

Sustainable financing for marine ecosystem services in Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau

COUNTRY STUDY

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This Policy Paper summarises key messages from the case study on European Union payments to Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau for the conservation of marine protected areas under the Fisheries Partnership Agreements. The detailed case study is available in the 2017 OECD report *The Political Economy of Biodiversity Policy Reform*. A separate “Policy Highlights” brochure, which distils key messages and lessons learned from the full report is also available.

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1 Overview

Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau are the custodians of some of the world's most significant marine and coastal ecosystems, supporting fisheries of global importance and on which many people depend for their livelihoods. These fisheries are under threat from overfishing – which increased six-fold between the 1960s and the 1990s. The pressure on West African fish stocks is driven by foreign fleets and the substantial expansion of artisanal fisheries. Marine and coastal ecosystems are also under pressure from coastal development, the oil industry, pollution and climate change. This paper examines the efforts of Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau to establish sustainable financing for marine protected areas, via conservation trust funds, to help conserve and sustainably use these vital ecosystems.

The challenge

Sustainable use of these fisheries depends on regulating fishing, as well as the effective management of a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) along the West African coast. The MPAs support the ecosystems that maintain the fishing potential of the surrounding seas, to the benefit of fishing fleets. In developing countries, the costs of managing MPAs are often supported by international donors, but this support can be short-term and vulnerable to changing priorities. Long-term sustainable financing for MPAs is therefore needed.

The policy response

Both Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau have negotiated financial support within the framework of European Union (EU) Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs) to help finance MPAs. This arrangement can be considered an international payment for ecosystem services, with those who benefit from the ecosystem contributing to its sustainable management. To protect these funds from shifting political priorities, conservation trust funds have been created in both countries. These trust funds are independent entities financed by a range of international and national sources.

The impact

In both Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau, the FPA and conservation trust fund arrangements have helped to significantly increase finance for the conservation of marine and coastal areas. As of April 2015, total commitments to endow Mauritania's trust fund (BACoMaB) had reached EUR 22.3 million, with funds sourced from the Mauritanian Government via the EU FPA as well as from a range of international donors. Guinea-Bissau's more recent BioGuinea Foundation, established in 2011, has received commitments of EUR 5 million, including EUR 1 million from the Guinea-Bissau government.

Key messages

From a political economy perspective, several lessons can be drawn from the experiences of Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau in mobilising finance for the conservation trust funds. Building a shared understanding of the economic benefits that marine conservation can bring to the fisheries sector was vital. This required lobbying, consensus building and co-ordination by non-government organisations (NGOs) acting as brokers. Both cases also highlight the importance of a secure legal and institutional basis for MPA management and financing to prevent wavering political support and changing priorities threatening the long-term stability of conservation financing.



2 Sustainable financing for marine ecosystem services in Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau

The marine and coastal ecosystems of West Africa are of global importance, essential for maintaining regionally and globally threatened biodiversity – from turtles to seals and migratory birds. These ecosystems also provide a range of other vital services,¹ including a fishery resource of global, and local, significance. West Africa's fisheries are sought after by fishing fleets from around the world, sustaining a valuable industry.

These ecosystems are also of immense value to local economies and livelihoods. Fishing activities contribute to gross domestic product (GDP), provide livelihoods for fishers and processors, are a source of hard currency (from exports of fishery products), and boost government revenues through fisheries agreements and taxes (de Graaf and Garibaldi, 2014). In addition, fish contributes to at least 20% of the total animal protein intake in the coastal countries of West Africa (FAO, 2009).

Currently the main threat to marine and coastal ecosystems in West Africa is overfishing, exacerbated by coastal development, the oil industry, pollution and climate change. The pressure on West African fish stocks increased six-fold between the 1960s and the 1990s, driven by fishing by European, Russian and Asian fleets (Hogan, 2003), as well as the substantial expansion of artisanal fisheries (Matthew, 2003).

This paper summarises efforts in two West African countries – Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau – to mobilise international finance to sustain the marine biodiversity upon which fisheries depend, and to establish conservation trust funds. It examines the main impacts and challenges encountered, and draws out some lessons of wider relevance.

1. Ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from ecosystems.



3 The policy challenge: Ensuring sustainable finance for marine conservation and sustainable use

The waters of the West African coastline are a globally important source of fish – including horse mackerel, sardines, squid, cuttlefish and octopus, shrimps and hake.² The Mauritanian shelf is considered one of the most productive fishing areas worldwide, with catches reaching about one million tonnes per year. However, this large-scale exploitation has resulted in a 75% decline in demersal³ fish resources since 1982 (Gascuel et al., 2007).

The West African countries that make up the environmentally significant Marine Ecoregion⁴ have taken a two-pronged approach to addressing this challenge, on the one hand regulating fishing practices and on the other establishing marine protected areas (MPAs). MPAs can provide a wide variety of benefits: the conservation of areas that are home to important biodiversity, serving as nursery grounds for fisheries and enhancing fish stocks, protecting habitats that buffer the impacts of storms and waves, and removing excess nutrients and pollutants from the water (OECD, 2016).

Countries in the West African region have a long experience of MPA establishment and management: the National Parks of Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania), Langue de Barbarie and Sine Saloum Delta (Senegal), for example, were created as early as 1976. The identification of ecological corridors between MPAs, and the pooling of countries' conservation efforts, resulted in the establishment of a regional network of MPAs in West Africa in 2007. Today the network includes 23 MPAs. Management of MPAs typically involves zoning different areas with varying types or levels of permitted use, including fishing. For instance, many

MPAs in Guinea-Bissau allow fishing by people living in and around them, with restrictions on the technology or gear they may use. In Mauritania, the Banc d'Arguin MPA is partially closed to fishing, allowing only the park residents (the Imraguens) to fish with small sailboats (Guénette et al., 2014). Many MPAs in the ecoregion also include areas that are strictly closed to fishing.

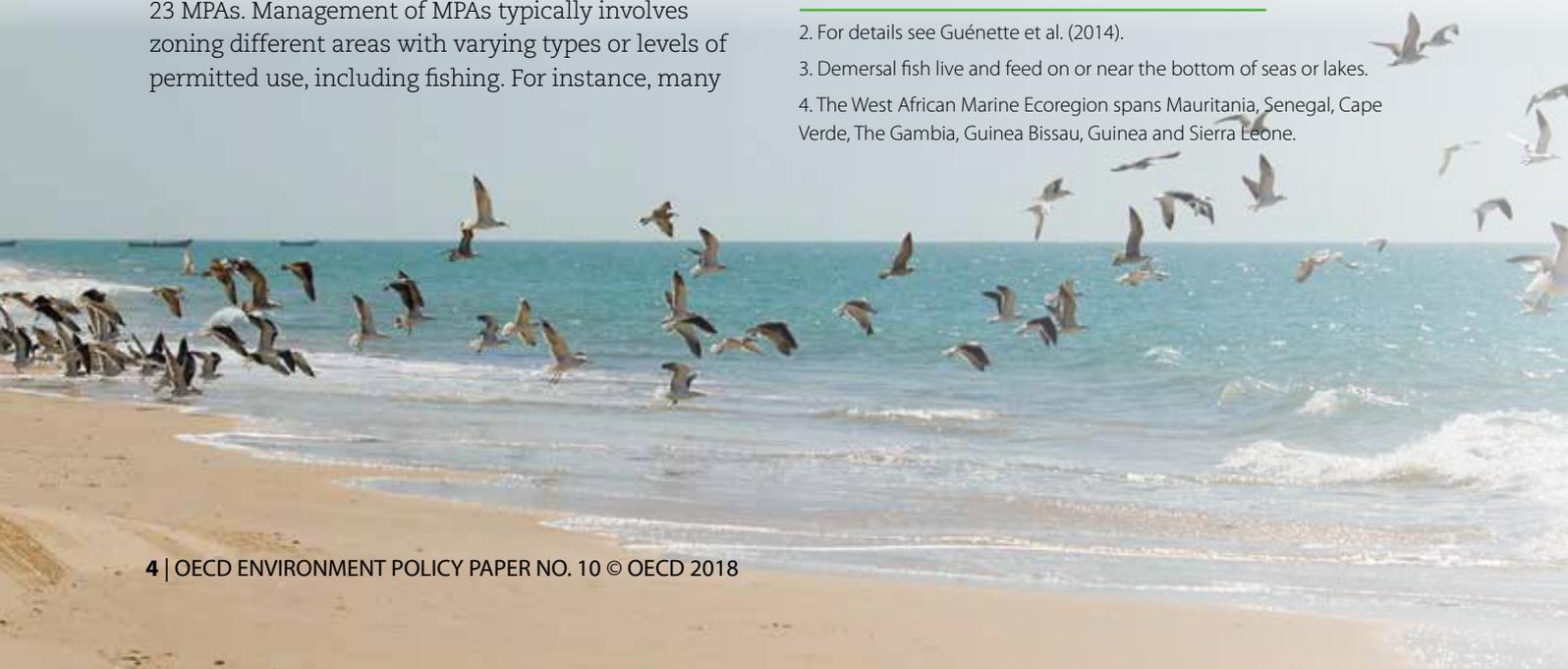
MPAs are intended to conserve habitats and fish populations and can also sustain or increase the overall yield of nearby fisheries (Balmford et al., 2004; OECD). Mauritania's Banc d'Arguin MPA supports about 23% of the total production and 18% of the total catch of the Mauritanian shelf ecosystem, and up to 50% for coastal fish. Of the 29 fish groups exploited, 15 depend on the Banc for more than 30% of their food, directly or indirectly (Guénette et al., 2014).

