

Socio-Economic Assessment of the Blue Economy in Seychelles

Concept note for national consultation webinar | 21 April 2021



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Acknowledgements

The assessment is being prepared by Stuart Laing (consultant) under the supervision of Mama Keita, Director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (SRO-EA) and Raquel Frederick, Associate Economic Affairs Officer. A draft will be presented to Seychelles government representatives and other stakeholders in April 2021.

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Cover image: [Anse Volbert Beach on Praslin Island, Seychelles. Adel Newman/Shutterstock.com](#)

I. Context

The “Blue Economy” includes all activities deriving from aquatic ecosystems (e.g., oceans, coasts, rivers, lakes, groundwater) and recognizes their synergies. The concept also recognizes that the productivity of these ecosystems is a basis for thriving aquatic-based economies in island, coastal, and even landlocked-states. The Blue Economy is encapsulated in the African Union’s 2050 Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy and the Agenda 2063, which describes the Blue Economy as the “new frontier of African Renaissance”. However, the socio-economic and ecological potential of aquatic ecosystems is not sufficiently measured in Africa. This hinders adequate understanding of resources at stake and the formulation of effective policies and tools towards their sustainable use and management. Therefore, it is strategically important to build the knowledge and capacities of key stakeholders who can in turn promote informed policymaking to harness the African Blue Economy.

In 2016, UNECA’s Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (SRO-EA) launched the Blue Economy Policy Handbook for Africa, an essential tool for developing strategic policy frameworks for the sustainable use and management of aquatic resources. The proposed framework adopts a multi-sectoral approach, in which Blue Economy sectors are intertwined through their economic, social and environmental dimensions and strengthened synergies. The Handbook’s methodology has been leveraged in recent work developing Blue Economy strategies in Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles, and regionally by the Indian Ocean Commission, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union.

More recently, SRO-EA has been supporting efforts to more accurately measure and value the Blue Economy in the region. In 2020, this involved producing a prototype of the Blue Economy Valuation Toolkit (BEVTK) for socio-economic-ecological assessments of the potential of the Blue Economy. The BEVTK was tested by consultants in three country-contexts: island-state (Seychelles), coastal-state (Djibouti) and landlocked-state (Rwanda). The Phase I toolkit and early experiences were presented to a group of over 75 government officials, academics and other experts at a virtual Expert Group Meeting in November 2020.

In 2021, UNECA SRO-EA has re-engaged the consultants to develop an improved version of the BEVTK and produce in-depth socio-economic assessments of the Blue Economy’s potential in all three countries. This engagement will also include targeted virtual workshops with the technical experts in the respective governments, to demonstrate the use of the toolkit and further promote its use in policy planning. These workshops will also provide a space for national experts to provide feedback on the preliminary results of the respective assessments.

II. Brief profile of the Seychelles Blue Economy

Seychelles was an early adopter of the Blue Economy concept, creating a national strategic policy *Roadmap* for the period 2018-2030 to support the transition to a Blue Economy. The seven principles conceived to guide this process capture the essence of a sustainable Blue Economy through their concern with marine health, economic efficiency and social-wellbeing. The island nation is intricately linked to the marine environment, thus it could be argued that most, if not all, industries are indirectly linked to the Blue Economy.

Seychelles is Africa's smallest country with a terrestrial area of 455km², approximately half of which is protected (Government of Seychelles, 2014). It has the smallest population of the continent of approximately 98,400 in 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020a). Seychelles' two primary industries are tourism and fisheries. Pre-Covid-19, these two industries represented formal employment for at least 26% and 17% of the population respectively (Hindle, 2019), and tourism contributing 55% to GDP both directly and indirectly and fisheries constituting 20% of GDP, whilst fisheries are responsible for ~93% of the nation's exports (Hindle, 2019). Consequently, it is apparent how crucial a healthy marine environment is for the country's success, as well as international travel. Additionally, it is understandably clear that the Seychellois are closely connected with the marine environment.

