

**GEF-UNDP Distance Learning and Information Sharing Tool  
(DLIST-Benguela)  
Terminal Evaluation Report<sup>1</sup>**

## **1. Executive Summary**

DLIST-Benguela (DLIST) is a GEF-UNDP Medium-sized project (2005 through 2008) designed to provide an information sharing program to support the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem (BCLME). The DLIST Programme focuses on the coastal areas that are part of the BCLME along the west coast of South Africa, Namibia and Angola.

The Benguela Current has long been recognized as one of the world's major cold-water marine ecosystems and provides enormous productivity and livelihoods for these three nations. This region is also rich in coastal (terrestrial) resources with astounding land forms and coastal features that include impressive levels of biodiversity, endemism and cultural heritage. But like many such areas around the world, this coastal zone is transitioning rapidly, resulting in a range of socio-economic and environmental pressures, including coastal development, changes in land ownership and recreational/tourism use, chronic pressure on fishery resources, and dwindling terrestrial mining, shifting towards offshore mining and its concomitant impacts. All of this change is in the context of significant poverty and threats to coastal environmental resources and services that hold the natural capital and potential to provide for many future generations.

The DLIST-Benguela programme was established to promote the sharing of information and ideas between a range of "coastal players" that include governments, industry and the private sector, and most importantly local communities. DLIST's emphasis is intended to communicate, and thus promote, effective environmental stewardship, such as the design and execution of management alternatives and actions, and sustainable livelihoods—with the Benguela Current's coastal and marine resources as the foundation.

DLIST is comprised of an Internet website, a member-based discussion forum accessible through email or the Internet, distance learning courses, and a networking program aimed at community-based natural resources management. During its three-year operation, DLIST has attempted to address the following specific issues:

1. bridge information across interests and disciplines through an accessible Internet Communication Technology (ICT) application and to engage an active user base
2. promote the flow of information and improve networking between coastal role players (stakeholders)
3. create a common pool of knowledge and
4. facilitate dissemination of the scientific outputs of the BCLME and BENEFIT programmes, as well as other projects, to all civil stakeholders along the BCLME.

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Anthony J. Hooten, AJH, Environmental Services, 4900 Auburn Avenue, Suite 201

*Context and purpose of the evaluation*

The terminal evaluation for the DLIST-Benguela project was undertaken to assess its relevance, performance and any lessons learned from the experience. The evaluation is also intended to examine the impact against stated objectives and examine the sustainability of results, including the enhancement of capacity, the achievement of broader environmental goals for GEF and UNDP and to identify any lessons learned that may be applied to subsequent projects.

*Main Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned*

DLIST has been a significant and relevant program for the Benguela Current Region, and as a model for regional information sharing and facilitation, DLIST has the potential to be scaled to other regions in the coastal South Africa Development Community (SADC) countries. The program has developed significant stakeholder ownership and use of relevant information by providing a platform to keep many informed. A range of coastal stakeholders have enrolled and remain committed to the model and vision that is DLIST. However, the network is not yet as comprehensive as envisioned in the project document, and there remains both the need and the potential for continued strengthening within the BCLME region—to ensure that DLIST adequately tailors the appropriate technology at the right level for broader up-take and use, especially among isolated coastal communities, and to also sustain the DLIST service over time.

DLIST has evolved into a more general platform for environmental and social causes, and has—to a notable degree—gradually moved away from one of its originally-stated intents: “translating scientific information”. This is not as much a criticism as an acknowledgement that the platform has adapted to the immediate interests and needs of its user base, and in particular to those local communities in the region. It is admirable that this medium-sized project (MSP) has been effective with its internal monitoring and evaluation, so as to adjust its operations based on observed need.

DLIST’s on-line platform has seen marked improvements over the course of the project and especially in contrast to the web platform used during the earlier pilot phase (prior to this MSP). There is sound evidence for a strong and on-going user base, especially for DLIST’s discussion forum; and in fact, many DLIST stakeholders largely define DLIST in the context of this single electronic feature. While the other electronic features support an active Internet community, this represents only a limited percentage of the entire DLIST community of practice. DLIST remains faced with communication bottlenecks, especially with Internet connections in certain locales. Internet connectivity and higher throughput enjoyed by many developed countries still remains a challenge in much of the current DLIST area. Even among more developed communities, connections are still slow and expensive, and this emphasizes the importance of a broad range of communication to the community of practice. Challenges also remain for DLIST in meeting the needs of other stakeholders within the BCLME region with media and materials that best relate to the communication currency and language of each locality.



The Distance Learning component of DLIST has been a successful endeavor by many accounts. Throughout the evaluation interviews, the availability of courses was repeatedly cited as an important improvement for the region and has made a genuine and significant difference in some peoples' lives. However, the courses remain largely focused on academia and those with reliable Internet access and connectivity. DLIST should continue to search for ways to strengthen its outreach—to reframe and continue education to a larger percentage of the population. Fortunately, DLIST's monitoring and evaluation effort has been one of the program's strengths, and has identified broader distance learning as a need. The environmental film festival, *EarthNotes*, is one good example in this regard, but DLIST is in the process of addressing the issue in other ways and should continue this focus.

The PMU has performed well during the project. It has demonstrated that it is aware of DLIST's strengths and weaknesses and frequent self-monitoring and internal evaluation has been refreshing to observe. The PMU's management team has been effective in tracking factors that have and have not worked for the program and have made useful adjustments accordingly.

DLIST remains dependent on donor funding to continue its activities and outreach. Sustainable financial support beyond the MSP period, and beyond in-kind contributions of some stakeholders, is not yet defined for DLIST to serve as a self-sustaining, operational network. This is an important consideration because of the expectation—and to some degree, dependence—that many DLIST stakeholders have for the information and services provided by the program. However, a significant part of DLIST's success rests with its independence from institutions (whether government or private), and careful consideration should be given to where a sustainably-funded DLIST program should be housed, so that it can continue to support its stakeholders objectively.

DLIST has the potential to serve as a regional model for information sharing and awareness beyond the BCLME region, provided that it applies the lessons it has learned during the past three years, the observations from its stakeholders, its management team and this evaluation in future program design, and continues to be sensitive to and adapts to local community needs.

DLIST has been good at collaborative management arrangements, because its network is long and deep, with historical roots in South Africa and Namibia. Lessons from Angola point to the probability that it will not be easy to establish and sustain new DLIST networks in different regions, so careful consideration will need to be given to the staging of priority elements of the DLIST model. DLIST should continue to strive to evaluate the uptake potential of each local community and then tailor the most effective suite of tools in sharing information. Hence, establishing DLIST in new regions should be systematic and targeted, with a focus on certain components in place first, before attempting to expand across local communities in other coastal areas. ICT should only be

put in place after scoping of specific communication needs and identification and recruitment of champions has occurred.

While DLIST's focus has been on ICT as a major entry point into information sharing and connecting individuals who share common interests, lessons from this experience emphasize the importance of the human dimension of the process. The development of trust through making good on promises, leveraging resources by seeking win-win solutions, routine communication, being open to adaptation through review, monitoring and evaluation and strategic use of a broad spectrum of tools and approaches with DLIST's constituents are the main ingredients required to develop and maintain a successful network over time.

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## 2. Introduction

### *Purpose of the Evaluation*

In accordance with requirements set forth in GEF MSPs, supported projects are subject to mid-term and terminal evaluations. This terminal evaluation (TE) was undertaken to assess the relevance, performance and success of the DLIST-Benguela project. It is intended to examine the impact against stated objectives and examine the sustainability of results, including contributions to enhancement in capacity and the achievement of broader environmental goals for GEF and UNDP, and sharing lessons with subsequent projects (refer to Annex 1 for the TE Terms of Reference).

### *Key Issues addressed*

The stated aims for the DLIST-Benguela Project are to bridge important gaps in information and learning through ICT applications, and to increase awareness and to provide access to training and the flow of information between coastal stakeholders, so that a common pool of knowledge is generated and maintained. DLIST's stated project goal and objective are as follows:

#### ***“The Project Goal:***

To ensure that collaborative management arrangements for stress reduction are in place to protect the ecological integrity of the transboundary BCLME and sustain living marine resources vital to the sustainable development of coastal communities.

#### ***The Project Objective:***

To bridge the information gap by using innovative ICT applications to provide access to training and to increase flow of information between experts, institutions and networks and coastal players including communities, as well as between themselves so a common pool of knowledge is created and maintained.”

According to the project documentation, DLIST's performance is directly connected to key development issues, such as poverty alleviation (“the ultimate goal of DLIST<sup>2</sup>”), HIV/AIDS, alternative livelihoods, environmental impact assessment and integrated development planning, through sharing lessons learned on the electronic platform and through mediators. DLIST lays claim to indirectly working within its region to address the eight Millennium Development Goals<sup>3</sup>.

The DLIST-Benguela project has four stated outcomes (and thus defined as program components), and the key issues addressed during this evaluation were to assess the extent to which the outcomes have been realized. The four outcomes are:

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<sup>2</sup> DLIST Project Document, page 29, paragraph 46.

<sup>3</sup> DLIST-IWLEARN GEF Experience Note #2, in preparation (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>).



