

“Building Urban Climate Resilience in South-Eastern Africa”

UN-HABITAT-OXFAM RETREAT

Summary minutes

The last day of the project Regional Workshop was dedicated to the internal retreat of the project core team. It was a unique opportunity to discuss about different topics revolving around the project while sitting around the same table. In particular, the main objectives were to create the space for open discussion on the main issues that are faced on a daily basis; to align working methods, expectations, and perspectives for the project; and to plan for future development.

PROJECT PROGRESS

The first session was dedicated to the exchange of lessons learned and experiences from the countries. National and City Project Managers shared their thoughts on how the project implementation is going, specifically referring to the main bottlenecks, challenges, and recommendations.

Several points were raised by more than one country, while others were reported as unique to the specific contexts. Below a summary of the main themes raised by the national project teams:

- **Pace of implementation:** each country has a different situation, so the pace of the implementation of activities is differing from country to country, both for the activities at the national- and city-level. Of course, the four countries share common issues that are affecting the implementation, like for example the variations to the sub-projects due to the changes occurred since the project design, or the price inflation, but some situations are characteristic to each context. Comoros for example faced some challenges since the registration of Oxfam in the country and the following opening of the bank account, clearly causing some delay to the activities; they reported issues related to the political instability and to the lack of some capacity at the local level, as municipalities in Comoros are a quite new institution compared to other countries. Despite the urgency of advancing on the project results, countries expressed the importance of carrying out each activity properly, making sure that the highest levels of quality are guaranteed, and safeguard measures respected.
- **National level budgeting:** for the activities at the national level the budget is quite limited; this entails some challenges when it comes to the involvement of the central government into the activities – including at the city level – in order to capitalize on internal available capacities. A possible solution to overcome this difficulty could be co-financing, through for example other complementary projects as it is already happening in Malawi and Madagascar.
- **Communities’ involvement:** the four countries agreed on the utmost importance of communities’ participation, especially for the city-level activities that often involve the same inhabitants in the construction works. They are the final beneficiaries of such activities, and their needs must be considered starting from the technical design stage. As already mentioned, some changes and delays in the sub-projects have been experienced, so it is fundamental that communities are involved and informed at every step. The Mozambique team shared its experience with communities’ consultations emphasizing on how the grievance mechanism is also a great instrument to collect feedbacks, and on the importance of the involvement of

vulnerable groups – including women, youth and people with disabilities – for an appropriate design of the interventions.

BUDGET

The budget for the project is posing some challenges as it is quite limited, especially for the activities at the national and regional level because most of it is allocated to the construction works of the sub-projects. The main problems are that costs increased since the budget was drafted, and that some costs were not budgeted or foreseen, like for example the communications costs and some national taxes. An additional point raised specifically by the Comoros team is that Oxfam internal procedure for budget revision is quite a lengthy process causing some delays.

Possible solutions and action points are listed below:

- Oxfam is planning to speed up the activities so to speed up the expenditures. Some concern is raised by UN-Habitat as the acceleration on expenditures should not affect the quality and preciseness of the works.
- It is important to justify and document all constraints that are preventing us to deliver on some points.
- Budget for monitoring missions should be ensured.
- Proposal to systematise the budgeting and not doing it country by country. A new budget based on the lessons learned should be build for the second half of the project.
- Resource mobilization is key for both UN-Habitat and Oxfam. The proposal is to work on a common strategy involving all the project stakeholders and adopt a cost-sharing approach, which UN-Habitat is already doing (see below).
- The project team agreed to leverage the reporting to the donor to highlight the challenges involving the budget.
- In order to monitor the implication of the trickle-down effect of all the contractual obligations, the suggestion is to map all of the contracts and agreement involved in the projects.

CO-FINANCING AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

As mentioned above, UN-Habitat has some projects ongoing that are co-financing the SEA Urban Resilience project, mostly supplementing the human resources budget but also some of the activities, as follows:

- In **Malawi** two main projects are contributing with some co-financing: the first one funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) looks at Nature-based Solutions and Ecosystem-based Adaptation in Lilongwe and has a *capacity building* component in which will be involved also the city of Zomba. The second one is a joint project with UNDP for emergency preparedness with activities in four cities – including Zomba – that has been pre-approved by ECHO and is waiting for final approval.
- In **Madagascar** a second project funded by SIDA on Nature-based Solutions in Morondava is finishing in June 2022. This project is undertaking some *mangrove restoration* activities complementing the SEA Urban Resilience project helping in this way to maintain a good relationship with the communities as interventions already started. The general expectation

with the projects funded by SIDA both in Madagascar and Malawi is to use them as pilots to showcase and scale them up.

- In **Comoros** a project funded by the World Bank for post-cyclone housing reconstruction and disaster risk management has just started. The complementarity with the SEA Urban Resilience project lies in the activities regarding the *legal framework* in the country, and in the *capacity building* at the central and local government.
- In **Mozambique** UN-Habitat is contributing to one component of an Ecosystem-based Adaptation UNDP project funded by GIZ which is co-financing *monitoring missions* and *capacity building* activities.
- Two years ago, UN-Habitat signed an agreement with UNDP and now the two agencies are drafting a joint proposal for smart urban resilience in southern Africa which, although it is still in a pipeline stage, it may represent a possibility for future co-financing for activities involving DiMSUR and the four cities of the project. Additionally, the Resilient Africa Initiatives from GIZ is being explored as a way to reinforce DiMSUR.

