

The ACP MEAs Programme Starts Phase III with an Added Scope

What Is It?

Established by the European Union in March 2009, in response to the environmental challenges facing the African, Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP) countries in fulfilling their obligations as parties to global environmental treaties (MEAs) due to lack of adequate capacity to address increasingly complex scientific and technical issues, the ACP MEAs Programme under UNEP's leadership has supported the ACP countries in addressing the environmental challenges they face by enhancing their capacities to fully engage in MEAs implementation. Since then, the programme has gone through two successful phases and has now started a third Phase-ACP MEAs III with an added scope.

What Do We Do?

We strengthen local, national and regional institutional capacities in African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries to enforce and comply with the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) related to biodiversity, chemicals and waste and Ocean/Seas governance so that the countries can achieve their environmental goals.

We achieve this by working with global, regional and local partners such as policy makers, civil society actors, private sector among others, who translate the global environmental commitments into action on the ground for sustainable environmental management at all levels.

Why Does It Matter?

Humans are utilizing an estimated 25% more natural resources than the planet can sustain, leading to a rapid loss of biological diversity (biodiversity). Aside from the impact on species and their habitat, loss of biodiversity has a direct and detrimental impact on human health and livelihoods. Chemicals are another key area that impact human development and livelihoods. Without sound management practices, chemicals can pose significant risks to the environment and human health, especially vulnerable populations.

As a solution, countries have agreed upon MEAs, global commitments such as Aichi targets, common objectives for the Minamata, Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and biological diversity Conventions among others, and more recently, universal goals and targets for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, transforming these commitments into tangible change on the ground remains a challenge as many developing countries face a variety of obstacles, including constraints in human, financial, and technical resources.

Thus, through the programme, we support key areas of environmental governance:

- stopping biodiversity loss
- enabling the sound management of chemicals and waste
- enhancing better management of coastal areas and oceans
- mainstreaming of biodiversity in agriculture.

ACP MEAs Goal

The goal of the Programme is to build national and institutional capacity in the African, Caribbean, and the Pacific countries to enforce the implementation of MEAs in the biodiversity, chemicals and waste clusters and Ocean and Seas governance. This will secure a sustainable future for the

What Is New?

In the previous two phases of the Programme, environmental management issues were mainstreamed into institutions and national development plans in most of ACP countries. The Programme promoted an integrated and synergistic approach to effectively implement the relevant Conventions on biodiversity and chemical and waste management.

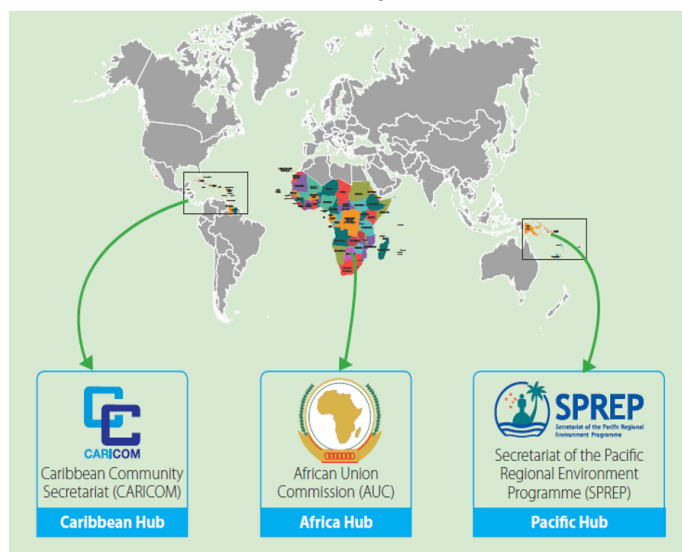
The third phase (ACP MEAs III) builds on the achievements of the previous Phases and aims at further enhancing the mainstreaming and implementation of MEAs related to biodiversity and chemicals and waste, with a focus on enforcement and compliance, enhanced oceans governance and the mainstreaming of biodiversity in agriculture.

79 ACP countries, which represent a significant part of the Small Island Developing States and the Least Developing Countries of the world.

How Does It Work?