1. ICT Platform – to put in place an innovative and user-friendly Internet presence (i.e. a multipurpose website) for coastal stakeholders
2. Course Development – to offer coastal users a distance learning course of sustainable development in coastal areas
3. Knowledge Management – to promote free access and flow of information between coastal players
4. Outreach – to make the ICT platform available to coastal communities.

#### *Evaluation Methods and Structure*

This TE was conducted by performing a desk review (Annex 1 & 2), conducting a mission to South Africa and Namibia (August 26 through September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008; see Annex 3) to meet with and interview a range of DLIST stakeholders (Annex 4), and then follow-up communications via email, Internet Communications (e.g. SKYPE) or telephone, revisiting questions with certain persons interviewed, or discussions with those DLIST stakeholders who were not available during the field mission. DLIST stakeholders residing in Angola were not met in person, so communications were conducted or attempted either through telephone interviews or email correspondence.

The documents evaluated during the desk review are listed in Annex 2. They include the DLIST Project Document and agreement signed by all three countries, the Logical Framework, Steering Committee meeting minutes, workshop minutes, notes and reports, International Knowledge Management (IKM) quarterly reports, the DLIST website, newsletters, and statistical reports, work plans and activity assessments, and other miscellaneous notes.

#### *Angola*

As part of the project document, an important expansion component of DLIST's model was to move into new geographic areas also dependent upon the Benguela current. The project document states:

“Through collaboration with various partners such as the BCLME Programme, government departments, CBO, NGOs, academic institutions, etc., DLIST intends to expand its influence into regional and local jurisdictions of Angola, a country that is now entering a new era after the ending of a 27-year war. The current DLIST platform already covers the coastal areas along the South African West Coast and parts of Namibia. However, the aim there is to further involve coastal communities in these countries through emerging multi-purpose resource centers (MPRCs) established with poverty alleviation funding. DLIST will also be used to connect the Activity Centers of the BCLME Programme with communities and other role players such as the resource centers planned for coastal communities in Angola using a blend of donor and government funding allocated to the Institute for the Development of Artisanal Fisheries (IPA).”

After review of information and discussion with the DLIST Chief Technical Advisor (CTA), it was determined by the evaluator to forego a visit to Angola for the field evaluation mission. This decision was based on the following:

1. Apparent lack of substantive progress and responsiveness from Angolan officials and other potential stakeholders as a result of the desk review

2. Additional discussion with EcoAfrica's DLIST liaison to Angola.
3. The transaction costs (within and outside of government authorization) that would have been required to safely arrange for mission travel
4. Apparent limited ability to operate within and outside of the capitol, Luanda, given the available time (2 days) and to meet with any relevant stakeholders within the calendar and resource period available for the field mission.

In place of the visit, EcoAfrica arranged for the TE to communicate with Angolans who have had some experience or interest with DLIST. In addition, the evaluator communicated on several occasions with EcoAfrica's Angola liaison during the desk review, and again while meeting with the PMU in Cape Town, South Africa.

The TE used no formal or standardized questionnaires to collect information before or during the field mission. This was deliberate as the role of DLIST stakeholders varied in location and exposure within the program's area of influence. Consequently, standard questionnaires were an inappropriate instrument to gather desired information. Instead, questions were tailored within the context of a conversation and discussion with each of the persons interviewed, based on information digested during the desk review and the role or activity for which each DLIST stakeholder was engaged. During each interview, respondents were asked similar questions that included the following:

- How do *you* think about (i.e. visualize or define) the DLIST program?
- What are DLIST's salient program elements?
- Do you visit the DLIST web site? How often?
- What sections of the website do you use?
- Do you use the discussion threads?
- Are you aware of the 911 function? Have you used it?
- Have you been involved in Distance Learning on DLIST?
- Are there other communication mediums that you believe to be important?
- Are there any specific examples in which DLIST has influenced policy or regulation at any level of governance?
- If DLIST could be improved, what suggestions would *you* have based on your experience with it?

Also, during site visits, evidence was sought that DLIST has had a presence within each community visited, and that stakeholders had some familiarity with its aims and activities over and above a simple recognition of the acronym, or branding.

Responses and notes from each interview were summarized and placed within a common outliner for synthesis. This provided the basis for assessment of DLIST's operation, perceptions by its stakeholders, performance within the region, and the previous experience of the evaluator. Interview responses were then reevaluated and compared to



information from the desk review. The evaluation report structure as defined in the Terms of Reference for the TE was used as the outline through which interview notes and synthesis were developed.

### **3. The Project and its development context**

#### *Project start and its duration*

DLIST was conceptualized in the late 1990s and piloted in the early 2000s with support from several different programs, such as a Norwegian Trust Fund, the World Bank, and the International Waters Learning and Exchange Resource Network (IWLEARN). The current phase of DLIST is under implementation as a GEF medium-sized project (MSP), implemented through UNDP and executed from October 2005 for a period of three years (terminating in December, 2008). The main outcomes of DLIST defined at project inception were as follows:

1. To put in place an innovative and user friendly ICT platform for coastal stakeholders of the Benguela Current Region
2. To offer coastal stakeholders distance learning courses on sustainable development in coastal areas
3. To offer DLIST users free access to information and promote the flow of information between them
4. To make DLIST accessible to coastal communities for their empowerment and motivation to remain involved with their respective communities.

#### *Problems that the project seeks to address*

An ideal that helped define DLIST in its early design was that in geographically separated and often impoverished communities, ignorance allowed for a disparity between coastal resource users and their ability to effectively self-govern and manage coastal environments and resources sustainably. Without knowledge, local communities can be at risk from exploitation from a range of different interests looking to capitalize on resource wealth and availability through some form of over-exploitation (regardless of intention). The framers of the DLIST model often referred to the “haves” and “have nots” being synonymous with “knows” and “know-nots”—those who do not have access to information that can support their active involvement in local governance. DLIST’s premise is that information—freely shared—is the key to helping resource users learn about and become better equipped with information about their surroundings—not only about their natural environment, but also about the political environment in which they live. DLIST’s intent has been to level this playing field by using a combination of communication technology—but with a special focus on ICT—to form and maintain a sharing environment and ‘social network’ among coastal communities along the BCLME.

### *Development Objectives*

As stated in the Terms of Reference for this TE:

“The DLIST-Benguela Project is designed to offer an electronic platform for vital information sharing and distance learning. The project assures dissemination of the scientific outputs of the existing Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem and BENEFIT programmes in Angola, Namibia and South Africa, to all civil stakeholders along the coastline of the Benguela Current. Such mass education and awareness building through information sharing amongst the stakeholder communities will enable effective participation of local communities, as follows. Regional and local decision makers will become involved in the translation of the scientific findings of programmes in the BCLME into management action, ensuring sustainable management of the Current. Local communities will be empowered to develop alternative livelihoods, therewith empowering local communities and substantially contribute to realization of Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) objectives along the Benguela coastline. The sharing of information and lessons learned will further strengthen linkages between existing marine and coastal programmes in the BCLME area, therewith enhancing the effectiveness of the individual efforts.”

Equitable distribution of resources and fair governance are expected cornerstones to sustainable development. DLIST’s development objectives have been to foster, through information sharing, the knowledge of sustainable coastal resource use that support equitable and fair local (i.e. stakeholder) governance. The DLIST model therefore supposes that this will contribute to reductions in poverty and resource use conflicts. DLIST has intended to serve as a grassroots vehicle through which local communities stay informed and share information about such issues.

### *Main Stakeholders*

The main stakeholders intended for the DLIST-Benguela program include:

- a. Coastal communities and key role players from the participating countries of Namibia, South Africa and Angola. Many of these stakeholders were interviewed as part of this evaluation (see Annex 4)
- b. The governments of Namibia, South Africa and Angola
- c. The Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem Full-sized GEF Project
- d. Academic institutions within the three participating countries; as defined by DLIST; these are the Polytechnic of Namibia, the University of Namibia, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, and the Agustino Netto in Angola
- e. The Country Offices of the United Nations Development Programme in the participating countries, the UN Office for Project Services and the GEF office of the UNDP.

### *Expected results*

The DLIST Project document repeatedly stated that a main expectation of the project has been to bring together a wide range of coastal stakeholders through information, training and sharing of lessons using the Internet as a major vehicle of communication.

*“It is expected that by the end of the MSP over 200 people will have received accredited training because of DLIST. (Para. 30, page 23)“... ” Increased access is expected to continue with expanding useful knowledge that DLIST will aspire to provide during the implementation phase by bridging the gap between programmes and intended beneficiaries. As more and more people, programmes and donors access DLIST*



*and use the information sharing and distance learning mechanisms offered, they will become key users of DLIST who will continue posting and accessing information and engaging in debates, which ultimately contributes to local empowerment and uplifting through knowledge. (para. 38, page 27)”*

The project was thus organized around the four main components of an ICT platform, distance learning, management of the knowledge developed, and using outreach to share information and strengthen an ongoing network.

