

BEST 2.0+ RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

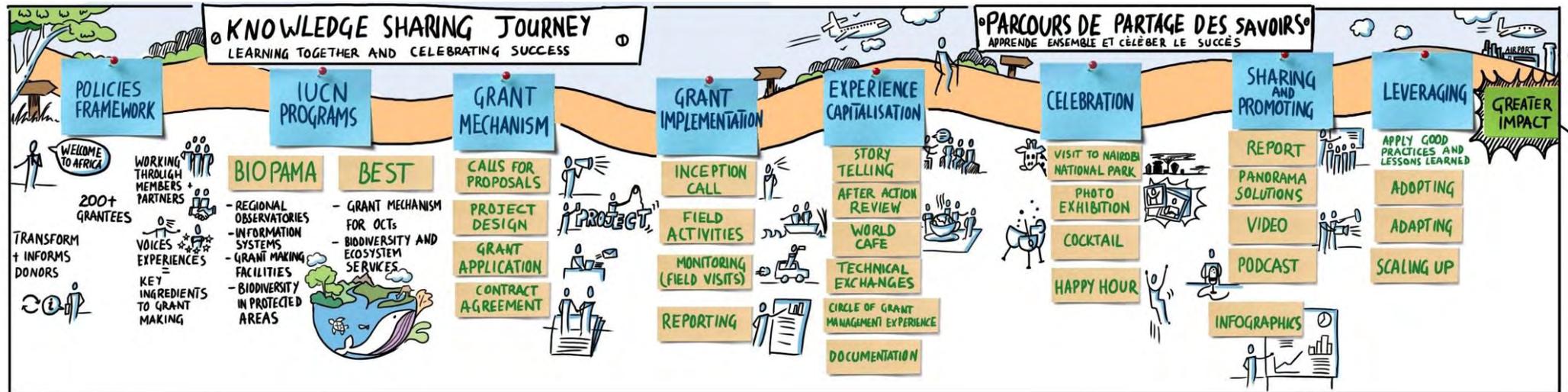
Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in the European Overseas Countries and Territories



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KNOWLEDGE SHARING JOURNEY



Knowledge Sharing Journey (Conceptualization and Graphic Facilitation by Maria Fernanda Arraes, and Graphic Recording by Gloria Muthoka)

The Knowledge Sharing Journey is an initiative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) pioneered through the BEST 2.0+ and BIOPAMA Programmes that promotes learning and knowledge sharing opportunities among grantees, and represents a stepping stone in institutionalising grant-making knowledge management at IUCN.

This BEST 2.0+ Knowledge Brief is one of the products elaborated resulting from the Knowledge Sharing Journey and intends to serve as a guide for grant-making at IUCN.

This first-ever Knowledge Sharing Journey has combined **online and in-person workshops**, in which BIOPAMA and BEST 2.0+ grantees and the IUCN management teams reflected on and analysed the grant-making experience, in the process identifying good practices and lessons learned.

83 participants from 43 countries from Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and the European Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) were part of this innovative and extraordinary experience that brought them together in Nairobi (Kenya) on 2-6 May 2023.

The journey also advanced the integration of **PANORAMA – Solutions for a Healthy Planet**, for future scaling with these and other IUCN-managed grant programmes, as a method to support reflection and documentation of successful outcomes of projects for systematic knowledge management.

As part of the Knowledge Sharing Journey, the BEST 2.0+ management team and the BEST 2.0+ grantees embraced a capitalisation experience together.