UNEP has designed the programme using a holistic approach which adopted an integrated and synergistic regional approach which institutionalized MEAs within the ACP regions to bring a long term environmental sustainability at the regional and national levels by focusing on building capacities locally. The current Phase III of the programme is to strengthen national and institutional capacities in the ACP countries to enforced and comply with MEAs in the Biodiversity, Chemical and Waste clusters, enhance Sea/Oceans governance and mainstream biodiversity into agricultural practices.

For a sustained environmental governance impact, the Programme introduced regional Hubs housed within the African Union Commission, the Caribbean Community Secretariat, and the Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme. Partnerships have also been established with FAO, the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and four Regional Sea Conventions (Nairobi, Abidjan, Noumea and Cartagena) who translate the global commitments into action on the ground.



Our regional and global ACP MEAs partners

On Stopping Biodiversity Loss

Biodiversity loss is one of the world's most pressing issues facing humanity. Through this programme, we are supporting ACP countries by strengthening their COPs negotiation skills, developing relevant guidelines, national frameworks, legislations and mechanisms for the effective implementation of the biodiversity cluster of MEAs, which include treaties such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the post-2020 biodiversity framework, as well as supporting governments in creating enabling policy environment and develop transparent procedures to control the illegal trade in wildlife products. The activities are focusing on supporting the effective integration of environmental concerns addressed in the various MEAs into national and regional policies and laws including stakeholders awareness raising.



Black rhinoceros walking in a field-one of the endangered species

In the Caribbean, training biodiversity officers in COPs negotiation improved their knowledge and skills which led to the development of first ever regional Biodiversity Strategy for the Caribbean and the publication of the State of Biodiversity in the Caribbean Community: A Review of Progress Towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, by the CARICOM Secretariat.

In preparation for the post-2020 agenda, technical steps are being undertaken in the Caribbean to align the Caribbean Biodiversity Strategy with post-2020 Global Biodiversity Strategy, the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) regional guidelines and NBSAPs and other MEAs obligations (coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds) in line with national development strategies in select countries, including capacity development on monitoring and evaluation of NBSAP implementation and development of electronic permit processes (e-CITES) for the control of endangered species.

In Africa, strengthening the capacity of CITES-designated national authorities and institutions were identified as key areas for combating illegal trade in wildlife and enforcement of Biodiversity MEAs. Thus, training activities and expert advice are being undertaken by the African Hub and its partners for Member States to improve their national CITES, CMS and CBD related legislations and preparation for COPs negotiations.

In the previous phases, a number of key achievements in establishing guiding frameworks and providing the technical expertise and tools for greater biodiversity protection were realized. For instance, in 2016, a regional biosafety framework was successfully launched in collaboration with East African Community, which allowed countries to work together more effectively in controlling the cross-border movement of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and living genetically modified organisms (LGMOs) while providing guidelines on safe health conditions. The African

Hub is now strengthening national regulatory frameworks for access and benefit sharing for the Nagoya Protocol which deals with issues related to GMOs.

Building from the achievements of the previous phases, tools and guidelines developed with expert inputs for biodiversity integration into national planning processes – that are significant towards meeting target 2 of the Aichi biodiversity targets - were developed by the African Hub and promoted for adoption by the African Union member States. The effectiveness of these tools and guidelines are now being strengthened to incorporate measures for the implementation of the post 2020 biodiversity agenda among other national strategies and action plans.

Moreover, the creation of national environmental management strategies in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Tuvalu, Vanuatu, with support provided in the review processes in Tonga, Solomon Islands, the Republic of Marshall Islands, among other Pacific Island States are among the achievements of the programme in the Pacific region. The documents brought an integrated approach for the implementation of various MEAs (NBSAPs, National Action Plans for climate change or National Adaptation Programme of Action) and have been particularly successful in tackling environmental challenges in the Pacific Island States. These achievements are being elevated to the next level by the development and deployment of national guidelines to implement NBSAPs as per the Nagoya Protocol and for the implementation of the post 2020 agenda.