On Oxfam side, there are some complementary activities with other projects – although no co-financing is happening yet – as follows:

- In **Madagascar** a concept note was submitted to the Blue Action Fund for mangrove protection, sustainable livelihood, and carbon credit system establishment to make the protection of the mangroves sustainable in the Menabe region. Other investigations are being carried out for possible interventions on response and resilience in the south of the country.
- In **Comoros** UNDP and the EU are interested to collaborate with Oxfam on waste management issues and mangroves restoration the Moroni area. Discussions with WFP are ongoing for interventions on resilience building, risk reduction, and Early Warning Systems.
- In **Mozambique**, Chokwe will benefit from the complementary activities that are being carried out under the readiness and preparedness programme.
- In **Malawi** there is constant coordination with the urban resilience programme.

At this stage of the project, resource mobilization is key to cover the funding gap. As a first step it should be defined what is missing to implement current activities and what is needed to support DiMSUR. The proposal is to **develop a joint fundraising strategy** building on the comparative advantage of the existing multi-stakeholder partnership. The SEA Urban Resilience project should be leveraged as a showcase of the partnership’s achievements and expertise. The agreement is to set up a small task team composed by Silvia Testi, Benedetta Gualandi and Lynn Chiripamberi from Oxfam, Fruzsina Straus from UN-Habitat, and Nuno Remane from DiMSUR, to put together a fundraising strategy having the next DiMSUR Executive Board as a possible deadline for a first draft.

REPORTING AND EVALUATION

After a brief discussion on Oxfam’s quarterly reports where UN-Habitat confirmed that the structure and level of detail of the reporting is good, the discussions focused on the organisations for the next Project Performance Report (PPR) on the second year of implementation to be submitted to the donor. Below the main points:

- As the Adaptation Fund takes time to review and disburse the funds, the submission should be done as soon as possible, ideally aiming at the first available date which is 23rd June 2022.
- The organization of the information collection should be the same as last year, being Silvia Testi and Selene Angelone responsible for coordinating it with city and national project managers for Oxfam and UN-Habitat sides respectively. Monica Gakindi (UN-Habitat) and Antonio Mancini (Oxfam) will be responsible to fill the financial and procurement sections of the form.
- The tentative timeline is the following:
 - 31 May 2022: final date for information collection at the country and city level. If any key activity is expected to be carried out between this date and the end of the reporting period (23 June 2022), it should be flagged out so that the information can be integrated in the PPR before the actual submission.
 - 10 June 2022: UN-Habitat and Oxfam consolidate the data at the national and city level respectively.
 - 17 June 2022: the final consolidated draft is ready to be submitted to the Adaptation Fund.

This year the mid-term evaluation of the project has been conducted by an independent evaluator. UN-Habitat will coordinate this with the internal Evaluation Unit and will draft the ToRs that will be then shared with Oxfam. Oxfam prepared an internal MEAL plan that will share with UN-Habitat.

The internal retreat gave an opportunity to also have a lively exchange between the countries on environmental and social management plans issues and arrangements, and on gender issues, including reflections on how to better include women in consultations and other activities. The discussion was so interesting and fruitful that led to the proposal of organising internal thematic discussions quarterly for country teams to learn from each other on how they are managing different issues.

COMMUNICATIONS

The day was concluded with a discussion on the communications strategy which needs to be thoroughly organised as there is no budget specifically earmarked for it but yet so critical for capturing the entire process for fundraising and visibility purposes. Jessica Valerani, Communications Officer at Oxfam, conducted the discussion that highlighted some critical points as follows:

- Ongoing activities should be leveraged to extract useful information for communications purposes, like for example monitoring can provide numbers, achievements, community feedbacks. In general, collaboration from the field is very much needed for this purpose.
- At least one story should be drafted per country by June 2022.
- Both for social media and for web stories it is better to use the already available channels.
- Although some communications activities are already planned at the city level, the national level is lacking such planning and it would be important to show the impact of the project activities on governments. In this sense, set up a calendar could be a good solution to have an idea of what is going on and to better plan for further initiatives.
- At the moment UN-Habitat team does not have a communication officer dedicated to the project, but it is planning to get one on board in the next few months. In the meantime, the team is organising itself with the support of a consultant and few interns to bridge the gap.

- On the communications material, the agreement is to first update what is already available – presentations, leaflets, etc. – and to start thinking about new material favouring visuals and infographics. The target should be clearly defined and based on that, adapt communications material, also in terms of languages. For translations and graphic design online UNV could be used.
- The existing project communications strategy has to be adapted to make it feasible because of the budget constraints.
- A specific communications strategy should be drafted for DiMSUR.
- The defined platform to share communications material is BOX.