Knowledge Sharing Journey workshop in Nairobi, Kenya ©IUCN

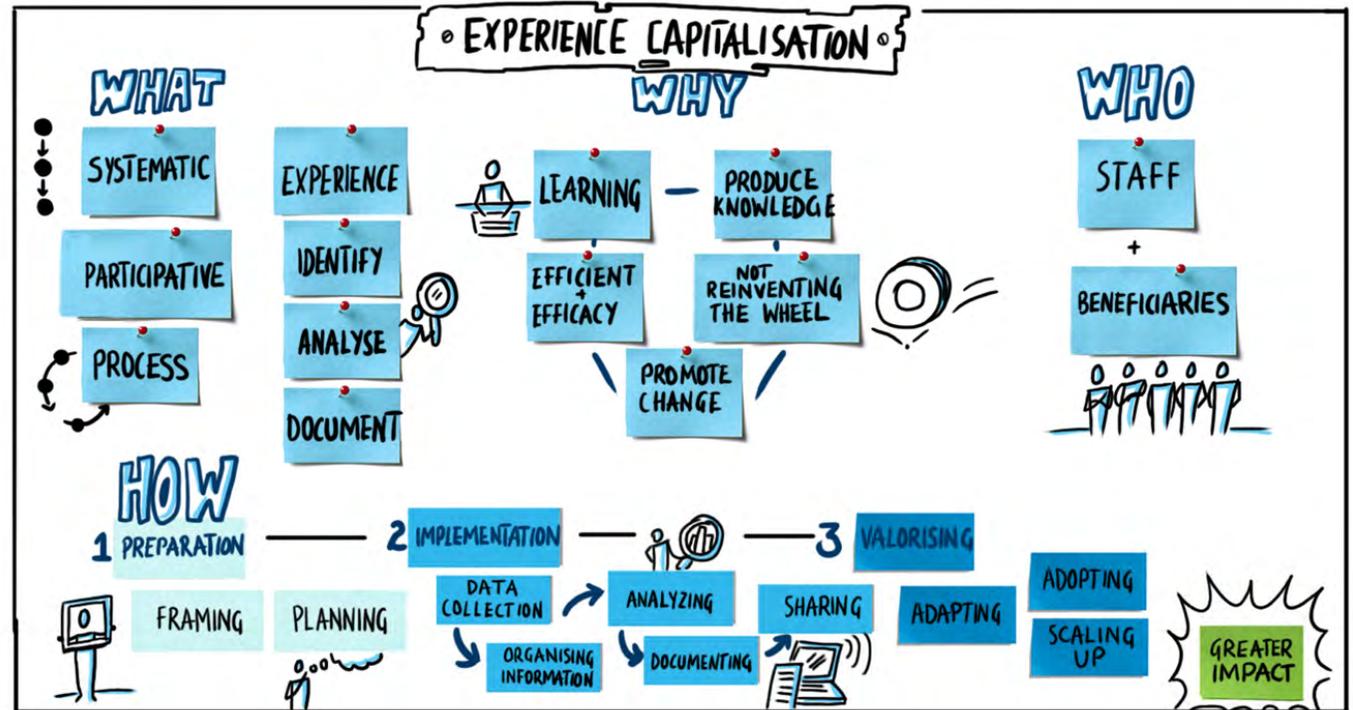
BEST 2.0+ EXPERIENCE CAPITALISATION

Experience capitalisation is a systematic, interactive and participatory process whereby an experience is identified, analysed and documented to create knowledge, which can be shared and used to generate a more significant impact. This methodology is key for effective knowledge uptake at the programme and institutional levels.

The experience capitalisation of BEST 2.0+ sought to capture, analyse, and document the knowledge and insights gained from this programme, and elaborate knowledge products to inform the results, good practices and lessons learned from the grants' project implementation, as well as from the BEST 2.0+ programme management.

The BEST 2.0+ capitalisation process afforded IUCN staff a valuable opportunity to reflect on the work accomplished, thus allowing for a deeper understanding of the programme's achievements, its challenges, and main takeaways. This approach also contributed to identifying best practices and areas for improvement in the design, implementation and monitoring of the grant mechanism, and will significantly help in determining potential areas for discussion with current and prospective donors.

Moreover, the BEST 2.0+ and BIOPAMA Knowledge Sharing Journey, endorsed by the IUCN's knowledge management tool, PANORAMA, represents an important step towards a more streamlined knowledge management practice at IUCN. By systematically capturing, documenting and sharing project and grant mechanism insights, the organisation can increase its effectiveness and efficiency in similar future endeavours. This initiative will grant IUCN an opportunity to further professionalise its grant management practices, thus



Experience Capitalisation (Conceptualization and Graphic Facilitation by Maria Fernanda Arraes, and Graphic Recording by Gloria Muthoka)

seeking to enhance project outcomes and strengthen organisational capacity.

Ultimately, the BEST 2.0+ and BIOPAMA led capitalisation process paves the way for creating a **community of practice on biodiversity conservation composed of grantees and practitioners**, IUCN staff across the globe and relevant stakeholders. This newly-created shared space will aim to foster collaboration, share learning, and exchange ideas and experiences, thus broadening the scale and impact of conservation action.



Participants from BEST 2.0+ funded projects



Knowledge Sharing Journey workshop in Nairobi, Kenya ©IUCN

BEST 2.0+ OVERVIEW

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

Financed by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), BEST 2.0+ promotes the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of ecosystem services, including an ecosystem-based approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation, in the **European Overseas Countries and Territories**, which are located in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean, Pacific, Polar and Subpolar, and South Atlantic regions.

Built upon a compelling grant mechanism, BEST 2.0+ enables, empowers and strengthens local authorities and civil society organisations committed to local development, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of ecosystem services by financing local field actions and providing targeted capacity development.

BEST 2.0+
promotes the **conservation of biodiversity** and **sustainable use of ecosystem services**

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The management structure and governance of the BEST 2.0+ are shown in the diagram below.



Source: BEST 2.0+ Operational Manual

STEERING COMMITTEE

The BEST 2.0+ Steering Committee provides the strategic direction of all phases of the programme and approves the annual operating plans. This governance body supports the European Commission (EC) as contracting authority and promotes the necessary dialogue with the BEST 2.0+ Secretariat for well-informed decision-making. Chaired by DG INTPA, it gathers representatives of other relevant services of the EC, the BEST 2.0+ Secretariat, representatives of the OCTs under the coordination of the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA), and BEST 2.0+ Regional Focal Points.

SECRETARIAT

The BEST 2.0+ Secretariat is responsible for the overall management of the programme, as well as communication with the Steering Committee and the Regional Focal Points. Their main tasks include the supervision and coordination of BEST 2.0+ activities, the financial management of the programme, its external promotion and communication, the evaluation of grantees activities, and reporting to the donor. The BEST 2.0+ Secretariat with two technical and one finance project staff.

