conservation.
7. Distribution of Olive seedlings to the local communities in accordance to a preset criteria

Zaranik:

1. A veterinary campaign was organized from 27 – 30/7/2002. Including 34 professors and their assistants from the faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Cairo University to diagnose and treat the livestock of the Zaranik local people.
2. A health campaign was organized from 10 – 13/9/2002 with the cooperation of the faculty of Medicine Ain Shams University including 52 professors, seniors and Junior physicians in different specialties to diagnose and treat the local communities of the protected areas.
3. A preliminary report concerning the economic, social and demographic status for the local communities within the vicinities of Zaranik was completed. It is worth noting that this was the first time any of this data was ever incorporated in any survey.
4. Purchase of engines for the fishermen's fishing boats. This will enable these fishermen to fish in Lake Bardaweel instead of in Zaranik leading to fewer disturbances to the birds.
5. In collaboration with the Hanns-Seidel Foundation and the Nile Media Centers, a workshop on the eco tourism potential of Zaranik was held in Zaranik on 7-8 June 2002. The objective of the workshop was the elaboration of a detailed project proposal including draft designs for a Bird land park in the Buffer zone at the eastern border of the Zaranik Protected Area. Participants comprised relevant partners at the local, national and international level.
6. Coordination with several entities to address problems faced by the fishermen of Zaranik, namely El Nasr Salinas to undertake necessary measures to fix deteriorating filtering system of El Nasr Salinas to overcome adverse affect on the Zaranik fish stock.
7. Planting of Acacia trees at the southern boundary of Zaranik, as an alternative source of grazing.

Communication

A. Communication of National Component's Studies & Findings

- All national component studies are sent to the RFU for validation and posting on the website. The project is also planning to mobilize resources at a later stage to print all site diagnosis findings in scientific manner in addition to a friendlier manner for the regular reader.

B. Communication of progress

- Based on the national component's policy of transparency, the Project disseminates reports on its progress to all relevant stakeholders at all levels including the RFU, UNDP, NCS, The Minister of State for Environmental Affairs, and representatives of the National Wetland Committee.
- Reports include: Quarterly progress report, mid year report, annual progress report, yearly work plan, mid year updated work plan, and Project Implementation Report (PIR),

Networking and partnerships

The project linked with different initiatives. The national component is collaborating with the Hanns-Seidel Foundation, the Nile Media Centers, and the Governorate of North Sinai to develop eco tourism in Zaranik (based on Bird watching). The project has defined developing eco tourism in Zaranik as one of the operational objectives of the protected area. This was also backed by the North Sinai Governorate's interest and enthusiasm.

Several meetings were undertaken between the national component, UNDP and GEF Small Grants Project for potential partnerships. The focus of the meetings was different ways to include local NGOs in conservation efforts and provide wise use incentives for the local communities at the three project sites. Based on these strategic meetings and workshop, four potential project proposals were submitted to the GEF small grants programme to be implemented by four different NGOs in Burullus. Technical support to the local NGOs was given by the MedWetCoast community development experts.

Participation in Relevant Initiatives

- At the national level, the project manager is a member of three important relevant committees, namely, The National Bio safety Committee of Egypt, The National Plant Genetic Resources Committee, and The Egyptian Man and Biosphere (MAB) Committee (UNESCO).
- At the Regional level, the Project Manager actively participates in relevant initiatives in his capacity as the project manager, as the representative of the Government of Egypt, or as a member of a regional committee.
- Regional conferences and conventions attendance and presentations include: The River Basin Initiative in Nairobi, Ramsar Convention in Valencia (Wetlands of International Importance for Migratory Water Fowls), and the Scientific Committee of Bonn Convention for Migratory Animals in Bonn.