



Context

Straddled by Cuba, Mexico and the United States, the Gulf of Mexico is a home to one of the most productive marine ecosystems in the world, making the Gulf an important global reservoir of biodiversity. However, pollution from oil and gas production (the 2010 oil spill being a devastating example) and the Mississippi River and the tourism industry and widespread over-fishing are severely impacting this productivity. This has created areas in the Gulf where life cannot be supported, or so-called “dead zones”. Though the causes of these problems are clear, there is currently no agreed regional programme for managing the resources of the Gulf and existing management approaches often lack an ecosystem-based perspective necessary to ensure protection of the Gulf.

Strategy

In partnership with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the Governments of Mexico and the United States, UNIDO initiated a regional project to promote sustainable management of the Gulf’s resources with a focus on restoring fisheries and fish stocks and reducing nutrient enrichment to safe ecosystem levels. By removing identified constraints and barriers, developing common mechanisms and tools and promoting reforms and investments the project seeks to create a foundation for an ecosystem-based management.

So far, the project infrastructure has been established and all three demonstration projects have commenced. A transboundary diagnostic analysis has been conducted in order to identify priorities for joint action, root causes and scope for concerns or opportunities. The resulting report, once agreed upon, will serve as a scientific basis for developing an agreed programme of intervention including fisheries, management reforms, conservation measures and pollution control.

Expected results

- Transboundary issues analysed and priorities defined from an ecosystem-based perspective
- Improved legal/management/planning structures for addressing the priority transboundary problems

- Improved institutional structures, regional coordination mechanisms and other regional and national bodies for conducting effective regional interventions for fisheries, habitat conservation and pollution prevention and control
- Successfully completed demonstration projects that will serve as a basis for replication in the region and outside the region
- Marine and coastal ecosystems restored, depleted fish stocks recovered and pollution reduced

Impact/Outlook

So far, the project has triggered a transboundary dialogue among the riparian countries. It has the potential to make an important contribution by providing the needed building blocks, such as information systems and exchange, reinforced capacity and mechanisms for stakeholder participation. An enhanced knowledge of the oceanography of the gulf will assist the countries in addressing uncertainty regarding ocean-atmosphere links. The project will bring together the private sector, civil society representatives and government agencies at all levels and donors interested in supporting work in the region. As the social and economic gains are realized, this will provide an initial incentive to the countries to continue and strengthen their support for the project and to replicate these efforts.

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At a glance:

Goal:	Sustainable management of the Gulf of Mexico
MDG:	7. Environmental Sustainability
Thematic area:	Environment and Energy
Donors:	Government of Mexico, Government of the United States, Global Environment Facility (GEF)
Partners:	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (Mexico), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (United States)
Budget:	USD 101,750,000
Status:	ongoing
Duration:	June 2009 – June 2013