REGIONAL FOCAL POINTS

The Regional Focal Points are responsible for leading capacity development actions in their region and providing direct and ongoing support to applicants during the call for proposals process and to grantees during their project implementation. BEST 2.0+ has one Regional Focal Point in each of the target regions, i.e. Caribbean, Indian Ocean, Pacific, Polar and Subpolar, and South Atlantic.

REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

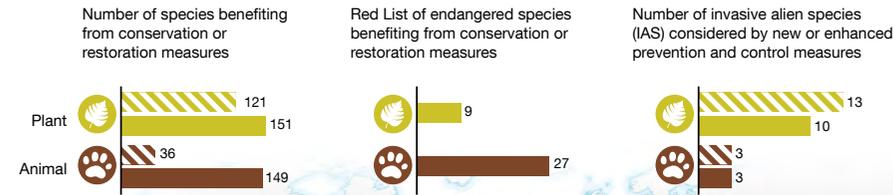
The BEST 2.0+ Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) brings together independent experts who assist in the evaluation of proposals in their region. These experts have in-depth regional knowledge, relevant backgrounds in natural and social sciences and proven practice-based expertise in interdisciplinary approaches to conservation action on-the-ground.

BEST 2.0+ RESULTS & LESSONS LEARNED

RESULTS INFOGRAPHIC

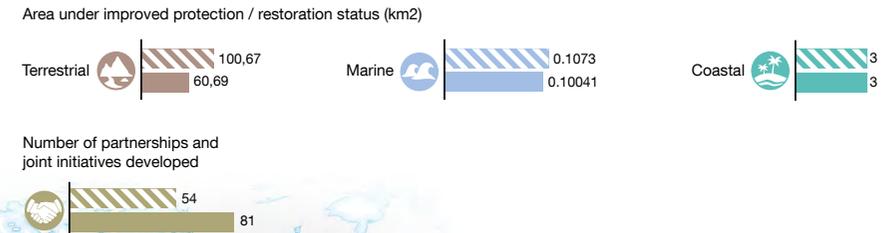
Impact

The conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of ecosystem services, including ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation were promoted as a basis for sustainable development in OCTs.



Outcomes

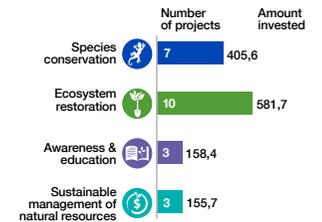
Improved engagement of civil society, MSMEs and local authorities in OCTs for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of ecosystem services.



Best 2.0+ projects

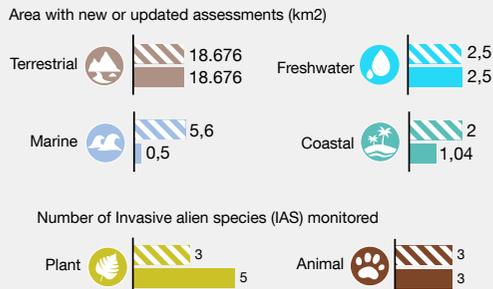


Number of BEST 2.0+ projects selected, disaggregated by themes and amount invested (in thousand euros).

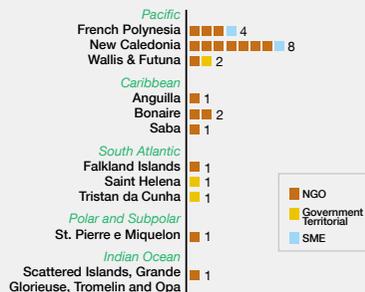


Outputs

Local CSOs, LAs and MSMEs enabled to carry out field-based initiatives for the improvement of critical habitats and ecosystems.



Number of BEST 2.0+ projects selected (23), disaggregated by OCT and type of beneficiary/ type of organisations



Increased capacities of OCT CSOs, LAs and MSMEs in terms of project proposal preparation, design, project management and reporting.

Number of people from OCTs local organisations with improved knowledge as a result of BEST 2.0+ training sessions, presentations, or active engagement in the projects presentations (aka capacity development)



Increased visibility of OCTs as key contributors to the achievement of EU and global biodiversity targets (Aichi Targets).

Number of individuals sensitised on environmental issues through social media and offline communication (aka awareness raising)



Implementation period: 6th December 2019 to 31st August 2023

BEST 2.0+ RESULTS & LESSONS LEARNED

1. THE ENGAGEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE OCTs IN BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES WAS ENHANCED

Through the awarded projects, BEST 2.0+ supported the **dialogue and active engagement of a diverse group of stakeholders**. The participatory and inclusive process strengthened the linkages between the grantees' organisations and the local and tribal communities they are embedded in, resulting in **more than 70 partnerships and joint initiatives** that will pave the way for advancing results and increasing the sustainability of these interventions.