Managing an MPA effectively entails costs however: to employ staff and finance training, ensure adequate monitoring and enforcement, and other maintenance. In West Africa, where national capacities for government funding of MPA management are weak, project-based support by international donors has played an important role. In general, donor funding for MPAs is part of a wider portfolio of finance, and tends to support establishment costs, training, and other forms of capacity building. It also aims to put frameworks in place so that MPAs can become financially self-sufficient. Such support, however, is often short-term and can be vulnerable to changes in donor priorities (Carr-Dirick and Klug, 2002).

2. For details see Guénette et al. (2014).

3. Demersal fish live and feed on or near the bottom of seas or lakes.

4. The West African Marine Ecoregion spans Mauritania, Senegal, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone.



4 Response: Channelling international ecosystem payments into conservation trust funds

A quarter of the EU's fishing catches take place in third countries and international waters (European Parliament, 2015), and the EU recognises its responsibilities for the sustainable use of these fisheries. In 2004, the European Council paved the way for a new generation of agreements – the Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs) – to allow EU vessels to fish for surplus stocks in foreign exclusive economic zones (EEZs) (EC, 2015b). Recently renamed “Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements”, the agreements involve a financial contribution to partner countries that includes two components: (1) a financial contribution for access rights to the fisheries resources within the EEZ (which can be used at the discretion of the partner country); and (2) “sectoral” financial support, which aims to promote sustainable fisheries development in the partner countries and is spent according to an agreed programme (depending on the needs identified by the partner country) (EC, 2015a).

Fleet access is negotiated to ensure that stocks are exploited in a sustainable manner, taking into account the precautionary and the maximum sustainable yield approaches and favouring access priority for domestic fleets (EC, 2015b).

FPAs have been initiated with both Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau, and represent a significant source of finance for sustainable fisheries management (Box 1). NGOs active in biodiversity conservation in Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau have recognised the opportunities embodied in the FPAs for laying the groundwork for sustainable financing of MPAs in the West African Ecoregion. They have worked closely with both governments to advocate for the creation of separate, independent funds – known as conservation trust funds – to channel finance from a range of donors, including the EU via FPAs.