#### **4. Findings and Conclusions**

By many measures, DLIST has been a successful concept and network that has had a positive influence in Namibia, South Africa and even in other countries outside of the DLIST region (such as Zanzibar, Tanzania). Angola has been less successful in getting DLIST to take as an idea during this MSP, and this is discussed in the evaluation separately (refer to Section 4.1.1). Time will tell whether seeds planted during the MSP may have had nascent influence over various stakeholders there.

The project is relevant to the development priorities for the region as a whole and for each of the participating countries. DLIST has been of value to those institutions that have enrolled in its operations; however, there have been some observed disappointments from at least one municipality and some higher levels of government. The community of Hondeklip Bay, South Africa, showed significant promise during DLIST’s pilot phase with the establishment of a multi-purpose resource centre (MPRC) that was targeted for significant DLIST involvement at the beginning of this MSP. But the local government changed focus for the MPRC and DLIST has been excluded from that community during the course of this project. Furthermore, while the government (i.e. certain ministries) of South Africa have been aware of DLIST and essentially compliant with its aims, it has not demonstrated as active a role during this MSP as it had during DLIST's early pilot development and growth. Namibia, through its municipal departments, university and UNDP country office have proven to be significantly active and supportive of the DLIST model.

DLIST has successfully established, and has promoted, its user friendly ICT platform for coastal stakeholders of the Benguela Current Region. The DLIST website has provided users with free access to—and has promoted the flow of—information, although this reach has largely been limited to those with consistent Internet access, which only makes up one portion of the overall community of practice. In an effort to address this limitation, DLIST has also reached out to communities through other forms of media and communication through established focal points, liaisons, workshops, centres of activity, and educational opportunities, especially for school-aged children. Furthermore, DLIST demonstrated an ability to adapt to changes in need and information demand by designing and executing various activities (e.g. a film festival, workshops, field trips and other participatory activities), with the express purpose of reaching out to a broad spectrum of local people to raise awareness and sensitize public interest over a range of environmental and socially responsible themes.

Through the ICT platform DLIST has made available a library of relevant documents, discussions, analyses and postings of key development and environmental issues, access to regional and international expertise, and some summary and translation of materials. While there is evidence available regarding the number of downloads by Internet users (see section 4.3), these resources are not used to a highly significant degree (i.e. to the degree that such a wealth of available information should be, based on the time and energy invested in making such material available), except by students enrolled in distance learning courses.

DLIST has provided academic and certain other stakeholders with distance learning courses on a) environmental engineering and b) coastal zone management through universities based in South Africa and Namibia, respectively. Although there was a concerted effort by the DLIST management team to also establish a course based in Angola, this did not occur. Even with this relatively limited number of course offerings available, the distance learning component of DLIST has had a significant impact to a specific cross-section of registered users. While this feature has not been used by all the DLIST stakeholders, it received consistently high marks by those interviewed during the field evaluation mission, and certification has led to either college credit or access to employment opportunities that would not have otherwise been available to some participants. One on-going challenge to the DLIST program is to broaden this component's access to an even wider audience as distance learning, continuing educational opportunity.

#### *Key Performance Indicators*

DLIST's outcomes and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are evaluated in several different ways. First, DLIST's project design, project impact, implementation and performance are assessed, and ratings are assigned as either Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Marginally Satisfactory (MS); or Unsatisfactory (U) (see Section 4.1). Second, the Logical Framework was assessed, evaluated and scored for progress against 17 KPIs identified at the start of the project (see Annex 5). Third, the list of outcomes is compared between mid term and final evaluations (see Table 2 in Section 4.3) and assessed according to the degree to which each has been satisfied during the project period.

### **4.1 Project Formulation**

#### **Conceptualization/Design (HS)**

**Highly Satisfactory.** Given the advantage of an earlier pilot phase, the DLIST program was soundly conceived and tested as a platform and network for communication. The pilot phase also allowed DLIST's proponents to clearly identify and test the target beneficiaries. This had a direct benefit in defining where DLIST may be able to seek expansion of the member base more effectively. There were some disappointments during the evaluation mission based on expectations from DLIST's pilot phase and are discussed in elsewhere in this report. In particular, the South African coastal community



of Hondeklip Bay held great promise as a network node through a MPRC; however, the local community leadership chose a different direction during the MSP period and DLIST was unable to grow within that area as hoped.

The objectives and outputs of the project were stated explicitly and as precisely as possible concerning KPIs. However, the metrics defined for DLIST in the Logical Framework Analysis do not always lend themselves well to full assessment of progress—especially when dealing with difficult-to-quantify issues, such as the extent to which messages have been received (i.e. internalized and applied within the community of practice), versus messages sent (in other words, a genuine assessment of learning). Some metrics, such as the number of visits to a website (even if filtered to address multiple returns to a site) are still relatively poor proxies as to the extent to which an idea or concept tips and spreads throughout a community<sup>4</sup>. Section 4.3 attempts to capture some qualitative examples that show other ways in which DLIST has made progress within the Region.

Internet access, while improving, has continued to be a bottleneck (significantly so in some areas of the project) both technologically and economically within the region. In many cases, Internet access remains a luxury that many people simply cannot afford relative to access to other forms of mass media, such as television and radio, and this will continue to be a limiting factor. DLIST has recognized this limitation and has worked to introduce radio programs, where practical, and support interpretive centers or employ individuals and volunteers to serve as information coordinators for outreach, but these alternatives have shown varying levels of success. Nevertheless, they remain an important part of the DLIST network for continued growth and development to mitigate the ICT limitations.

The Key Performance Indicators identified for DLIST in the LFA were clearly and fairly defined as much as possible, and the program has been highly consistent in using the LFA, stated outcomes, work plans, steering committee meeting minutes and quarterly reports as tools in gauging progress and adapting to change. In particular, use of the quarterly reports has allowed the management team to identify an opportunity that resulted in the creation and development of the DLIST-supported public film festival, *EarthNotes*, which generated significant response and interest among many local communities as a communication and outreach tool. However, DLIST's overarching goal in the LFA does not effectively embody within it the value of the elements that make DLIST a promising communications platform and network. Refer to Annex 5 for an evaluation table that scores how the LFA succeeded in capturing program progress.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Tipping Point, How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Malcolm Gladwell, 2000.  
<http://www.gladwell.com/tippingpoint/index.html>

#### 4.1.1 Country-ownership/Driveness

Even though all three countries are signatories to the GEF grant agreement, it is clear from this evaluation that there have been variations in the level of active involvement by the governments during the DLIST MSP. Namibia appears to have demonstrated the most regular engagement by members of municipal or ministry-level government agencies, whereas South Africa has shown less routine engagement in the network, as evidenced in the project documentation and during the field mission. While DLIST held meetings in Angola, documents show that the prospective stakeholders were consistently represented more from academia and non-governmental institutions than government representatives.

**Angola** – Expansion into Angola was to be a major objective of this MSP. Based on review of meeting minutes, interviews with several stakeholders and PMU staff, information sharing in Angola has been difficult and largely uni-directional (i.e. limited and disappointing responses from Angolan stakeholders), especially with follow up responses resulting from the two visits made by the Project Management Unit. This has been complicated by an apparent history—often ascribed to the previous civil conflict—of reluctance to share information openly about many issues, even ones that are general in nature. Difference in language (i.e. English versus Portuguese) has also been repeatedly cited during the evaluation as an additional limitation to effective dialog. It is therefore a fair assumption that opening a society to information sharing will take additional time and patience, and likely beyond the period of the MSP. Post-conflict has been the right time to attempt such communication overtures, and DLIST should be recognized for approaching Angola as part of the project design, given its important role and influence along the BCLME, and its repeated attempts to engage stakeholders there. However, even under the best of circumstances in robust Internet environments, web-based technologies can take time to tip, or take hold, and personal networking takes even longer. Internet connectivity remains limited largely to urban centers, and is not consistent or of high quality in the more rural areas.<sup>5</sup> While DLIST has other media forms available to communicate, poor Internet access has made it more difficult to make DLIST attractive to Angolan stakeholders. (Some Angolans do appear to be participating on the DLIST discussion thread via email.)

Based on review of the minutes of the meetings held in Luanda, that there was initially high enthusiasm for the idea of a distance learning course in a general sense, but no follow-up to the offers from the DLIST management team. Reasons for this apparent lack of responsiveness were documented and reported as follows:

- The environmental community in Angola is small. While there are individuals, especially from universities, who stood out during meetings it was

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<sup>5</sup> To some degree DLIST experienced similar outreach challenges in some locations in South Africa (e.g. coastal communities in the Northern Cape province) during the pilot phase in the early 2000's, as it was attempting to gain a foothold in new areas.

- difficult to identify champions who have the time or commitment to engage with the current network
- Other media outreach, such as an environmental radio program, was identified early in contact and meetings, but the organizer cited a lack of time to broadcast DLIST messages

Some participants expressed interest in the distance learning component of DLIST; however some cited a greater need for more practical courses than the ones currently offered. While the PMU appeared to be flexible in helping to structure a course (and provide support) that may meet such need, there was a failure to respond to such overtures in developing one. Consequently, the distant learning course that was planned for Augustino Netto University in Angola has essentially failed.