BEST 2.0+ financed **23 projects in 11 European Overseas Countries and Territories:**

Pacific:

- French Polynesia
- New Caledonia
- Wallis and Futuna

Caribbean:

- Anguilla
- Bonaire
- Saba

South Atlantic:

- Falkland Islands
- Saint Helena
- Tristan da Cunha

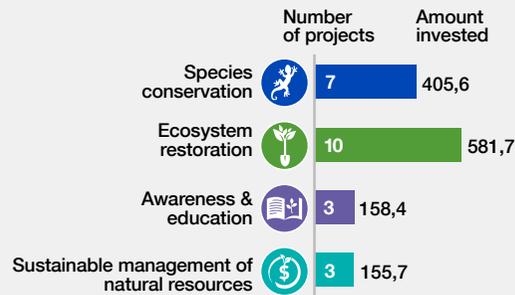
Indian Ocean:

- Scattered Islands (Grande Glorieuse, Tromelin and Europa)

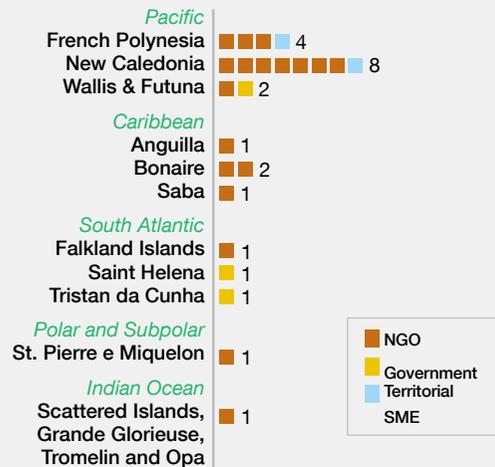
Subpolar:

- Saint Pierre and Miquelon

NUMBER OF BEST 2.0+ PROJECTS SELECTED, DISAGGREGATED BY THEMES AND AMOUNT INVESTED (IN THOUSAND EUROS).



NUMBER OF BEST 2.0+ PROJECTS SELECTED (23), DISAGGREGATED BY OCTS AND TYPE OF BENEFICIARY/ TYPE OF ORGANISATION



Beneficiaries of BEST 2.0+ funded projects

BEST 2.0+ RESULTS & LESSONS LEARNED

2. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS, LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS AND SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES IN THE OCTs WERE UPSKILLED TO DEPLOY FIELD-BASED INITIATIVES FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF CRITICAL HABITATS AND ECOSYSTEMS

The activities financed by BEST 2.0+ yielded focused conservation actions in the areas of **Ecosystem Restoration, Species Conservation, Awareness and Environmental Education and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources.**

Biodiversity: species and ecosystems

- 151 plant species benefit from conservation and restoration measures (including assessment measures), nine of which are included in the IUCN Red List of endangered species.
- 149 animal species benefit from conservation or restoration measures, 27 of which are included in the IUCN Red List of endangered species.
- +100 km² of terrestrial areas under improved protection in the Pacific.
- 3 km² of the coastal area under restoration status in the Caribbean and the Pacific.
- +18,500 km² of the terrestrial area newly assessed in the Pacific.

- 1.04 km² of coastal area with an updated assessment in the Caribbean.
- 2.5 km² of the freshwater area newly assessed in the Polar and Subpolar regions.

Biodiversity: threats reduction

- 10 Invasive Alien Species of plants impacted by the funded projects' restoration and conservation actions. The four impacted IAS are in the Pacific and in the South Atlantic.
- 3 Invasive Alien Species of animals impacted by the funded projects' restoration and conservation actions. The three species are in the Pacific.



Projects initiatives for land and ocean restoration

BEST 2.0+ RESULTS & LESSONS LEARNED

3. THE CAPACITIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS, LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS AND MEDIUM, SMALL AND MICRO ENTERPRISES IN THE OCTs INCREASED IN TERMS OF THE PROJECT DESIGN, PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND PROJECT REPORTING AND MONITORING

Local civil society organisations committed to local development, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable use of ecosystem services in the OCTs were empowered and strengthened

- + 2.900 people have seen their knowledge improve thanks to their participation in capacity development activities; these include workshops, training sessions, public presentations and tailor-made exhibitions. Most of these recipients are in the Pacific.
- BEST 2.0+ projects have enabled the conditions to amplify the knowledge and the efforts of the funded actions by:
 - devising technical material tailored to the knowledge and skills of local communities;
 - contributing to enacting official regulations that recognise local environmental associations as essential actors in conservation actions;
 - helping revamp national strategies with new species assessments.



Capacity development activity in New Caledonia

Grantees and their organisations are upskilled and empowered to apply for prospective funding

As project managers, grantees further developed valuable skills in different aspects of their work. **They demonstrated growth in project design, project delivery, financial management, and communication practices.** These improvements not only had a direct benefit in the implemented actions; but more importantly, they have enhanced the grantees' capacity to apply for prospective funding and implement future initiatives successfully.

- Grantees developed and increased their skills to design a project proposal, create a log frame and identify relevant SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) indicators to measure project progress and success. They also learned to apply the IUCN Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) for the identification of potential adverse environmental and social impacts.