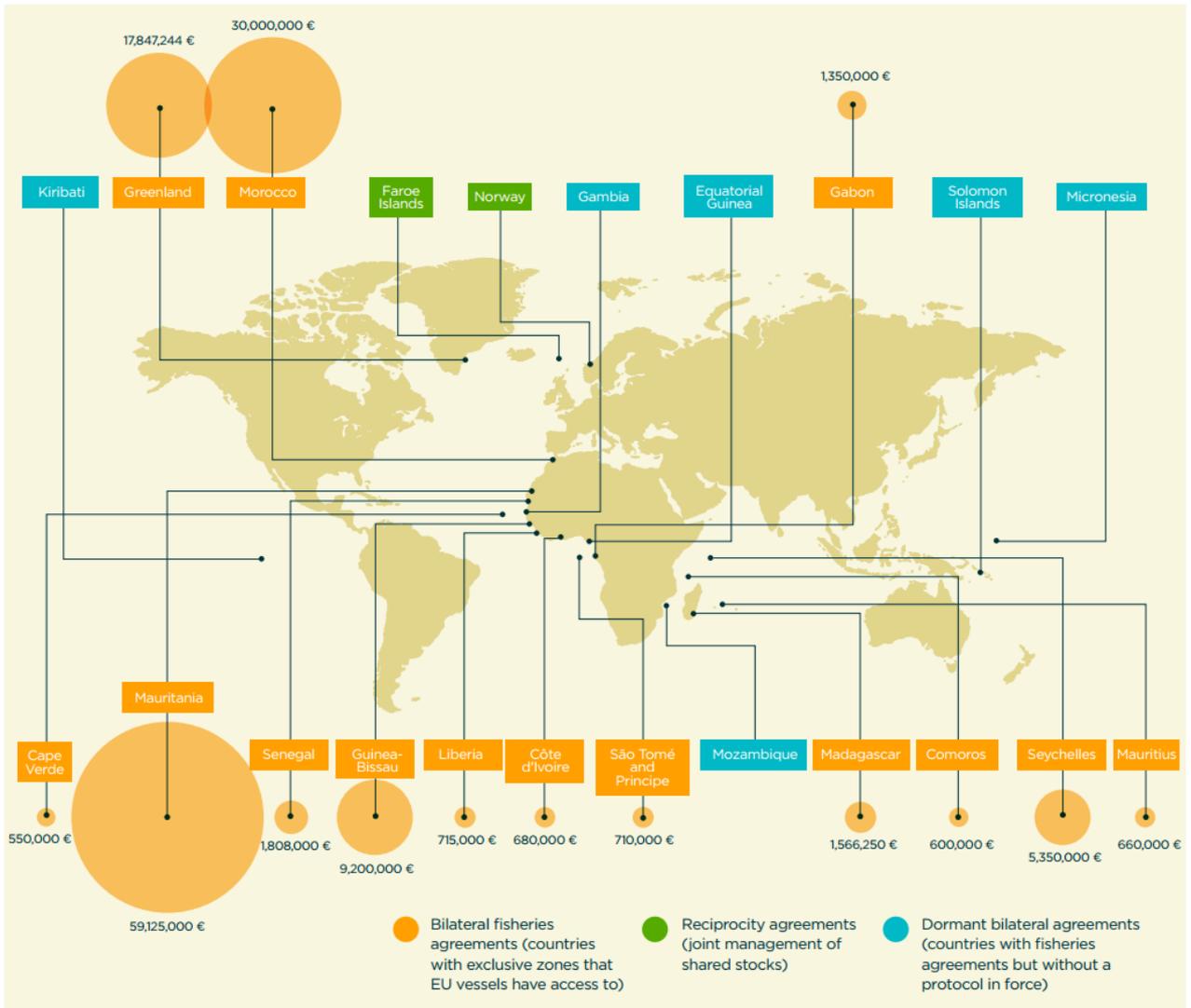


Box 1. Fisheries Partnership Agreements in West Africa

In the West Africa Marine Ecoregion, the FPA initiated in 2006 with Mauritania was the EU's single largest agreement, both in financial terms (EUR 86 million a year directly from the EU), and in terms of fisheries opportunities (Figure 1). Approximately 200 licences were available for European vessels to fish in Mauritanian waters (EC, 2007). The agreement was renewed in 2015, committing EUR 59 million per year to the partnership, with EUR 4 million to support the fishing communities, including environmental sustainability, job creation and tackling illegal and unregulated fishing (EC, 2015a). Other countries of the Ecoregion with an FPA with the EU include Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau (with more than EUR 9 million committed), and Senegal.