This is not surprising, as there is a period of maturation that is often required when networks are attempted in new locations. DLIST may have had some influence with some stakeholders within that country (for example, a project for the preparation of Angola's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan based in Luanda was sent to DLIST to upload to the website)—it has just not yet been measured to a significant degree.

It was both strategic and fortuitous that EcoAfrica employed a former Angolan citizen on its staff, fluent in Portuguese, to assist with communication. However, either an on-going physical presence in Angola or the identification of a dedicated champion already residing there is what is likely required to accelerate interest and network development.

#### **4.1.2 Stakeholder participation (S)**

**Satisfactory.** As a networked community of practice (evolution of Internet terminology can also refer to a community as a 'social network'), DLIST would be non-functional if there was no stakeholder participation. It is clear from the desk review and field evaluation mission that the community of practice in DLIST is committed and has been active at various levels in the program's growth and development. Depending on the geographic location (and the quality/reliability/cost of Internet service) there are variations in the degree to which DLIST members have been able to participate. And this has placed a challenge before DLIST to continue to expand the spectrum of media available to its stakeholders (see Section 5, Fig. 1). Many interviews cited a need for translation of materials into local languages to ensure that information is routinely available to local constituents (even if disseminated through focal points or interpreters).

#### **4.1.3 Replication approach**

DLIST's replication approach does not apply in the context of the current MSP as it has been developed (in fact, the current MSP is, in essence, a replication from lessons learned during its pilot phase). However, replication approach will be relevant as DLIST expands as an information model into other regions, or sub-regions, and the recommendations and lessons identified in Sections 5 and 6 should be used in subsequent project design.

## 4.2 Project Implementation

### 4.2.1 Implementation Approach (S)

**Satisfactory.** The implementation of DLIST has been of high quality by those organizations that have been active and committed to the DLIST program. Active government agency participation from all three countries in DLIST's implementation has been variable, and thus a major reason in being unable to rate this as Highly Satisfactory. The outputs and outcomes as defined in the project document, and highly relevant to and reflective of successful implementation, have been evaluated and discussed in Table 1 in Section 4.3. The delivery of the outcomes has been the result of strong relationships between the Project Management Unit (EcoAfrica), the Executing Agency (IKM), the UNDP country office in Namibia and technical assistance from the UNDP office in South Africa, and UNOPS, based in New York. Members of these organizations were key participants in DLIST's Steering Committee meetings in addition to other stakeholders. During the evaluation interviews each of these organizations were questioned and assessed on their working relationships. It is clear from interview responses, email correspondence and meeting minutes that there has been mutual respect, creative tension, constructive criticism, high expectations and support in making the DLIST work program operational. In several respects, this arrangement appears to be an extension of the DLIST community of practice by these members. During interviews and the desk review, it is apparent that they have also enrolled, participated in and learned from DLIST's information sharing.

The PMU demonstrated a strong ability to manage adaptively by adjusting activities based on network feedback and user demand. Roles and responsibilities of the management team were clearly defined and terms of reference followed. DLIST appears to have benefited from experience that it gained during a pilot phase period, and considerable time was invested in the early stages of the MSP to analyze feedback from the pilot. The ICT platform was derived from lessons developed from earlier models used elsewhere. During this time social networks –especially Internet-based ones–were new and so few lessons were available to implement many of the ideas that comprised DLIST. Thus, in some respects, DLIST has been a pioneer in developing a communication and social network at the regional level. In fact, the discussion thread that is a cornerstone of the DLIST model has been more active (and thus successful) than similar attempts at a broader, multi-regional scale that predated DLIST and were more technologically advanced<sup>6</sup>.

As stated in the project goal, DLIST has had some success with collaborative arrangements, especially with the World Bank-supported NACOMA project (<http://www.nacoma.org.na/>). There appears to be a strong link with NACOMA that

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<sup>6</sup> The DLIST platform was modeled after ICT applications such as the Global Water Partnership and the International Coral Reef Initiative, both of which piloted discussion-based features in their web platforms. Over time, DLIST has demonstrated a much more active and engaged user-base participating in discussion threads (and at a regional level) than either of these parent applications.



involves information sharing and mutual support-even more so than the BCLME project. Even though DLIST has summarized information from BCLME, it does not appear to have been as directly collaborative as DLIST has been in actively working and sharing information with NACOMA. A relatively weak linkage was identified as a potential issue by the CTA of the BCLME program during the July 2006 Steering Committee meeting, but DLIST appears to have done a solid job of posting BCLME content on the DLIST website, including documents that provide more reader-friendly summaries of some BCLME content. *This could be presented more prominently on the DLIST web site for easier access, assuming there is high user demand.* However, a review of web usage statistics over time for DLIST does not substantiate a strong user demand for the BCLME Project information (refer to Annex 9).

DLIST has varied participation with industry associations (e.g. there are registered DLIST members who represent the private sector, such as DeBeers and TransHex Diamond interests), a range of universities, and other multilateral development projects, and many of these are represented on DLIST's *kiosks* feature on the website. Many of these stakeholders have been active in discussion threads over the project period. Among universities, of particular note was a partnership strengthened with CPUT in Cape Town, SA, where an Environmental Resource Centre was established in August, 2007, to help with information dissemination and library resource and research to support DLIST as a node, as well as a distance learning resource and training moderator for students.

#### **4.2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation (HS)**

UNDPs Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Policy has four main objectives:

1. Monitor and evaluate results and impacts
2. Provide a basis for decision-making on necessary amendments and improvements
3. provide accountability for resource use
4. Document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned.

Based on the desk review, field visits and interviews conducted of DLIST stakeholders and the PMU, the M&E for DLIST-Beguela is rated as **Highly Satisfactory**. The project has consistently used its reports and internal assessments to adjust actions over the course of the MSP. The Steering Committee meeting minutes contained sufficient detail and clearly-stated action items for follow up, and the quarterly reports from IKM have been clear regarding resource allocation and expenditure. The internal mid-term review and the recommendations and adjustments coming from that exercise appeared to be thoughtful, fair and objective in assessing progress to date in 2007. DLIST has produced two GEF Experience Notes to evaluate lessons learned.

#### **4.2.3 Stakeholder Participation (S)**

Stakeholder participation in the implementation of DLIST has also been rated as **Satisfactory**. As an MSP, DLIST has had a surprisingly far and deep reach among its user base in South Africa and Namibia. This is largely due to the solid network that has

been forged over years by the program's CTA, Francois Odendaal, across a range of past-projects and activities prior to the execution of the MSP. This point and special circumstance is discussed further in Section 4.3.

#### 4.2.4 Financial Planning

Review of the project document and the twelve quarterly reports from IKM, (combined with interviews of UNDP and UNOPS personnel) show that the cost by objective, outputs and activities were realistic for DLIST and appears to have been well managed fiscally. Costs associated with each component were consistent and appear relevant to the work program for each quarter. IKM's reporting of outputs and activities were on track and even under-budget in some quarters, thereby supporting a cost-effective approach. There was a consistent under-utilization observed—on average roughly 40% per month—in Quarters 1-8, which turned out to be an important and positive adaptation for the PMU; it made note of the under-spent amounts in the work program, and the *EarthNotes* concept for the film festival as born as a result of this situation. This turned out to be an effective use of residual resources for raising awareness across a wider public spectrum for DLIST.

#### 4.2.5 Co-Financing

**Satisfactory.** There has been a significant difference between the amount of co-financing that was presented in the project document, versus what was finally raised by the project. To the PMU's credit, a detailed list of in-kind and cash contributions was monitored over the life of the MSP (and this is further evidence of a well-managed M&E process). However, the difference between what was determined in the Project Document for co-financing (\$780K) versus what was ultimately tracked was almost half (\$437K). This would not have been the case had USAID made good on its original pledge of \$200,000.00. Nevertheless, even this amount is a respectable showing of in-kind contribution from within the SADC Region.

#### *Sustainability*

*"It is also expected that by providing a platform which donor-funded programmes can benefit from, funding required after implementation can be guaranteed through collaborative and mutual support between DLIST and those programmes. (para. 43, page 28, DLIST Project Document)"*

Most of the interviews conducted acknowledged that the termination of DLIST would leave a significant void (some interviewed used the term 'hardship') by dismantling an important network in the BCLME region. In several instances respondents felt that it is the only objective platform available to voice concerns and that this is done without partisanship by the current Project Management Unit. However, DLIST has yet to have defined a clear strategy for sustainability, or a clear exit strategy for the end of the project should sustainable funding not be forthcoming. *This is a crucial issue that needs to be addressed soon.* DLIST may have a second Phase for the BCLME and also expand into other LME regions for the future, and so may be able to continue to some degree through geographic expansion (as implied in the above statement from the Project Document). But this potential spreads DLIST's mission further geographically and its management

structure thinner. Furthermore, even if such support occurs, the network will be faced with the same challenges of sustainability in the future. Based on the interview with the country office personnel of UNDP-Namibia, there appears to be a strong belief that if the DLIST model can reside with the newly-established Benguela Current Commission, this may offer an opportunity to receive on-going financial support and not be bound by institutional obligations that may come with affiliation to a single government or ministry. However, there appear to be no details that such has been developed at this point in the program. The care, feeding and maintenance of the network clearly require recurrent financial resources, even if the stakeholder commitment to participate remains strong.