- Grantees adapted their customary financial procedures to the stringent conditions of the donors, e.g., with the submission of monthly fully-fledged timesheets and the adherence to compelling procurement policies. Overall, the adoption of these practices had a positive impact on the organisation's bookkeeping, thus equipping them to navigate financial rules more effectively in the future.
- BEST 2.0+ requirements encouraged grantees to put in place an efficient time management system with a catalytic effect on their organisations' working dynamics. As part of the project's deployment, grantees learned to establish and further developed multi-stakeholder engagements that will strengthen the linkages between these local organisations and the communities they are part of.
- As part of their project monitoring and reporting, the project teams systematically collected data on project resources, activities and results; this included the routine monitoring and the established reporting of progress towards the outputs and outcome of the project using their log frame and indicators.
- In the field of communications, grantees implemented outreach activities that stimulated knowledge and educational growth among the local communities. They identified Facebook as one of the most effective social media platforms to engage with local populations and often took part in TV and radio features to reach a wider audience. Additionally, the organisation of tailor-made public events and technical presentations aided with raising awareness among the local community and attracting invested volunteers.

BEST 2.0+ grants technical and financial support for projects implementation

BEST 2.0+ has provided financial and non-financial investment to the grantees' capacities. This included **budget guidance; support to organisational development; and support to strengthen their communications, management and networking opportunities**, which ultimately can be beneficial for projects to position themselves for future funding.

BEST 2.0+ also found it vital that building capacity be geared towards reinforcing the skills to access and use information and knowledge and better monitor and evaluate environmental impacts. The latter should ensure that grantees are well acquainted with the main principles and techniques of their project monitoring and assess and identify opportunities for improvement accordingly.

BEST 2.0+ monitoring field visits

The field visits sought primarily to perform onsite technical and financial monitoring of the funded projects. Effectively, they also met the purpose of:

- Obtaining an independent perspective of the projects;
- Organising in-person capitalisation workshops catered to the suite of projects in the visited region;
- Obtaining a holistic narrative of the area in terms of conservation action;
- Meeting with local stakeholders, including government representatives, volunteers and local practitioners;

- Timely participation in the projects' outreach activities, e.g. public presentations and debates;
- Introducing the work of IUCN and BEST 2.0+ in the territory to the existing IUCN membership and beyond.

BEST 2.0+ onsite capitalisation workshops

These workshops were the cornerstone of the field visits. Some of the common reactions emerging from these exercises proved how pivotal it is to:

- Engage the wide-stakeholder spectrum when defining priorities for the call of proposals;
- Feature the enhancement of capacities among the core programme's priorities;
- Be sensitive to and pursue an inclusive approach when it comes to the local realities, gender and different demographics;
- Foster collaboration between projects from the outset in order to allow for intra-regional coordination and coherence;
- Value the projects' quality and potential for scaling up and receiving further funding;
- Reconcile the traditional knowledge of the local communities with science-driven approaches;
- Minimise the risk of project over-expectation on the part of the grantees, particularly when they do not have a lot of experience in managing and implementing such actions.

BEST 2.0+, jointly with BIOPAMA, organised a global Knowledge Sharing Journey

The Journey supported the knowledge exchange and the capacity development of grant beneficiaries and IUCN staff alike. Tailor-made sessions, both in content and format, addressed operational issues related to knowledge and project management and communication. From a technical standpoint, this journey provided a platform for participants to delve into the topics addressed by the funded actions, including biodiversity monitoring, species conservation, ecosystem restoration, protected areas management and governance, tourism in protected and conserved areas, environmental education, enforcement and surveillance and community livelihoods.



Field visits and monitoring of the funded projects

BEST 2.0+ RESULTS & LESSONS LEARNED

4. THE VISIBILITY OF THE OCTs AS KEY CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF EU AND GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY TARGETS (AICHI TARGETS) WAS INCREASED

Communication products were developed by projects, either as tools to support technical and social activities, or as informative and knowledge products targeting local and/or external audiences.

The communication activities of BEST 2.0+ projects stimulated societal interest in environmental issues

- Public events were catered to different audiences. Whilst educational presentations were designed to inform the local community at large, tailor-made technical convenings engaged invested volunteers and practitioners.

- BEST 2.0+ projects developed technical activities paired with education and awareness campaigns. This combination of hard and soft interventions increased access to information and allowed local communities, schools and other social groups to increase their knowledge of environmental issues.
- Important practices were identified as enabling factors for good results, efficient communication and engagement with local stakeholders:
 - respect and adaptability to the local culture
 - the use of the local language to foster meaningful participation of the local communities
 - intervention approaches combining scientific and local and traditional knowledge
 - promotion of knowledge sharing between different stakeholders

The communication activities of BEST 2.0+ helped increase the visibility of the EU investment in the OCTs.

The work yielded by BEST 2.0+ has been visible through different means of online and offline communications and outreach activities at programme and projects level.

At programme level, a special focus should be placed at the participation in EU policy events and international convenings like IUCN's World Conservation Congress in Marseille in 2021. Also, the Knowledge Sharing Journey was a lab that bolstered the narrative of BEST across the programme's target regions and BIOPAMA's conservation actors in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. The outcomes of this journey will be embodied in several communication and knowledge products such as videos, podcasts, a photo album and replicable case studies documented as PANORAMA Solutions.