In 2009, for example, the total EU contributions were 15 times the national budget for fisheries in Mauritania and accounted for more than 16% of the country's total public revenues; the EU contribution is comparable in Guinea-Bissau (15.6% of total public revenues) (Oceana, 2011).

Figure 1. EU Fisheries Partnership Agreements are significant in West Africa



Source: EC (2015b), "EU SFPAs: Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements", Infographic, https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/sites/fisheries/files/docs/body/2015-sfpa_en.pdf.

Conservation trust funds are “private, legally independent grant-making institutions that provide sustainable financing for biodiversity conservation and often finance part of the long-term management costs of a country’s protected area system” (CFA, 2008). They can offer several advantages, including (GEF Secretariat, 1998):

- providing a vehicle for collaboration among the government, NGOs, and the private sector;
- the capacity to involve a wide range of stakeholders through participatory structures;
- the capacity to attract a diverse range of national and international funding sources;
- a stable, long-term source of funding, allowing for long-term planning and strategy implementation.

Mauritania’s BACoMaB Trust Fund

The impetus for establishing the BACoMaB Trust Fund (*Fonds Fiduciaire du Banc d’Arguin et de la Biodiversité Côtière et Marine*) for marine conservation in Mauritania emerged in the early 2000s in a context of declining donor support. Conservation organisations working in Mauritania began to explore ways of achieving more sustainable financing for the Banc d’Arguin National Park (PNBA), a large MPA covering 20% of the whole Mauritanian shelf and one of the most important zones in the world for nesting birds and migratory waders. The Banc d’Arguin is a key contributor to marine ecosystems, constituting a major nursery for several species and sustaining a large part of the Mauritanian marine production (Guénette et al., 2014).

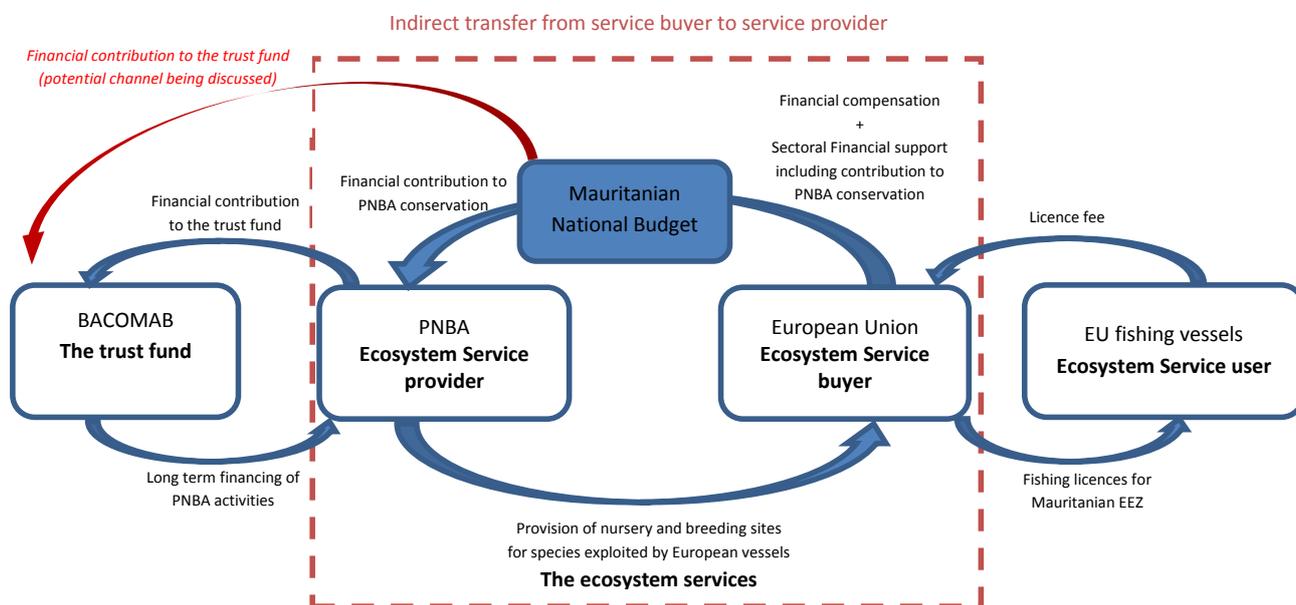
Lobbying, co-ordination of stakeholder interests and action then followed. This was driven, in particular, by the *Fondation Internationale du Banc d’Arguin* (FIBA), a long-term partner of Banc d’Arguin National Park with a strong influence on conservation in Mauritania (Goyet, 2016; Renaud, 2016). Persistent and determined lobbying of various EU institutions (DG Fisheries, DG Research, DG Development, and DG Environment) between 2003 and 2005 generated support from the highest authorities in the EU (Office of the President of the European Commission) for the park to be a key element of the FPA with Mauritania (Goyet, 2016). This decision was partly based on research that identified the Banc d’Arguin as a key contributor to fish resources (Guénette et al., 2014).