#### *Execution Effectiveness*

DLIST was banking on key individuals to use their personal contacts and experience operating within the Angolan region—an approach that has served DLIST very well through EcoAfrica in South Africa and Namibia. With any network, however, managing new contacts presents a significant maintenance challenge, and EcoAfrica was not well-prepared to remain in Angola for extended periods. The attempts to engage interested stakeholders within Angola were genuine and there is documented evidence of follow-through by EcoAfrica in attempting communication with Angolan counterparts. Nevertheless, there appears to have been a lack of consistent response from Angolan stakeholders to overtures of interest and even financial assistance, and it is clear that this leaves two general options: a) a time and resource intensive campaign for DLIST to establish a presence and operate within Angola or b) to sow seeds of interest and allow for those to take and grow within their own time. Option ‘a’ has additional resource implications. There may be some evidence that option ‘b’ has begun. According to interviews with the CTA, (and even with participation in the April, 2008 Steering Committee meeting), a few Angolan interests have been active with recent email communications. However, in the face of rapid coastal change and urgency to address environmental problems, is the latter model the best use of time? Enrollment and commitment of stakeholders to an ideal and active participation in a network cannot be pushed, and if sustainability is a desired outcome (which it clearly is), then DLIST has to present itself as an opportunity for learning and growth and thus be demanded by its user-base.

With respect to other elements of DLIST’s execution, the PMU has responsibly leveraged resources in working with local coastal communities by offering support to help educate, execute educational field trips, such as coastal clean-ups or school education opportunities, workshops, interpretive centers and Internet connections (where technologically possible) to solidify the network and further expand outreach.

**Table 1.** Co-financing of project activities over the course of the MSP. Refer also to Annex 2, Table 1 & 2 for greater detail.

Co financing (Type/Source)	IA own Financing (UNDP/GEF) (mill US\$)		Government (mill US\$)		Other* (mill US\$)		Total (mill US\$)		Total Disbursement (mill US\$)	
	<i>Planned</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Planned</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Planned</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Planned</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Planned</i>	<i>Actual</i>
- Grants	0.75	0.75	0.2	0	0	0	0.95	0.75	0.69	0.65
- Loans/Concessional (compared to market rate)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Credits	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Equity investments	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- In-kind support	0	0	0	0	0.7	0.44	0.7	0.44	0.7	0.44
- Other (*)										
<b>Totals</b>	0.75	0.75	0.2	0	0.7	0.44	1.65	1.19	1.39	1.13

\* Other is referred to Contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

### 4.3 Results and Discussion

#### Attainment of Outcomes/Achievement of Objectives (S)

**Satisfactory.** Throughout the field evaluation and interviews, it is clear that DLIST has established a solid network identity and has provided useful information to many local coastal communities in Namibia and South Africa. In this regard, DLIST has achieved its objectives to an important degree. There is still significant work to do with making lasting connections and development of programs in Angola. DLIST has established a user-friendly ICT platform, has summarized significant information posted on its web site, and has established a broad reach through its on-line community discussion thread via both the website and email. The distance learning courses have generally been well received as a useful service to the region. Currently this is predominately limited to academic institutions, and distance learning courses for a broader audience would further strengthen this component. The Knowledge Management component of DLIST has been variable in how information has been presented to its user community. Large numbers of files have been posted and made available through the DLIST library, through its “burning issues” section, and some summaries developed for BCLME and other regional reports. However, there remains a challenge in finding the best way to summarize and present information in useable formats across a user base with a diverse educational (and literacy) spectrum. Outreach is perhaps the most challenging of all of DLIST’s components and there has been continued and significant progress; however, because DLIST is a network, maintenance, adaptation and improvement will always remain a work in progress, and all components can be further strengthened in maintaining and expanding DLIST’s reach, and in using the most appropriate medium to maximize up-take by local stakeholders.

Table 2 compares DLIST's progress of outputs since the internal Mid-term evaluation. A quantitative assessment of DLIST’s progress within the Log Frame Analysis is presented in Annex 5.

**Table 2.** Expected Output/Indicator Achievements

Output/Indicator	Mid-Term Assessment	Terminal Evaluation
<b>Output 1.1</b> An improved DLIST portal that is easier to use, has more functionality and addresses needs of coastal players more efficiently.	1470 messages posted on the DLIST discussion thread 500+ documents available 1000+ photos 50 ‘911’ users 40 Kiosks 20 sustainable development-oriented networks.	Successfully achieved. The ICT platform is well populated with information and provides an information source and service to registered members
<b>Output 1.2</b> Server installed, running, test-driven and maintained and IT staff trained to maintain the server on a long-term basis.	Accomplished	Accomplished by mid-term

<p><b>Output 2.1</b> Ideas and 'lessons learned' by CPUT shared and academic institutions in Angola, Namibia and South Africa on board for distance learning course development</p>	<p>South Africa continued and improved distance learning. Namibia developed a Memorandum of Agreement for posting of a course in ICZM. Agreement with Polytechnic University in Namibia pending. Agreement within Angola pending</p>	<p>Namibia course in ICZM piloted. Active Distance Learning agreement not reached and course not accomplished within Angola</p>
<p><b>Output 2.2</b> Distance learning courses developed, packaged, available on the DLIST portal and continuously improved and updated during project implementation and a growing number of coastal players with enhanced knowledge on sustainable development in coastal areas</p>	<p>Mid-term target of 2 courses met</p>	<p>One course fully operational in South Africa (CPUT Environmental Engineering); A second general course under development. ICZM course successfully piloted though the University of Namibia. Target of four courses not met.</p>
<p><b>Output 2.3</b> Teaching staff at institutions in the three countries trained; teaching staff and students' knowledge enhanced through exposure and multiple interaction</p>	<p>26 distance learners since MSP startup, total of 81. Limited institutional capacity to increase intake with only 1 course running.</p>	<p>Both South Africa and Namibia have been active and have met targets. Angola has not developed a DL course, and has not participated in the others.</p>
<p><b>Output 3.1</b> An updated portal that responds to the evolving needs of coastal players</p>	<p>533 registered users; out of this total, approximately 135 are from Namibia, and 8 from Angola. The DLIST newsletter reaches an additional 188 Namibians and 81 Angolans.</p>	<p>701 registered DLIST users based on a target of 800. 911 function fully operational; Burning issues helps brief users. Searchable Document library has a broad array of information.</p>
<p><b>Output 3.2</b> A dynamic portal built by coastal players where they can access information pertaining to the BCLME coastal areas from a multitude of sources in one single place, disseminate their own information, and enhance their knowledge</p>	<p>8+ DLIST functions implemented</p>	<p>Website is fully functional. Use of the site is significant (more than 18,000 absolute unique visits), but currently represents a limited percentage of the total regional DLIST community of practice.</p>
<p><b>Output 3.3</b> A dynamic portal where coastal players can air their views and raise their concerns and a mechanism to organize and boost new knowledge</p>	<p>22 sustainable development programs participating</p>	<p>The number of users who contributed to and participated in on-line discussion forums doubled from 2005-2008 (from 42 to over 90 and from 320 to 668, respectively)</p>
<p><b>Output 3.4</b> People involved in DLIST trained on knowledge management issues and better prepared to use DLIST as a platform to make things happen on the</p>	<p>4 IT capable staff in Cape Town 4 DLIST administrators More not presently required.  People trained as moderators: 5 in</p>	<p>The target of 4 DLIST moderators for each country (South Africa, Namibia, Angola) not met.</p>

ground	South Africa; 4 in Namibia;1 in Angola	
<b>Output 4.1</b> A growing network of structures, Programmes and organisations in the BCLME coastal areas that are linked through DLIST	Establishment of DLIST Nodes and participating Kiosks (on-line) exceeded mid-term estimates (40 versus 35 expected)	More than 60 organizations engaged; but this relates largely to the <i>Earthnotes</i> film festival.
<b>Output 4.2</b> Coastal players in the three countries aware of the existence of DLIST and enjoying ready access to DLIST	7 nodes existing 3 formal node administrators appointed: Walvis Bay, Port Nolloth & Luderitz. Other existing and pending focal persons engaged	Nine DLIST nodes established in Namibia and South Africa with specific activities undertaken at each.
<b>Output 4.3</b> "Lessons learned" through DLIST shared with other LMEs and cross-LME links established	Under development with two GEF/IWLEARN Experience Notes and new potential DLIST engagement in other regions (ASCLME)	Pending. Terms of Reference for DLIST in ASCLME developed and in final review.

### Discussion

While part of assessing DLIST's progress and performance has been accomplished with some measurable indicators, such as in the above table, and combined with the LFA (in Annex 5 DLIST scored 80% in satisfying its stated objectives), this has been successful only to a certain degree in quantifying progress. There will always be significant limitations with this approach in capturing a comprehensive assessment of DLIST's strengths and areas for improvement. As part of this evaluation, various observations and comments combining quantitative and qualitative evaluation for each of DLIST's main outcomes (components) are discussed below.