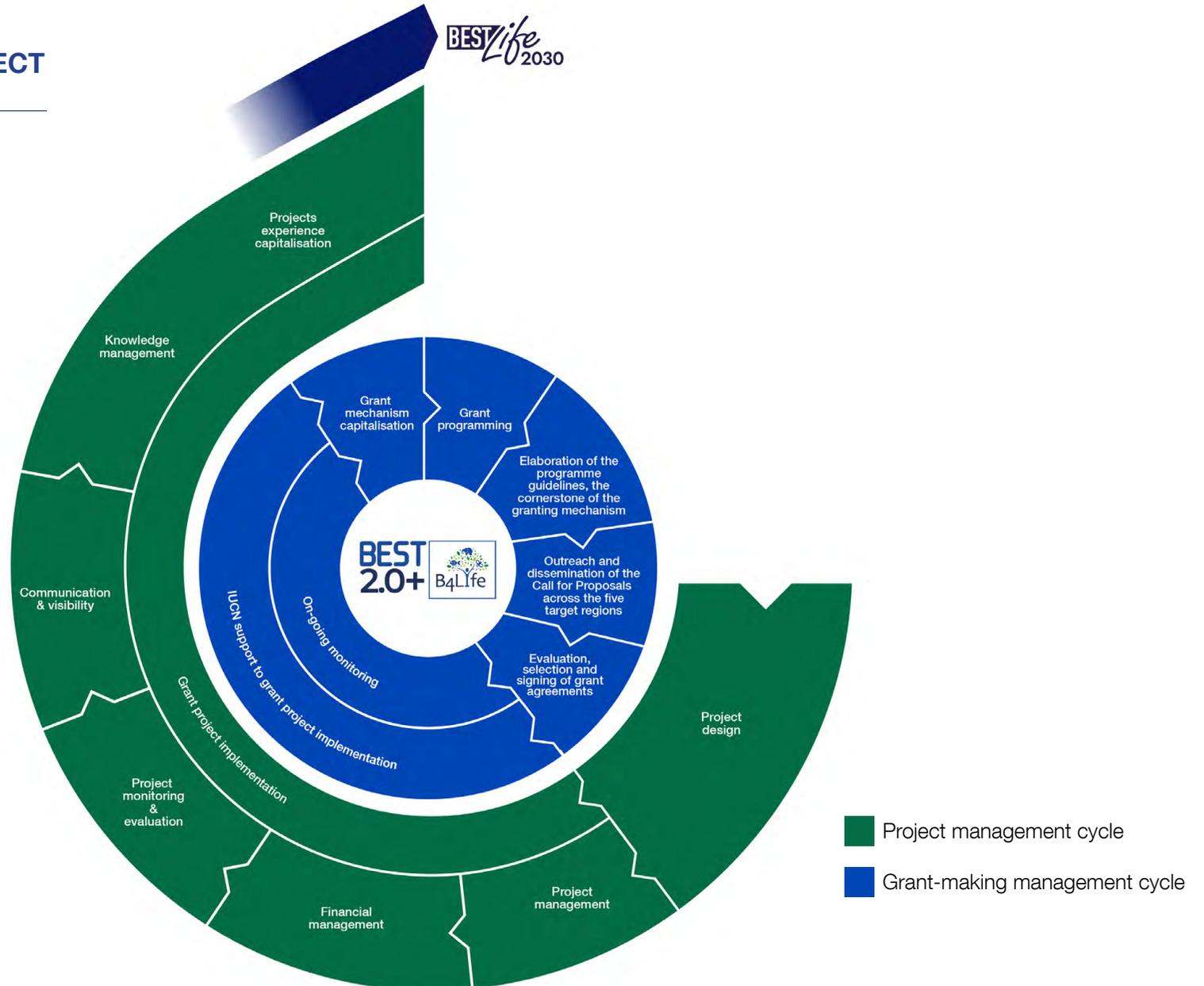
At project level, the visibility activities by the grantees have revolved around social media channels, with Facebook standing out as the most successful media channel to engage with local populations, and media engagement in the local press, on TV and radio programmes.



Figure 2 Group photo of the Knowledge Sharing Journey @IUCN

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GRANT-MAKING PROGRAMMES AND GRANT PROJECTS

GRANT-MAKING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT CYCLES



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GRANT-MAKING PROGRAMMES AND GRANT PROJECTS

The challenges faced during BEST 2.0+ implementation were analysed by the programme management team and the grant-recipients alike. These analyses yielded recommendations that will inform prospective grant programmes and will hopefully set the foundation for the design of new grant mechanisms and the implementation of successful projects.