The BACoMaB Trust Fund is not funded directly. Under the FPA, the EU provides sectoral support funds (i.e. EUR 4 million a year) that are paid into Mauritania’s national budget. The Mauritanian government then channels part of the sectoral financial support (EUR 1 million a year) to the PNBA (Figure 2). As these funds largely exceeded the PNBA’s absorption capacity, it was agreed to allocate 50% of these funds (EUR 500 000 a year) to BACoMaB. The government’s commitment to contribute to the BACoMaB Trust Fund has been a key factor in attracting additional contributions from other international partners.

This arrangement has been described as an international payment for ecosystem services, with the EU acting as an ecosystem service buyer, financing the trust fund to enable the park authorities to effectively manage the MPA (Binet et al., 2013).



Figure 2. Paying for ecosystem services in Mauritania: funding marine protected areas from Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs) through a conservation trust fund



Source: Adapted from Binet et al. (2013), "First international payment for marine ecosystem services: The case of the Banc d'Arguin National Park, Mauritania", *Global Environmental Change*, (23) 1434-1443.

Guinea-Bissau's BioGuinea Foundation

Guinea-Bissau hosts the largest mangrove area in West Africa and the most important green turtle nesting site in West and Central Africa. Various laws enacted between 1997 and 2011 led to the establishment of a network of protected areas in Guinea-Bissau, including several MPAs. Dialogue and growing understanding of the relationship between management of coastal and marine protected areas and the fish breeding and nursery grounds they sustain led to agreement that fisheries funds could support the management of important coastal and marine protected areas. The link was thus made between the conservation of the coastal environment and the fisheries of Guinea-Bissau and beyond. This shared understanding at the technical level ensured sustained commitment despite the frequent turn-over in governments engendered by political instability. The enthusiasm and willingness of key advocates for the scheme, including people in government, were also important factors for success.

The BioGuinea Foundation (FBG) was legally established and registered in 2011 under English law. The purpose of this conservation trust fund is to generate sustainable finance for the national system of protected areas. The experience of BACoMaB in Mauritania was a key factor in its creation, with the same international partners involved in conservation in both countries. The EU was also a strong supporter of the process, having been involved from the beginning. The trust fund is currently in the process of securing its initial seed capital. Commitments in the order of EUR 5 million have been made, which include EUR 1 million from the Guinea-Bissau government. Of this, EUR 500 000 is to be drawn from the sectoral support included in the 2014-17 Protocol of the FPA with the EU (as specified in the approved joint programming for 2015), and the rest from other sources (Bastos, 2016). The first tranche of EUR 500 000 was transferred by the government to the FBG in January 2016.