**Outcome 1:** *To put in place an innovative and user friendly ICT platform (i.e. a multipurpose website) for coastal stakeholders of the Benguela Current Region*

During interviews with many of DLIST's stakeholders, it became clear that DLIST, as a concept, means different things to different constituents. Outside of the DLIST management team, in almost every case those interviewed largely equated DLIST with the discussion thread that allowed ideas to be shared in one's email through the ICT platform. The discussion thread was the single most referenced feature that tied respondents together. Only one interview (out of 30) immediately identified DLIST as an enabler of grass roots education activities before referring to its role as a communications platform. However, not all those interviewed routinely used the feature, even though they identified with it. Most respondents immediately added that DLIST represented a network of like-minded individuals, and their ability to share information about coastal and marine resources played an important role.

In many respects DLIST has the potential to be likened to a learning organization—a community of practice that shares and dialogues about one another’s issues in seeking common ground and an actionable vision for the future. Inherent in such a model is a continual process of learning, adaptation and strengthening—so an ongoing process within the community. However, most interviewed within the network view DLIST predominately as a technological ICT mechanism through which stakeholders currently participate, even though use of the platform appears highly variable. This view of DLIST is, perhaps, gradually changing and from a practical point of view DLIST will have to spend substantial time disseminating information in other formats if the network is to reach coastal communities to the degree that all objectives are fully met.

User statistics for the on-line components of DLIST were provided by the PMU and were reviewed and assessed. In general terms, the total number of DLIST registrants, and those contributing information, have approximately doubled over the life of the MSP. Direct traffic (from within the BCLME region) represents the largest percentage of users overall (predominately from South Africa (12,279 unique Internet Protocol (IP) visits to the site) and Namibia (2,214 unique visits)<sup>7</sup>. However, there are also significant percentages of visitors/users from developed countries, such as those in North America, the UK, Germany, Australia, Norway, France and the Netherlands. From March 1, 2007 through July 2, 2008, DLIST had more than 18,000 unique visitors, but the average length of time spent on the site was relatively low—about three and one-half minutes.<sup>8</sup>

There is also a clear difference between in-country use of the DLIST Internet Platform and those in urban areas with greater on-line access. This supports the case that the on-line community for DLIST, while significant in membership, represents only a limited percentage of those coastal players within the BCLME region who need to be reached with information and communication.

There are various web-based features for which significant time and energy were invested to make available to DLIST users; however, many are not used to the extent originally envisioned. Based on the review of web statistics, as one gets further into the web site, there are significant drop-offs of pages viewed and time spent on sub-pages. Such low levels of use (or time to maturation) are not uncommon among web site features in general, but awareness of this tendency and trend should be taken into consideration when attempting to develop a similar DLIST model in other regional locations.

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<sup>7</sup> A unique visit to the DLIST site is not synonymous with registered DLIST users. A unique visit represents a visit from different IP addresses, but all visits do not represent registered users. A visit may be a single hit on the DLIST site and does not imply that significant time was spent perusing or information downloaded.

<sup>8</sup> Google.com provides services for web use statistics (for which the DLIST site uses), and it does incorporate rates of bounces (those who’s IP addresses simply hit the site and leave), which tends to lower the overall statistic for length of stay on a site. While an average visit on web-based blogs may be low (e.g. 90-100 seconds), other sites that are content rich can have length of stay times on the average of 10 to 20 minutes. An average time of 3.5 minutes spent on the DLIST site is relatively low for reviewing the depth and quality of content that DLIST makes available.



Since documents were posted on DLIST (as early as the year 2000), more than 21,000 downloads of documents have taken place through the DLIST website over the course of the MSP. The largest percentage of this activity has been through the Distance Learning Course (77%), which is an obvious result and need by those participating in on-line courses. The remaining percentage of downloads relate to the other users of the DLIST platform. Of this lower percentage the nature of the downloads offers an interesting insight into what content the general DLIST user base has requested. Of the top five downloaded items, the largest single file has been a map of the *Strandloper Guide to the Namaqualand Coast* (569), the next highest download has been a request of the DLIST-Benguela course mailer (59), followed by *Poverty and Tourism* (57), *Scope of work for country assistantsFINAL.doc* (57), and *air quality act.PDF* (55). These are not large volumes of file downloads for a registered DLIST membership of over 700. Other topics relate directly to the Benguela-Current region, but the number of downloads drop significantly (see Annex 9).

The downloads of documents represent a relatively small (and exclusive) demographic and still highlight—to some degree—the digital divide among the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, even within the Region. While the access to Internet connections is constantly improving and DLIST is well positioned to continue supporting coastal stakeholder through this medium, reaching its constituents through other means remains an important challenge. The DLIST PMU has been well aware of this fact, as evidenced by repeated points in Steering Committee meeting minutes. However, the translation of materials should be a major focus of future DLIST efforts in rural and isolated locations with limited electronic communication.

#### *The 911 Function*

Most interviewed in the coastal communities either had not heard of the 911 function, or if they were aware of it, had not used it. By contrast, the Project Management Unit has documented about 48 requests for information using the 911 feature.<sup>9</sup> This shows that there is a separation of awareness and use by different DLIST stakeholders, and this can be visualized as to how the different media within DLIST may have variation in reach across its current region (see Figure 1). The point and lesson is that a suite of various media is required in relative percent contribution and tailored to each local situation to be more effective in communicating concepts for coastal and marine resources.

#### *On-Line Discussion Forum*

During this TE, the DLIST on-line discussion forum was reviewed in detail and was found to have a broad range of topics covered. The following general categories of issues were repeatedly observed in discussion threads:

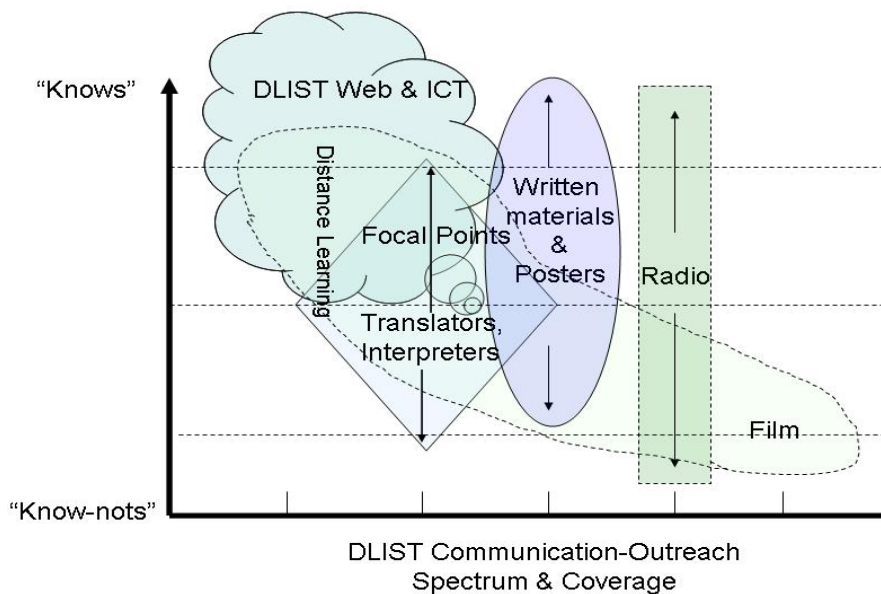
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<sup>9</sup> Of the requests from DLIST users to the 911 function, the categories of different requests are classified as follows: Course-related: 19; networking inquiries: 9; request for general information: 13; questions related to DLIST administration issues: 7.

1. Discussion of environmental philosophy based on various themes
2. Sharing (and challenging) of opinions
3. Personal experiences that members wanted to share with one another
4. Warnings about industry taking advantage of coastal communities
5. Announcements of opportunities, courses & meetings
6. Requests for comments
7. Dissemination of news articles
8. Sharing contact information and resources

Like any discussion thread the various topics may be short, or may take on a long and repeated life among its stakeholders. Over the course of the project, there are at least three cases in which discussion threads have resulted in some impact in a local community context. These were identified as discussions relating to coastal development in Port Nolloth, the need for regulation of the dune system between Swakopmund and Walvis Bay to address impacts from excessive use by recreational vehicles, and community activities for areas affected by diamond mining.

**Figure 1.** Diagram depicting the relationship of DLIST communication mediums relative to reaching various levels of audiences within the project domain. Web-based mediums are dependent upon Internet infrastructure and affordability. These are important considerations in attempting to tailor a similar DLIST model in other regions/sub-regions in the SADC. Needs analyses should be prerequisites to determine which of these approaches may serve as the best entry points in attempting to enroll local stakeholders in new areas, so that they are committed and remain active. Then the most salient elements of each medium selected should be developed first, using adaptive management, based on need and demand, to develop additional features within each medium.



In 2008, there has also been an active discussion pertaining to wildlife management of elephants in northern Namibia, but the discussion remains in progress. A second, more recent discussion thread has examined a marine dredging project related to diamond mining offshore and its potential impact on a marine protected area near Hondeklip Bay, South Africa. These have not resulted in drastic changes to government policy to date; however, the discussions have had clear impacts to these local communities and have allowed local citizens to act and respond to their governments. This, in fact, is the intention behind the function of this on-line feature, and therefore can be viewed as a success.