Underwater view of coral reef in the Pacific. ©SPREP

Enabling the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste

The chemicals and waste cluster focuses on building technical and institutional capacity at the national and regional level with a focus on key global multilateral environmental agreements such as the BRS and Bamako Conventions, the World Health Organization/FAO International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management as well as the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

The ACP MEAs programme is focusing on strengthening the technical and legal frameworks for harmonization of pesticide legislations and registration, developing tools and providing advanced trainings to enhance the capacity of national authorities to better manage pesticides and enforce the implementation of related MEAs. One of such interventions on which the activities of phase III is building on, has been the regionally harmonized scheme for the Pacific developed with inputs from the Pacific Islands Countries in phase II of this programme.

On the issue of e-waste and plastic pollution management, concrete intervention strategies have been identified in partnership with the related conventions in the regions such as BRS, Bamako and Minamata. In February 2020, for

example, the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa carried out its third meeting of the conference of the Parties in Brazzaville, Rep. Congo that brought together representatives of the parties to the Convention and observers, including non-parties, ECOWAS, AU, diplomats, UN agencies, civil societies, private sector and media to discuss the status of ratification, accession to and implementation of the Convention.

The decisions adopted recommended the provision of information and guidance to member States to promote the ratification of or accession to, and the incorporation into national laws the mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention in order to consolidate actionable efforts to enhance the total ban of the import of hazardous chemicals and wastes into Africa among others. Regional tools and guidelines for the sound management of chemicals and waste in Africa are also being developed in selected member States of the African Union, focusing on decreasing the uncontrolled waste disposal and related negative impacts on human health.



Delegates during the Bamako Convention COP3 in Rep. Congo. ©Bamako Convention

Moreover, the unwise use of mercury in gold mining and its release into the environment is a major source of a number of negative environmental impacts affecting the health of the local populations in many ACP countries. The programme has embarked on strategies such as capacity strengthening for the development of National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and legislations for addressing mercury-added products phase-out in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) in accordance with the provisions of the Minamata Convention to enhance the ability of countries to work toward increasing ratification and implementation of the related Conventions and Protocols.

Furthermore, increase in human population has also led to intensive agricultural practices and misuse of agrochemicals in agriculture –resulting into human and environmental health impacts worldwide. Developing countries, however, experience high incidences of pesticide related poisoning due to lack of sustainable pest management strategies and proper pesticide control measures. In 2016, a Pesticide Registration Toolkit, a key instrument to support the work and decision-making process of pesticide registrars worldwide that are tasked with evaluating and authorizing products was launched by FAO. As an important tool, several training sessions are being organized to build capacity of experts who shall then roll out the trainings at national and regional level in their respective ACP regions.

On Enhancing Better Management of Oceans /Seas and Coastal Areas in the ACP Regions

Oceans and seas which cover more than 70 per cent of the Earth's surface are important resources in sustaining human well-being. Conversely, human activities are increasingly threatening this precious ecosystem by causing harmful

effects on marine life, undermining coastal communities and negatively affecting human health. The ACP MEAs programme has adopted a horizontal Ocean governance approach to advance marine protection and sustainable management of all coastal areas in the region.

Pollution is a major cause of marine biodiversity loss and environment related health issues in the regions. In order to substantially reduce marine litter levels, appropriate context specific programmes and measures are being developed in the ACP regions to reduce the level of marine litter through effective waste management practices.

In the African sub-region for instance, the Abidjan Convention has initiated webinar series to develop a regional Action Plan for the management of plastic waste. Once the plan is completed, it will be a guiding tool for member States to better manage their Oceans and coastal areas by carrying out measures for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity; and effectively implementing the related Regional Sea Conventions.

In the Pacific, the previous waste recycling plant (*i.e. Samoa Recycling and Waste Management Association*) which comprise of local businesses and community groups, in collaboration with the UN Environment Programme, Pacific office and the Pacific Hub is being revived due to its past success in effectively reducing the influx of waste into the marine environment.



Plastic recycling site, Tarawa, Kiribati. ©CARICOM

For a sustained impact, capacity building is an important trigger for increasing technical knowledge at the regional and national levels for the implementation of MEAs. Hence, the programme has a number of ongoing capacity development initiatives in several ACP countries aim to strengthen the existing Regional Seas governing frameworks, implementation mechanisms and development of strategic vision for the implementation of Ocean-related SDGs. Similarly, capacities related to marine genetic resources, environmental impact assessments, development of area-based management tools, including networks of marine protected areas (MPA) are being strengthened. In the Caribbean, governments are benefiting from technical support in monitoring and research for the establishment of new Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) and MPAs.