GRANT-MAKING MANAGEMENT

	KEY CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
CALL FOR PROPOSALS	Having a balanced representation of beneficiaries, both in type of organisation and geographical distribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing a solid communications plan. • Deploying more targeted and comprehensive outreach and visibility. • Adapting the call for proposals to adequately reflect not only the biodiversity challenges, but also their socio-economic local contexts.
PROJECT DESIGN & GRANT APPLICATION	Obtaining an optimum number of proposals above the threshold.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building capacity among applicants and prospective grantees on transversal topics including project design, proposal writing, logical frameworks, project monitoring and evaluation, and ESMS procedures. • Having regional focal points locally based, with expertise in the local biodiversity realities, and with good and proven knowledge of grant-making at technical and financial levels.
CONTRACT AGREEMENT	Final review of proposals upon signing of grant agreements took longer than envisaged.	Better planning of the pre-signature phase to avoid delays in the projects' inception and the subsequent trickle-down effect in the implementation of the project.
	Not having all the grant agreements signed on the first of the given month, as it makes it complex for grantees to report the corresponding staff costs.	End the first official reporting period on the last day of the given reporting period for grantees whose grant does not start on the 1st of the month, before the new month commences.
HUMAN RESOURCES	Heavy workload during certain periods, leading to delayed turnaround from the grants team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan sufficient grant staff resources to allow for effective and efficient grant management. • Have qualified regional focal points based locally, who are knowledgeable on the relevant biodiversity contexts and possess proven experience supporting grant mechanisms and grantees at technical and financial levels.
	High turnover of IUCN staff, leading to overstretched personnel and inadequately prepared handovers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properly earmarked manpower and financial resources for the programme. • Devising a comprehensive onboarding process. • Managing and storing the information in live/shared files.
OPERATIONAL ASSISTANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing a solid communications plan. • Deploying more targeted and comprehensive outreach and visibility. • Adapting the call for proposals to adequately reflect not only the biodiversity challenges, but also their socio-economic local contexts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the capacity development needs of each group of beneficiaries. • Create a robust capacity building strategy that includes transversal topics, from monitoring and evaluation through to communications, and deploy it according to the time constraints of the grantees. • Provide collective project management guidance throughout the grant cycle. • Encourage the active engagement of the extended grants team in the activities of the programme, and not only the project leader or coordinator. • Create opportunities for collective learning and knowledge sharing between project beneficiaries at national, regional and global levels.

GRANT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

	KEY CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
LOCAL CONTEXT	Insufficient endorsement from local governments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target territorial governments among the recipients of the outreach activities. • Intertwine the programme's communication and policy-related activities. • Include policy dialogue and advocacy capacity building activities as part of the technical support provided by IUCN.
	Projects suffered delays due to the often cumbersome and lengthy operational logistics in small islands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate logistical difficulties and planning accordingly. • Provide IUCN technical support regarding procurement.
INCEPTION CALLS	The collective inception calls did not fully meet the expectations set on them, as grantees needed recurring clarifications, especially when it came to technical and financial reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt the inception calls and the content delivery to the needs of the target audience. • Have the technical and financial staff of the granted projects join the calls.
	The inception calls with grantees were not followed up by regular check-ins, properly adapted to the grant cycle, i.e. implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.	Envisage regular and individual check-ins with the grantees adapted to their timely needs, challenges and requirements as per the grant cycle.
FIELD ACTIVITIES	Some project visits were not as meaningful as they should have been, with not enough time for a proper site visit, and not 100% efficient in allocating the time available.	Organise the field visits with sufficient time in advance to allow for optimum planning, including a maximal number of projects, for quality monitoring of the project site and for having the visits coincide with project activities of relevance, e.g. involving community engagement.
	Obtaining more meaningful support from the regional focal points.	Devise compelling ToR for regional focal points that make a clear reference to their active involvement in the preparation ahead of and during the field visit.

PROJECT & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

	KEY CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
PROJECT MANAGEMENT	Insufficient implementation periods, with some delays in the contracting and disbursement of funds, which impacted the delivery of the projects and on-time completion.	Extend the grant implementation period as a means to more accurately devise a long-term vision and a sustainability strategy.
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	Rigidity in the financial requirements, leading grantees to face challenges in meeting the strict financial criteria set by the EU and IUCN.	Make it compulsory for the project's finance team to attend the inception meeting with IUCN technical and financial staff.
	Delays in validating financial reports.	Streamline financial processes and planning resources accordingly.
	Complex and burdensome financial and administrative work.	Negotiate with the donor ex-ante the possibility of adopting more lax financial requirements.
	Challenges in obtaining eligible receipts, especially when grantees operate in rural and remote areas.	Improve the clarity on budgeting, reporting, and reimbursement procedures and organise seamless capacity development sessions on this matter.
	Grantees encountered difficulties due to price increases between project proposal submission and project implementation	Shift the risk of currency exchanges to IUCN or the donor.
	Need for better understanding of the Simplified Cost Option (SCOs) of the grant.	Provide training dedicated to SCOs and share examples of good finance reports.