The DLIST Newsletters were also reviewed and found to be informative. Many of the interviews cited the newsletter as an important reference and source of helpful information. Many of the persons interviewed stated that if they could improve DLIST, it would be the need to routinely disseminate information in native languages, and having translations of key articles within the newsletter would be helpful in this regard.

**Outcome 2:** *Course Development – to offer coastal users a distance learning course of sustainable development in coastal areas*

Most of those interviewed believed that the Environmental Engineering course offering was an important and significant contribution to the community through improving knowledge and developing skills for enhancing existing employment enhancement or creating new opportunities. Given that the ICZM course offered through UNAM has been piloted, it is too early to assess whether there have been similar views with that course.

The two current courses offered vary in subject matter and content from the different academic institutions. What process, if any, is being used to brand or quality-assure that the courses on DLIST meet a standard for quality? And should they be represented as DLIST-sanctioned courses, or simply offerings made through an academic institution on the DLIST platform? Given that there are only two courses at present, this may not be a crucial consideration; however, it is a potentially greater issue for the future if DLIST continues to develop distance learning courses and expands into other regions. Should a single course on one subject be offered to DLIST participants as a DLIST-sanctioned subject? Or should institutions from each participating country develop their own set of courses, even if redundant subjects and materials are offered? It would seem most efficient to sanction courses through DLIST and that each future participating course is solicited to offer complimentary course content so that DLIST represents a regional distance learning platform.

**Outcome 3:** *Knowledge Management – to promote free access and flow of information between coastal players*

There are no examples of DLIST “translating the outputs of science investigations into management action”<sup>10</sup>, even though there are examples of DLIST management action taking place through the discussion forum. There is no direct connection of having translated results from the BCLME into management action. However, during discussions with the UNDP staff in Windhoek, Namibia, a useful distinction was made—that that the bona-fide translation of scientific information within DLIST may be an overwhelming, impractical task. Rather, an important realization of DLIST may not be the literal translation of science-as described in the project document, but to “understand and communicate the impact of science on the local communities.”<sup>11</sup> DLIST has attempted to provide summaries of BCLME documentation for those who may have interest. However, the demand for this has been less (as evidenced by low relatively numbers of downloads) compared to other types of interpretation and communication of knowledge among local interests, to which DLIST has proven responsive. Synthesis should continue to be a goal in helping to translate technical information into meaningful actions, but most of DLIST’s current work lies in first raising awareness and participation.

There is one example of the sharing of lessons learned through DLIST. The DLIST-Benguela workshop held in Swakopmund, Namibia, October 10-11, 2006 shared lessons and examined challenges to a network aimed at addressing sustainable coastal and marine resources management. Notes from this workshop and interviews indicate that the meeting and topics were relevant and helpful to stakeholders.

**Outcome 4:** *Outreach – To make DLIST accessible to coastal communities for their empowerment and motivation to remain involved with their respective communities.*

There were several factors observed during the evaluation that have hampered the achievement of this particular objective. These include the need for greater outreach though translation of materials into languages that the local community is most comfortable with, and the readiness of some local communities to participate in DLIST activities (e.g. Angola and Hondeklip Bay, South Africa). This is acknowledged by the CTA in a discussion thread posted in May, 2008.

*“We need to concentrate far more on spreading information than simply gathering it, and depositing [sic] it into reports. At least for the coastal areas we are building a database that will allow us to reach anyone with a cellphone, or internet almost instantaneously by the time the Green Paper is ready, also giving them the opportunity to give input back into the system so to speak.”... “Also, if we are to reach rural communities, including remote fisher communities, we will have to reach far beyond the web platform only and use other ways of making an maintaining contact. “ (source: messages in a discussion thread dealing with Human Wildlife Conflicts, May, 2008)*

The DLIST-sponsored film festival, *EarthNotes*, is an excellent example of outreach to a broad audience to raise awareness and sensitize community stakeholders to the issues of

<sup>10</sup> DLIST Project Document, Page 36, paragraph, 72

<sup>11</sup> Martha Mwangingi, UNDP, August 28, 2008

sustainable development that permeate DLIST's mission. Another excellent example observed during the evaluation mission pertains to an interpretive center established in Port Nolloth, South Africa. Based on interviews with the DLIST focal point there, DLIST has been moved from the Port Nolloth Museum to a newly created Biodiversity Center (with some support provided by DLIST), which provides interpretive and educational opportunities for the community. The focal point, Johan Lanzer, has demonstrated a high level of creativity, energy and resource leveraging in structuring an interpretive centre for learning about the area's natural history and future challenges, and has incorporated DLIST's information and mission into its operation. It is a fine example of an outreach tool that integrates the DLIST network into increased awareness and opportunities for learning.

Even though DLIST has made substantial progress in communities like Walvis Bay, Luderitz, Port Nolloth and others, also pushing information using non-technical or low technical means is still an area of effort that could be strengthened in many cases. During the evaluation interviews there were several people who felt that DLIST could be strengthened in this regard. Simple activities can facilitate participation, such as clean-up of beaches and shorelines to engage communities, and DLIST is already well-aware of this and uses this approach in its outreach. Annex 10 offers one small example of a simple "Junior Ranger Guide" developed by the Cumberland Island National Seashore, USA, as a local outreach tool to younger audiences in the national park system. Successful completion leads to a small reward that has resonated with youth in that region. Similar ones could be tailored to local communities within the Benguela region to sensitize and reward youth in a similar fashion, and these are future DLIST members that will help sustain the network.

#### *The Role of EcoAfrica in DLIST*

The current DLIST may have had an advantage in becoming established within the South Africa-Namibia region, given the historical networks that had been initiated through EcoAfrica prior to the MSP's operation. This likely was a major factor in the degree to which DLIST has been successful with community-based outreach to the extent that it has. This is a plus in strengthening an existing Network, and developing the tendrils for growth.

In conservation and sustainable development efforts, it is a mistake to separate initiatives from champions (at any stage in the process) who founded and helped steward them. The link between DLIST and EcoAfrica is currently highly dependent, and while some generic model may be theoretically desirable (to avoid any perceived conflicts of interest from project design to execution), if DLIST is to continue as an information dissemination model within the sub-Saharan Africa Region, then its structure needs to be maintained and supported such that its champions continue to play a significant role in establishment, level of stewardship and networking until each regional node has the opportunity to tip with- and be supported by - local stakeholders. Given the history and experience of EcoAfrica in establishing and executing DLIST since the Pilot Phase and the continued experimental nature of this effort (i.e. Regional social networking), it is the



opinion of this evaluation that DLIST needs to continue to have some coordinating role from EcoAfrica for the foreseeable future. Otherwise, the model will risk mis-interpretation by a separate, independent entity during execution, loss of momentum and risk losing institutional knowledge until ownership can be self-sustaining by local champions within each region where it is applied.

## 5. Recommendations

DLIST has been good at collaborative management arrangements, because its network is long, deep and with historical precedence in the region. Lessons from Angola point to the probability that it will not be easy to solidify new DLIST networks in new regions, so careful consideration will need to be given to the staging of priority elements of the DLIST model. Establishing DLIST in new regions may have to be more systematic and targeted—assessing needs and instituting certain steps and structures in place first, before attempting to expand into other areas. The following recommendations are suggested to add to DLIST’s progress within the BCLME area, but especially to consider when expanding the model to other locations.

1. Advancements in ICT applications (especially ones that address social networking, such as *Facebook*, *MySpace*, or other such web-based, social network platforms) are constantly subject to, and push, new technological innovations. There is a strong tendency within the ICT community to constantly change and update features and application performance, and often above the quality of the content offered. While the DLIST platform design has been a refreshing update, it should constantly stress *practical functionality* in design and execution over technological features in formulating future project design and outreach, and continue to focus most energy on the quality of content posted.

Seldom is there a problem today with the condition of computer hardware among donor-supported programs; most such programs provide the most recent equipment available. Thus, playing CDROMS or MP3 files, or other file formats is often not a limitation at the site of use. The larger limitation lies in the Internet throughput and expense associated with on-line communication. Consequently, DLIST is in a position to convert much of its on-line content to CDROM formats; make radio broadcasts, or simple audio files (lectures or messages in various languages) available in MP3 file formats for later and repeated playback to DLIST stakeholders. For example, the Kunene Environmental Radio Programme could have been easily recorded with an inexpensive, but stereo quality, digital recorder and the resulting audio files could be easily copied and shared via CD, by emailing MP3 files as attachments, or by making them available for download on the website. This is something that DLIST should incorporate into its future outreach efforts. Also, “How-to” videos can be easily produced and shared via CD and in reduced file format (e.g. Flash) for electronic sharing. These are all tried and proven methods that are inexpensive and do not require significant effort to make operational. Furthermore, these formats (audio and visual learning) have the potential to be more effective in communicating content in areas where literacy and comprehension rates are lower.