The BEVTK has been used to create initial estimates of the Blue Economy in Seychelles. These figures are yet to be refined. With this in mind, the BEVTK indicates that the economic component of the Blue Economy directly contributed \$495 million in 2018. It is responsible for approximately 45% of all formal jobs. Socio-economically, the average Seychellois is estimated to consume 58.9kg of fish per year showing a high reliance on a healthy and well-managed ocean. Seychelles has a Gini coefficient of 46.8 (2014) putting it among the 25 highest internationally. Youth unemployment (17%) is far higher than the country's average (4.8%), with these figures being reported pre-Covid-19. Ecologically, Seychelles is a nation of high wealth aesthetically and naturally. It is estimated to have extensive seagrass meadows which are currently being mapped, 1690 km² of coral reefs, over 1,100 species of fish and more than 170 species of coral. Limited accurate and recent ecological measurements resulted in estimates of the cover of coral reefs, mangrove forests and seagrass meadows being used in the BEVTK to return an ecological value of \$48 billion, almost 30 times greater than Seychelles GDP in 2018. It is clear that, combined, the Blue Economy is an integral part of Seychelles economy, and management of this is integral to Seychelles continued success.

III. National consultation objectives

The effects of the global Covid-19 pandemic have been catastrophic for many nations. The pandemic has, however, created an opportunity for nations, governments and citizens to reassess how they conduct their economic activities, how society functions within this, and how these activities impact upon the natural environment. Attention is being focused toward ensuring that the three pillars – economic, social and ecological – be developed harmoniously as opposed to having harmful effects on each other. Balanced growth and development aspirations, such as these, are central to the paradigm of the Blue Economy.

In order to understand how a country's Blue Economy is performing and progressing, it needs to be measured. UNECA's BEVTK is means of doing just that: measuring the economic contribution of the Blue Economy, whilst taking into account how socio-economic wellbeing in this context is changing, as well as how the natural environment is being affected through changes in ecological measures and values.

The objective of the national webinar is to provide an overview of the BEVTK. More specifically, the socio-economic indicators will be presented and discussed, providing stakeholders with an opportunity to comment on the current proposed indicators and to register their concerns and suggestions. Discourse entered into by stakeholders will only serve to strengthen the BEVTK. This in turn will ensure a product that is more robust, comprehensive, yet user friendly.

It is expected that during the webinar, stakeholders will be able to interact and discuss:

- The delineation of the Blue Economy in Seychelles from an economic context
- The usefulness, or practicality, of the BEVTK
- How this can be used to further Seychelles Blue Economy agenda
- What would be needed to complement the BEVTK to ensure robust and accurate reporting on Seychelles Blue Economy
- Ownership of the BEVTK by a specific organisation/s

The specific discussion points that will benefit the completion of the socio-economy potential of Seychelles Blue Economy include:

- i. Whether the indicators included in the socio-economic assessment are representative of Seychelles' Blue Economy
- ii. Whether other indicators should be considered to be a part of Seychelles' socio-economic indicators
- iii. Whether the indicators identified, and any suggested by stakeholders during the webinar, can be collected and compiled accurately and cost effectively within a suitable time-frame
- iv. Whether the results of the socio-economic indicators, and the BEVTK in general, are likely to be used by government or policy makers going forward

IV. Format of the virtual workshop

This national consultation will be held virtually on 21 April 2021 with the following agenda:

Welcome and Introduction

Mama Keita, Director of UNECA Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (SRO-EA)

Brief Overview - UNECA and the Blue Economy

Raquel Frederick, Associate Economic Affairs Officer

Overview of Series of Consultancies

Stuart Laing, National Consultant

Overview of Toolkit

Philippe Lallemand, Consultant

Presentation of Draft National Socio-Economic Assessment of Blue Potential

Stuart Laing, National Consultant

Q&A

The event and discussions will be moderated by Stuart Laing.

V. Participants

This virtual workshop will bring together representatives of the ECA and the main stakeholders of the country, including technical departments such as the Directorate of the Economy and the Directorate of the Environment, representatives of academia, the private sector, and institutions. International organizations involved in the Blue Economy will also attend.