5 Economic and environmental impacts

Economic impacts

The FPA and conservation trust fund arrangement have helped to significantly increase Mauritania's budget for the conservation of marine and coastal areas. As of April 2015, total commitments to endow BACoMaB had reached EUR 22.3 million, of which EUR 21.3 million has been disbursed. The Mauritanian government has contributed EUR 2.8 million from the 2006-08 and 2008-12 protocols of the FPA with the EU, while other donors include the Agence Française de Développement (AFD: EUR 3.5 million), the German KfW Development Bank and the MAVA Foundation (EUR 10 and 6 million respectively). For a trust fund established as recently as 2009, this level of capitalisation is very satisfactory according to some observers. It has, however, been achieved progressively, which means that BACoMaB has yet to be a major source of support for conservation activities in Mauritania (Lefghih, 2016). Since 2014 BACoMaB has allocated grants of EUR 650 000 for coastal and maritime surveillance, conservation, and research activities – only a small proportion of the amount of capital in the endowment (BACoMaB, 2015).

Distributing the increased financial support among different and competing stakeholders is a challenge, and competition among them risks stifling reform in favour of marine biodiversity in Mauritania. PNBA and BACoMAB compete for FPA funds, in spite of their supposedly shared interest in conserving the Banc d'Arguin. The current executives of the PNBA wish to benefit from the totality of the FPA funds and regularly criticise the legal basis for channeling funds to BACoMAB, stating that the conservation trust fund itself is not mentioned in the FPA Protocols, nor in the Mauritanian budget law of 2007. The government's contribution is based on a legally questionable agreement between the previous Director of PNBA in 2013 and the BACoMaB (Beddiyouh, 2016). This has offered the basis for the current Director of PNBA to challenge the use of PNBA funds for the endowment of BACoMaB (Beddiyouh, 2016).

Donors, however, remain supportive to a certain extent. Ensuring the financial sustainability of the PNBA through the BACoMaB remains an important objective for the EU (Appriou, 2016). This is motivated by the multi-level governance set up by the trust fund to manage its

endowment, allocate grants, and monitor and evaluate the activities of beneficiaries (Appriou, 2016; Lefghih, 2016). As the PNBA lacks this governance structure, a direct and unconditional allocation of funds to PNBA is difficult to justify before the Court of Auditors of the EU (Beddiyouh, 2016). BACoMaB recently took the initiative to address a request for direct funding to the EU and the Mauritanian Ministry of Fisheries, and appears to have obtained positive feedback. This potential new channel for receiving EU funds is currently being discussed (Appriou, 2016; Beddiyouh, 2016).

In Guinea-Bissau, the arrangement is more recent. Government commitments to the FBG trust fund remain ad hoc, and are not currently challenged, but concerns have been raised that it is now time for the trust fund to show that it can indeed support conservation activities. In this context, the French Global Environment Fund⁵ recently granted support to a set of pilot programmes to be run by the trust fund independently of its endowment.

5. *Fond Français pour l'Environnement Mondial.*

Environmental impacts

Although it is too early to assess the impacts of the conservation trust funds on the marine environment, by offering a secure source of funds to manage MPAs they offer significant potential to improve environmental outcomes. The effectiveness of MPAs in ensuring more sustainable fisheries has been documented in many cases, especially those which ban all fishing (i.e. no-take zones). MPAs allow fish stocks to recover, and can increase total catch and catch-per-unit-effort (Garcia et al., 2013; Guénette et al., 2014; OECD, forthcoming). As for the FPAs, in principle, they should only allow EU vessels to fish the surplus resources of partner countries. However, this concept of surplus is very difficult to apply in practice due to lack of reliable information on fish stocks and fishing effort of the various fleets. A report by the European Court of Auditors found that the implementation of access conditions was not sufficiently robust and the Commission's role in monitoring implementation of the protocols was limited (European Court of Auditors, 2015). Earlier reviews of FPAs have raised similar concerns about the effectiveness of the agreements in improving sustainable fisheries management. Even with such mixed results, however, FPAs play an important role in the wider effort to improve the sustainability of fisheries.