2. DLIST should strive to evaluate the uptake potential of each local community and then tailor the most effective suite of tools in sharing information. This has been often referenced in DLIST steering committee meeting minutes, and other documentation; however, interview respondents often cited limitations in not having information alternatives to share with their local constituents. ICT still remains a limited percentage of the total community of practice, and so future effort should be to translate content and make available in multiple formats.

3. In the future, as a condition of engagement with DLIST programming (i.e. as a form of in-kind contribution), the program should make a concerted effort to strongly encourage and press participating national governments to provide its natural resource and social professionals with appropriate IT access (i.e. at least download capability via satellite). Even among government institutions in the region the access to appropriate equipment, Internet connectivity and throughput remains limited, and this was observed during the evaluation mission. This will continue to be a challenge among the general population of local coastal communities given the expense associated with IT, but if national governments are to be one significant beneficiary of information sharing programs, like DLIST, then in-kind contributions in the form of improved IT infrastructure in key resource management ministries and departments is a relatively modest contribution to make for DLIST to serve and to have greater reach.

4. **Develop and maintain a list of resource expertise on-line and also make available (i.e. for download) to the DLIST membership.** Several of the persons interviewed felt that this would be a helpful tool so that DLIST members could further facilitate one-to-many communication relationships on an as-needed basis. This is similar to the “Linked-In” model (<http://www.linkedin.com/>), a popular networking program among business professionals. DLIST could assist local stakeholders with this type of networking so that it remains regionally relevant.

5. **Distance learning offerings at different levels of sophistication for different capacities and learning styles.** Not all people have the same learning styles. In many communities (especially ones with poor literacy rates), audio and visual tools can be more effective. Future DLIST programming should provide a larger percentage of opportunity (and scholarship support) for distance learners, and focus on training the most appropriate audience with the right material at the right time. During the evaluation interviews, many stated that they would like more opportunity to participate in distance learning offerings, essentially to continue education; however, the academic nature of the current course structure (regardless of their accomplishments to date), presents a limitation to a broader audience. Additional effort should be focused on distance learning that can address this need.

*In new potential areas for DLIST:*

6. **Scope for champions** as a first step in expanding DLIST into new locations, and spend time talking with and identifying the potential for local champions. Champions



provide the basis as focal points in building and leading the social network to share information effectively. The new areas where DLIST may operate will most likely have different (possibly smaller) communities of practice within a broader community. New operations should first conduct a needs assessment for the types of communication, outreach and media formats that would be most effective. EcoAfrica has proven its ability to identify and recruit champions; however, this is likely to take longer in locations where DLIST and its management team are viewed as outsiders.

**7. Solicit High-level support** early in concert with the LME incentives for government participation. As part of this effort seek commitments from the government to at least supply natural resource and social professionals with ICT infrastructure (see recommendations #3 above) to be able to benefit from participation in the DLIST platform. Ensure that government agencies participate in Steering Committee meetings and that proxy members with decision authority are appointed to reduce the potential for apologies.

**8. Leverage effort and resources** (i.e. with other resources and in-kind contributions) to enable activities within a new locale. One lesson learned throughout the DLIST process is that small amounts of resources, leveraged where there is strong desire, are powerful in developing programs and affecting changes in attitude and behavior. The DLIST program (and PMU) has proven adept at this in its current operations.

**9. Focus on establishing communication in local languages and translation of content as a first order of business.**

**10. The ICT platform should be among the last of considerations in establishing DLIST in new locations.** However, based on experience from this MSP, a centralized operation for DLIST would be a logical approach until the different networks have the chance to take root in their respective regions. Future expansion should consider the following steps in establishing a sustainable on-line presence:

- A. Establish the List-Server/Discussion Forum first. DLIST should not spend valuable time attempting to structure, synthesize and post content in the early stages of a new location. Rather, it should use those features that have been proven to be more heavily used first, before attempting to post other material, which can be time and resource intensive. More focus should be on early outreach and identifying and grooming the people who can make the network function.
- B. An initial basic-only website— get key project documents posted immediately (even if just a listing or bulletin-board type function), especially so that government officials have content to refer to that defines the new DLIST. Recognize that this will be a limited, but important audience - i.e. those with good to fair IT access.
- C. Take the time necessary to review and vet relevant content. Provide some synthesis (and translation) before posting. This is a second order priority



relative to making contact with those tools that have proven the most widely used first.

D. Consider structuring DLIST's future on-line administrative organization as follows, so that it can continue to be mutually supportive across the SADC region, but does not occupy a sizeable percentage of the operational budget of each program, yet seeks efficiency of the operation while allowing dedicated service to each region. The following roles and goals should be considered in the future operation of the DLIST model:

1. An overall DLIST administrator for global elements common to the DLIST platform (but customized to the appropriate situation on-the-ground). Push the relevant technology into the appropriate locations and sub-locations (i.e. E-mail; web; CD-ROMS; DLIST representatives, focal point translators/interlocutors; hard copy (with appropriate translations); radio; TV; film)
2. DLIST-BCLME webmaster and administrator responsible for posting, synthesizing and responding to DLIST-BCLME content
3. DLIST-ASCLME webmaster and administrator responsible for posting, synthesizing and responding to DLIST-ASCLME content
4. DLIST-SIDS webmaster and administrator responsible for posting, synthesizing and responding to DLIST-SIDS content
5. A communications coordinator: A professional who will use principles in communications and advocacy across all DLIST elements to foster "stickiness"<sup>12</sup> of materials and messages. This is especially important in the new areas where DLIST will attempt to establish branding and name recognition.

The IT positions would be responsible for managing respective discussion threads, editing and posting relevant content for the respective regions/sub-regions (i.e. the synthesis and translation functions); maintaining collaborative communication arrangements with other projects as a function of smooth IT operations. The communications coordinator would work across programs and with the overall project manager to ensure that communications are effectively targeted.

## **6. Lessons Learned**

The development of lessons internally (i.e. from within the PMU and Steering Committee) have been identified and discussed elsewhere (i.e. GEF Experience Notes), and all of these lessons remain useful for DLIST to incorporate as it moves forward. The intent of this section is to emphasize a few key lessons that stem from observations during this terminal evaluation.

Previous discussions of lessons have identified trust as a major determinant of whether any network has the potential to be sustained. Trust embodies keeping promises—following through on commitments—and being consistently credible with information

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<sup>12</sup> *The Tipping Point, How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Malcolm Gladwell, 2000.

<http://www.gladwell.com/tippingpoint/index.html>



used to inform and educate. Without question, these have been important keys to the network established in Namibia and South Africa throughout this MSP and even before the pilot phase of DLIST. In fact, this evaluation finds that the effort of EcoAfrica in general and the CTA in particular, laid an important foundation in developing trust among this region's constituents. Although difficult to quantify, this will be an essential factor in whether the DLIST model can be established elsewhere, and careful attention will need to be given to fostering trust from the outset when expanding into new locations. Trust has to be engendered across all levels (i.e. technical projects, as well as government and local stakeholders) and this takes time to cultivate. EcoAfrica continues to do a good job in recruiting staff, as well as focal points and individuals, who engender trust and integrity and serve as local champions. From the interviews conducted, the relationships that have been developed by this cadre of specialists (i.e. multiple points of contact, as identified in the GEF Experience Note) have been an important factor in DLIST's success thus far. DLIST should continue to be aware of this as it moves into different regions, and should approach establishing new networks along the lines and recommendations identified above.

Obviously, ICT has the potential to reach a broad constituency, even in regional developing environments where Internet connectivity is a challenge. But ICT is only a small part (and partial facilitator) of a larger challenge in developing and maintaining a community of practice. As stated in a recent, popular advertisement from CISCO Systems, a world provider of computer switches and electronic communication solutions: "*Welcome to the human network*". Even among big business in developed countries, ICT providers recognize that technology merely provides a supportive, facilitating role and it is the relationships among people with similar interests in distant locations that will remain the most important ingredient. As demonstrated by DLIST, there are many formats and approaches to facilitate this, and its future should continue to use M&E as an adaptive mechanism to match the most appropriate tool(s) to local conditions.

Strategies to achieve a sustainable network are time and resource intensive to set up and maintain, and future DLIST operations will require the necessary support to establish and sustain them. Like the network marketing of products, some participants will remain brand-loyal and there will be attrition among others, but maintenance through routine communication and trust will be the foundation of success.

While maintaining such a network takes time and money, leveraging resources in small amounts and seeking win-win arrangements among local stakeholders fosters a sense of ownership, and has been proven as a successful strategy in Namibia and South Africa during this MSP. One observation that stood out during the evaluation interviews was the strong ethic expressed, especially by those interviewed in Namibia, concerning the responsibility of environmental and social stewardship for the future. This was not a once or twice observation, but a consistent philosophy and ethic expressed by professionals and local stakeholders. Identifying champions/leaders and then offering the appropriate leverage to realize a vision or dream for their local communities provides the kind of empowerment that proves a network's worth, and fosters longer term commitment by its

members, and future leaders to assume the helm. DLIST has demonstrated much strength and experience in working toward such a goal, and with adjustments (of which it is already aware) and additional modifications, it will continue to serve as an important regional information network for the coastal and marine resources of Africa.