



“Supporting Sustainable Inclusive Blue Economy Transformation in African SIDS”

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

Recruitment of an international firm to develop gender-responsive blue economy baselines, frameworks, and tools for African Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

1. BACKGROUND

The African Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Seychelles rely heavily on ocean and coastal ecosystems for economic prosperity, employment, food security, and social well-being. The ocean is their greatest shared asset and the foundation of livelihoods, trade, tourism, and cultural identity. However, these countries face growing pressures from climate change, environmental degradation, and economic vulnerability that threaten the sustainability of their ocean-based economies.

Recognizing both the challenges and opportunities, the UNDP-GEF Project “Supporting Sustainable Inclusive Blue Economy Transformation in African SIDS” seeks to help these nations transition toward a sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient Blue Economy. Implemented by UNDP and executed by the Global Water Partnership Southern Africa (GWP-SA), the project promotes integrated governance of marine and coastal resources and supports policies that link ocean stewardship with social inclusion, private sector innovation, and sustainable livelihoods.

While all six countries have advanced national Blue Economy strategies such as the Seychelles’ Blue Economy Roadmap, Mauritius’ Ocean Economy Plan, and Cabo Verde’s Charter for Blue Growth gaps remain in harmonized data systems, gender integration, and evidence-based policy tools. Most national strategies emphasize economic sectors such as fisheries, shipping, and tourism but lack systematic approaches to collect, analyze, and use data disaggregated by gender, age and social group. This limits governments’ ability to design equitable policies and to attract responsible private investment aligned with sustainability and inclusion goals.

Gender inequalities remain a particular concern. Across the African SIDS, women, youth and marginalized groups often face barriers to participation in decision-making, access to finance, technology, and marine resources. Although national gender equality frameworks exist and all six countries have ratified the international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), these commitments have yet to translate into measurable progress in Blue Economy sectors.

At the same time, the private sector including tourism operators, fisheries enterprises, shipping companies, and emerging blue-tech innovators plays a critical role in driving investment, job creation, and sustainable resource use. Yet engagement between the public and private sectors remains limited, fragmented, and often gender-blind. Strengthening partnerships and creating enabling conditions for inclusive private sector participation is therefore essential to realizing a truly sustainable and equitable Blue Economy.

In this context, and in line with Project Component 1 (Enabling Environment for Sustainable Blue Economy Transformation), the GWP-SA, as the Executing Entity for the African SIDS Project, is commissioning a consulting firm to lead the development of gender-responsive Blue Economy baselines, frameworks, and tools. This assignment will establish foundational evidence and practical tools that integrate gender equality, social inclusion, and private sector engagement into Blue Economy planning and implementation.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The main objective of this consultancy is to develop gender-responsive Blue Economy baselines, frameworks, and practical guidance for selected African Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to strengthen evidence-based policy development and strategic planning that integrates gender equality, social inclusion, and private sector engagement.

Specific objectives include:

- To establish or update national Blue Economy baselines incorporating gender and social inclusion analysis, with a focus on participation, access to resources, beneficitation, climate and vulnerability, institutional and policy practice and decision-making.
- To assess existing policy, institutional, and private sector engagement arrangements relevant to inclusive Blue Economy development.
- To develop national and/or regional Blue Economy frameworks that integrate gender equality and social inclusion objectives and actions.
- To produce a practical toolkit/guideline to support gender-responsive Blue Economy planning and implementation.

3. SCOPE OF WORK AND KEY TASKS

The consulting firm will develop gender-responsive Blue Economy baselines, frameworks, and tools that strengthen the enabling environment for inclusive Blue Economy transformation across the six African SIDS.

The baseline study will be broadened to provide an overall assessment of Blue Economy-related sectors, governance and coordination systems, policy frameworks, institutional arrangements, private sector engagement mechanisms, and financing approaches.

Gender equality and social inclusion will constitute the central analytical lens guiding all components of the assignment. The analysis will assess structural barriers, participation gaps, access to resources and decision-making power for women, youths and marginalized groups across Blue Economy sectors.

To improve analytical clarity and policy relevance, the baseline will be structured under thematic areas. The assignment will ensure complementarity with Activity 1.1.3 (Blue Economy Dashboard),

which focuses on KPI refinement and harmonised data tools, while this assignment focuses on policy, institutional, and strategic dimensions of gender-responsive Blue Economy transformation.

Task 1: Inception phase

- Conduct desk review on Blue Economy policies, strategies, coordination mechanisms and relevant studies.
- Review gender equality frameworks relevant to ocean-based sectors.
- Review relevant documentation related to the Blue Economy Dashboard under Activity 1.1.3.
- Map key stakeholders in government, private sector, academia, and civil society.
- Refine the gender-responsive analytical framework and thematic structure for the baseline study.
- Submit inception report including methodology, consultation approach, and workplan.

Task 2: Development of gender-responsive blue economy baselines

The consultant will develop comprehensive national baselines structured under thematic areas and guided by gender-responsive analytical approaches.