6 Lessons learned

From a political economy perspective, several lessons can be drawn from the experience of Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau in establishing conservation trust funds for marine protected areas.

Making the economic case for ecosystem services can build commitment to ensuring sustainable finance

Making clear links between the greater provision of ecosystem services and economic benefits was a useful strategy in both Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau for establishing broad support. Local support for conservation trust funds also requires that they rapidly demonstrate their potential as actual grant makers. This is especially important given that the opportunity cost of allocating finance to a conservation trust fund (rather than to more immediate needs) is felt acutely by the government, and given that the benefits (more sustainable fisheries, biodiversity conservation) are longer-term and accrue to a wide range of actors (fishers, tourists).

Concerted lobbying and consensus building are key

In both Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau it was concerted lobbying efforts by environmental NGOs that helped to establish a shared understanding of the benefits that MPAs bring to the fishing sector and the benefits trust funds bring to marine conservation. A well-established and credible “broker” (FIBA) played a key role in establishing this consensus, through active lobbying and co-ordinating all those involved in country, in the EU, and in the broader donor community. Aligning the interests of governments and the conservation community was essential to seize opportunities offered by shifts in the EU’s fisheries policy. Support from other donors (KfW, AFD, MAVA foundation) was, in part, built on the demonstrable commitment of governments to engage in the process, and on the innovative character of the arrangement.

Conservation funding mechanisms need to be financially and institutionally sustainable

Environmental policies and their reforms in developing countries are often disrupted by a lack of domestic funding or financing restrictions by donors. This undermines achievements and progress made. This is why funding mechanisms that are sustainable, such as conservation trust funds, are important. However, underpinning this financial arrangement with a strong institutional framework is equally important. Vested interests do not simply disintegrate once a policy reform has been enacted – political priorities can shift and governments can change. Frequent changes in leadership and staff in key institutions may create a void when champions or experts move on, resulting in existing policies becoming vulnerable to back-tracking. For example, as Mauritania’s capitalisation of the endowment was based on an informal understanding, it was rapidly challenged when leadership of partner institutions changed. This has jeopardised the partnership between the trust fund and the protected area authorities. Thus, the agreements themselves need to be grounded in a firm legal basis. External support can help build the institutional capacity required. In Guinea-Bissau, support by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Bank has been instrumental in setting up and running the FBG and in laying the ground work for broader institutional change for conservation.



Towards a more permanent solution?

In a context in which governments' priorities have shifted away from conservation (resulting in fewer resources for sectoral support under the FPAs) and in which relatively low interest rates challenge the rationale for placing funds in an endowment, it is unclear whether and how resources from FPAs will continue to support marine conservation. The transitory nature of the arrangement could also jeopardise long-term commitments, as FPAs and protocols are renegotiated on a regular basis, as are government budgets. Paradoxically, such uncertainties are one of the main justifications for establishing conservation trust funds in the first place. One option to address this would be for the EU to directly finance the trust funds to ensure its own goals (and financial management rules) under the Common Fisheries Policy are met.



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Sustainable financing for marine ecosystem services in Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau

This Policy Paper summarises efforts in two West African countries – Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau – to mobilise international finance to sustain the marine biodiversity upon which fisheries depend, and to establish conservation trust funds. It examines the main impacts and challenges encountered, and draws out some wider lessons learned for other countries tackling similar environmental issues. This country study draws on the 2017 OECD report *The Political Economy of Biodiversity Policy Reform*.

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For further reading on the political economy of biodiversity-related reform, see the following report on which this Policy Paper is based:

OECD (2017), *The Political Economy of Biodiversity Policy Reform*, OECD Publishing, Paris, www.oecd.org/environment/the-political-economy-of-effective-biodiversity-policy-reform-9789264269545-en.htm.

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