These supports will lead to the ratification by Caribbean countries of the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols as well as development of regional strategies and road maps for enhancing Oceans governance and socio-economic prosperity through the use of Blue Economy, Ecosystem Based Management.

On Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Agriculture

The success of agricultural sector depends heavily on biodiversity which sustains food production systems and livelihoods, making them more resilient to shocks and stresses,

including climate change. On the other hand, however, agriculture is a significant cause of biodiversity loss as a result of intensive land use, water and agrochemicals, putting severe pressure on natural resources. These challenges necessitate the agricultural systems to be designed in a manner that build on, and enhance natural biodiversity while at the same time sustaining production and profitability.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as a global partner in the ACP MEAs programme is leading the mainstreaming of biodiversity into agriculture policies and practices that utilize ecosystem-based approaches to halt the loss of biodiversity caused by unsustainable agricultural practices including the mismanagement of hazardous pesticides, to achieve resilient societies and ensuring food and nutrition security.

These interventions build on FAO's previous achievements in the ACP regions where it supported a cross-sectoral approach to the implementation of the CBD by introducing two technical guideline documents for East Africa and the Pacific Islands regions that collect context-specific knowledge and experience on ecosystem-based agriculture while providing policy entry points for mainstreaming at the national and regional levels.



A farming family showcase its produces in Tonga, the Pacific ©FAO

On Synergies and South-South Cooperation

Media plays an important role in influencing and facilitating change in a society. Thus, raising awareness and sensitizing the public especially decision-makers and parliamentarians on the significance of implementing MEAs in the context of sustainable development through environmental governance is crucial to affect crucial decision-making processes at local and national levels. We have, therefore, developed and distributed to high-level partners publication materials to aware them on the ACP MEAs programme. In the Caribbean, the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM) which is the led implementing partner in the region together with the Caribbean Node are improving communication and networking through outreach education programmes for Marine Litter Management. These activities are expected to promote access to information and knowledge on MEAs.

Over the past years, inadequate human, financial, and technical resources have constrained the achievement of environmental sustainability in the ACP countries mainly due to silos in interventions. The synergistic implementation of the programme in the region is maximizing resources and efforts to ensure a better impact on the ground. For example, activities related to biodiversity, Regional Seas, and chemicals and waste including agriculture are being implemented in complementarity with similar programmes

such as the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA), African Monitoring of Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD), Monitoring for the Environment and Security in Africa (MESA), TerrAfrica, and integration with SDGs to strengthen management effectiveness by building capacities for the promotion of synergies with other international treaties including BRS, Minamata, CBD, CMS and CITES among others.

A similar approach is also being applied in the Pacific on the promotion of synergies and institutional cooperation between biodiversity convention and the relevant daughter agreements of the Convention on Migratory Species on common issues of concern such as Ocean Acidification, Marine Litter and Sargassum.



MEAs capacity building and awareness raising workshop. ©CARICOM

Additionally, given the diversity in knowledge, skills and experiences in the entire ACP region, collaborative efforts such as south-south cooperation are important for a sustained impact and knowledge sharing. This, however, requires political will among the partners. In an effort to solicit political will for effective management of marine areas for instance, partnerships dialogues are being promoted between the concerned Regional Seas programmes and relevant regional fisheries bodies for a cross-sectoral cooperation in the ACP and other regions to facilitate the coordination of knowledge exchange initiatives. In Africa, the African hub is collaborating with the secretariats of the Abidjan and Nairobi Conventions as well as other partners such as RECs, and regional fisheries bodies on issues related to fisheries, Ocean governance and marine pollution in the relevant African member States.

How to Get Involve?

Environmental management is everyone's responsibility in order to secure the sustainable future we want. The UN Environment Programme has established several mechanisms on how individuals and communities can contribute to environmental management. To get involve in the ACP MEAs programme, one can subscribe to our website www.acpmeas.com or follow us on twitter [@MeasAcp](https://twitter.com/MeasAcp) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-CH) for updates from the ACP region.

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