MONITORING & EVALUATION, COMMUNICATION & VISIBILITY AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

	KEY CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
LOGFRAME	Lack of familiarity with log frames and indicators, as grantees struggled to understand and design log frames and apply indicators effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devise a Monitoring and Evaluation learning guidance, with a focus on logical frameworks. • Provide tailored training on log frames and indicators.
REPORTING	Reporting deadlines were sometimes not met by grantees.	Have a closer follow-up with each grantee to anticipate delays, which would require, first and foremost, seamless communication with the regional focal point and close monitoring from their side.
	Reception of projects' interim and final reports that did not meet the required quality standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devise more user-friendly technical and financial templates. • Organise capacity development workshops dedicated to reviewing and explaining the reporting templates and be open for feedback, when possible.
	The project portal undermined at times the efficient workflow of grantees and IUCN grant staff.	Build up a project portal that is fit for purpose and that runs at optimal functionality.
COMMUNICATION & VISIBILITY	Grantees with insufficient skills for communication and visibility activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it compulsory for grantees to have a dedicated budget for communication to hire skilled staff or train existing ones. • Prepare comprehensive guidelines for grantees on communication and outreach strategies.
	Ineffective translation of technical language into accessible and easily consumable products.	Conduct workshops dedicated exclusively to communications and hosted by appropriate staff.
	Ineffective communication actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully align the deployment of the communication outputs with the rest of the project activities. • Guide on how to measure the effectiveness of the communication and visibility activities, beyond solely the number of engagements. • Give local stakeholders a strong sense of ownership of the issues affecting them to capture their attention and encourage action.
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT	No pre-established mechanisms for the design of the programme knowledge management or the activities that could contribute to it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate knowledge exchange among grantees and encourage collaboration from the first steps of the programme (from the call for proposal to project closure). • Feature PANORAMA, Solutions for a Healthy Planet, as an integral part of the programme.

By implementing the suggested recommendations in the project and financial management, and communication, future grantees can enhance their performance and achieve more successful outcomes. Additionally, the recommendations for the EU and IUCN aim to address the identified challenges and create a more supportive and effective grant-making system.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Contract and Administrative Considerations

1

Negotiate less stringent reporting conditions with the donor to reduce the administrative burden on grantees.

Programme Design

2

Adapt the call for proposals to local biodiversity and socio-economic challenges to ensure that the awarded actions are responsive and effective.

3

Search for synergies, establish links and adopt best practices from other grant-making programmes.

4

Create extensive guidelines to support the grantees' technical and financial reporting activities, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of their project progress.

5

Foster cross-project collaboration from the application phase and throughout to ensure geographical coherence, local coordination and enable the conditions to achieve greater impact.

6

Complete the development of an IUCN grant-making project portal to assist in the strategic and professional management of the IUCN grant-making process, and contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the grants' performance across programmes, thus ensuring an overall programmatic suite of objectives.

7

Leverage IUCN's Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) to identify and manage environmental and social risks alike.

Stakeholder Engagement

8

Involve the wide-stakeholder spectrum to define priorities and focus recommendations to foster inclusive projects.

9

Trigger policy dialogue with the territorial governments. For example, for projects that aim to devise relevant policy strategies, the involvement of the local authorities is crucial for their success and sustainability.

10

Encourage multi-stakeholder participation in the design and implementation of actions.

11

Reconcile traditional knowledge and technical/scientific approaches for the successful execution of community-based projects.

12

Engage in key policy discussions at EU and international level, to communicate insights derived from peer-to-peer knowledge exchange for biodiversity conservation, and to channel solutions into central and local government and private sector decision-making processes.

Capacity Development

13

Recognise that reinforcing individual and institutional capacities should be a constant element in the growth path of grant-recipients.

14

Create a robust capacity building strategy that includes transversal topics, from monitoring and evaluation through to communications, adapted to timely needs of the grant cycle.

15

Identify the development of cross-sectoral local capacities among the core programme's priorities.

16

Provide opportunities for collective learning and knowledge sharing between project beneficiaries at national, regional and global levels.

17

Foster peer-to-peer training tailored to grantees' needs and challenges, as well as triggering networking and cross-project collaboration.

Monitoring & Evaluation

18

Develop a solid programme logical framework that includes seamless monitoring of grants to ensure that the funding is supporting the intended priorities of the projects.

19

Measure the tangible contribution of the grant projects towards achieving national, regional and global goals for biodiversity and climate action and to achieve the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Knowledge Management

20

Systematise the interaction and networking among grantees through a mechanism meaningfully devised for information management purposes.

21

Monitor and document such exchanges with a view to sharing and managing the knowledge generated.

22

Incorporate knowledge management as a customary practice across all IUCN-led and implemented grant making programmes, leveraging from the robust partnership initiative of PANORAMA - Solutions for a Healthy Planet.

Communication & visibility

23

Correctly earmark the resources needed in terms of personnel and budget to deploy communication efforts that are effective, fit for purpose and generate the response expected.

24

Design a solid programme communications plan that identifies and adequately targets the different target audiences and prospective grantees.

25

Increase the programme's visibility by leveraging the communication activities carried out by the grantees.

26

Commit grantees contractually to earmark financial resources for communication purposes.

27

Adapt planned communication activities from the projects to the expertise and resources of grantees. This will help alleviate the burden of communication while ensuring effective outreach and visibility.

28

Further professionalise and institutionalise the communication of positive conservation actions across the different grant programmes, highlighting cross-programme impact.

Projects Sustainability

29

Ensure that the long-term continuity of the funded projects is not solely dependent on government funding, but also on alternatives like volunteer work, partnerships forging, and other income generation activities.

30

Advocate for an extended granting period, thus allowing for the design and implementation of projects with a longer-term vision.

31

Enable the conditions for grantees to apply for recurrent funding to further advance the conservation actions deployed.

32

Use PANORAMA - Solutions for a Healthy Planet to ensure the documentation, promotion and, ultimately, the replication of best practices.



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