Thematic area 1: Gender equality and social inclusion in the blue economy

- Assess participation of women, youths and marginalized groups across Blue Economy sectors
- Analyse gender roles and power relations influencing participation in ocean-based livelihoods
- Assess access to resources including finance, technology, markets, information, and training
- Identify gender-specific barriers affecting entrepreneurship, employment, and leadership
- Assess representation of women in decision-making structures related to Blue Economy governance
- Identify good practices supporting gender-responsive Blue Economy development
- Document local knowledge on coastal and marine practices led by women, youths and marginalized groups.

Thematic area 2: Policy and legislation for gender-responsive blue economy

- Review national policies, strategies, laws, and regulations relevant to Blue Economy sectors
- Assess integration of gender equality and social inclusion considerations in policy frameworks
- Analyse alignment with national gender policies, climate commitments, biodiversity strategies, and development plans
- Identify policy gaps limiting inclusive Blue Economy development
- Assess coherence across sectoral policies affecting women and youth participation in Blue Economy sectors

Thematic area 3: Intersectoral coordination and national platforms

- Map institutional mandates relevant to Blue Economy development
- Assess existing intersectoral coordination mechanisms supporting Blue Economy implementation

- Identify in-country platforms facilitating dialogue across ministries, private sector, academia, and civil society
- Assess participation of gender institutions or women's organisations in coordination mechanisms
- Identify institutional barriers affecting integrated and inclusive Blue Economy governance

Thematic area 4: Monitoring of blue economy implementation (link to dashboard)

- Assess how countries currently monitor Blue Economy implementation across environmental, economic, governance, and social dimensions
- Identify institutional responsibilities for monitoring Blue Economy progress
- Assess availability of gender-disaggregated data relevant to Blue Economy sectors
- Analyse alignment between national monitoring approaches and the Blue Economy Dashboard KPIs
- Identify gaps affecting gender-responsive monitoring systems
- Provide recommendations to strengthen coherence between policy implementation and monitoring systems, without duplicating technical work under Activity 1.1.3

Thematic area 5: Private sector engagement and innovative financing

- Identify private sector actors engaged in Blue Economy sectors
- Assess barriers affecting women-led enterprises in Blue Economy value chains
- Assess policy and regulatory conditions affecting inclusive private sector participation
- Identify innovative financing mechanisms supporting Blue Economy development
- Assess the gender responsiveness of financing mechanisms
- Identify opportunities to strengthen women's entrepreneurship and access to finance in Blue Economy sectors

Task 3: Development of gender-responsive blue economy frameworks

- Develop national or regional frameworks integrating gender equality and inclusion objectives into Blue Economy governance and sector development.
- Ensure frameworks address barriers identified in policy, institutional coordination, private sector participation, and monitoring systems.
- Define priority actions, institutional roles, and strategic entry points.
- Facilitate validation consultations with national stakeholders.
- Finalize frameworks with implementation guidance.

Task 4: Development of gender-responsive toolkit and guidance

- Develop practical toolkit to support integration of gender equality and inclusion into Blue Economy planning and implementation.
- Provide tools to support gender analysis in Blue Economy sectors
- Provide guidance on integrating gender considerations into policy development
- Provide practical approaches for tracking and strengthening women and youth's participation in Blue Economy value chains
- Include case studies, checklists, and practical tools.

4. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES, TIMELINE AND AMOUNT

N°	Deliverable	Description	Timeline	Amount (USD) to be provided by consultant
1	Acceptable inception report	Methodology, methodology and gender-responsive analytical framework, work plan, and consultation plan	Within 4 weeks of contract start	
2	Country baseline reports	Comprehensive Blue Economy baselines with gender and social inclusion analysis structured around thematic areas (one per SIDS)	Month 3	
4	Frameworks	National/regional policy and institutional frameworks integrating gender equality and social inclusion gender-responsive Blue Economy	Month 5	
5	Toolkit/guidelines	Practical tools for integrating gender equality and inclusion into Blue Economy planning, policy, and investment processes	Month 7	
7	Final Report	Synthesis of findings and recommendations for strengthening gender-responsive Blue Economy governance	Month 7	

5. LEVEL OF EFFORT

The consultancy is expected to require approximately 120 professional working days over a 7-month period. Given the multi-country scope and the range of analytical and technical outputs expected, the consulting firm will avail a core team of three experts with complementary expertise in Blue Economy policy, gender and social inclusion and private sector engagement.

Expert	Key responsibilities	Estimated days
Team Leader / Blue Economy Policy Specialist	Provides overall leadership and technical direction; ensures quality assurance; coordinates across countries; leads development of Blue Economy baselines and national/regional frameworks; Liaise closely with GWP-SA, national counterparts and other partners	50
Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist	Leads gender analysis and integration throughout all outputs; develops gender-responsive indicators; contributes to framework and toolkit design; ensures compliance with UNDP-GEF gender standards.	40
Private Sector Engagement Specialist	Analyzes existing and potential private sector roles and investments in the Blue Economy; identifies partnership models, financing options, and policy incentives; ensures integration of private sector engagement into frameworks and tools.	30

6. FIRM & KEY EXPERTS QUALIFICATIONS

The consulting firm must demonstrate:

- Legal registration as a firm, institution eligible to operate and contract in its country of registration and internationally.
- At least 10 years of relevant experience in policy research, advisory, and technical assistance related to the Blue Economy, marine and coastal management
- Proven experience in multi-country or regional initiatives, preferably within Africa or the Western Indian Ocean region.
- Demonstrated institutional capacity to coordinate multidisciplinary teams and manage complex assignments involving multiple stakeholders and development partners.
- Sound financial and administrative capacity to manage consultancy contracts, logistics, and reporting in accordance with UNDP and GEF requirements.
- A track record of successful delivery of similar assignments for UN agencies, international organizations, or government institutions (with at least 3 certificates of good completion)

The firm should appoint a multidisciplinary team consisting of the following key experts:

(i) Team Leader / Blue Economy Policy Specialist

Qualifications and experience:

- Advanced university degree (Master's or higher) in marine policy, environmental economics, natural resource management, or a related field.
- Minimum of 10 years of progressive experience in Blue Economy policy development, marine or coastal governance, or sustainable ocean-based economic planning.
- Proven experience in leading multi-country or regional projects involving multiple stakeholders.

- Strong understanding of ecosystem-based management, ocean governance frameworks, and policy analysis.
- Experience working with UNDP, GEF, or other international development partners is an asset

(ii) Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist

Qualifications and experience:

- Advanced university degree in gender studies, sociology, development studies, or related discipline.
- Minimum of 7 years of professional experience in gender mainstreaming and social inclusion in environmental, climate, or natural resource management sectors.
- Proven track record in conducting gender analysis and developing gender action plans for international projects.
- Familiarity with GEF and UNDP gender policies, safeguards, and results frameworks.
- Strong facilitation and stakeholder engagement skills, particularly with marginalized and vulnerable groups.

(iii) Private Sector Engagement Specialist

Qualifications and experience:

- Advanced university degree in economics, business administration, finance, or related field.
- Minimum of 7 years of relevant experience in private sector engagement, sustainable finance, or public–private partnerships.
- Demonstrated experience working with private sector actors in marine, coastal, or environmental sectors.
- Proven ability to identify and design inclusive business models or blended finance mechanisms.
- Strong analytical and communication skills, including experience in stakeholder dialogue and partnership development.
- Prior experience working with UN agencies or international development programs is desirable.

7. TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Weight of Technical Proposal: 80%

Minimum Technical Threshold to Qualify for Financial Evaluation: 70%

Evaluation criteria	Criteria description	Max weight (%)	Points
1. Firm's administration & experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal registration as a firm, institution eligible to operate and contract in its country of registration and internationally. • At least 10 years of relevant experience in policy research, advisory, and technical assistance related to the Blue Economy, marine and coastal management • Proven experience in multi-country or regional initiatives, preferably within Africa or the Western Indian Ocean region. • Demonstrated institutional capacity to coordinate multidisciplinary teams and manage complex assignments involving multiple stakeholders and development partners. • Sound financial and administrative capacity to manage consultancy contracts, logistics, and reporting in accordance with UNDP and GEF requirements. • A track record of successful delivery of similar assignments for UN agencies, international organizations, or government institutions (with at least 3 certificates of good completion) 	20	20
Subtotal			20
2. Personnel qualification and experience		50	30
Team Leader / Blue Economy Policy Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced university degree (Master's or higher) in marine policy, environmental economics, natural resource management, or a related field. • Minimum of 10 years of progressive experience in Blue Economy policy development, marine or coastal governance, or sustainable ocean-based economic planning. • Proven experience in leading multi-country or regional 	20	20

	<p>projects involving multiple stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong understanding of ecosystem-based management, ocean governance frameworks, and policy analysis. • Experience working with UNDP, GEF, or other international development partners is an asset 		
Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced university degree in gender studies, sociology, development studies, or related discipline. • Minimum of 7 years of professional experience in gender mainstreaming and social inclusion in environmental, climate, or natural resource management sectors. • Proven track record in conducting gender analysis and developing gender action plans for international projects. • Familiarity with GEF and UNDP gender policies, safeguards, and results frameworks. • Strong facilitation and stakeholder engagement skills, particularly with marginalized and vulnerable groups. 	15	15
Private Sector Engagement Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced university degree in economics, business administration, finance, or related field. • Minimum of 7 years of relevant experience in private sector engagement, sustainable finance, or public–private partnerships. • Demonstrated experience working with private sector actors in marine, coastal, or environmental sectors. • Proven ability to identify and design inclusive business 	15	15

	<p>models or blended finance mechanisms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong analytical and communication skills, including experience in stakeholder dialogue and partnership development. • Prior experience working with UN agencies or international development programs is desirable. 		
Subtotal			50
3. Proposed Methodology, Approach and Implementation Plan		30	30
3.1. Understanding of the ToR and Methodological Soundness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear demonstration of understanding of the ToR - Relevance and suitability of the proposed data collection and analysis approaches , methodology for capacity building, suggested data collection tools, etc 	20	20
3.2. Implementation Plan and Feasibility	Coherent workplan, realistic timeframe, clear outputs aligned with deliverables in ToRs.	10	10
Subtotal			30
TOTAL TECHNICAL SCORE		100	100

8. Reporting and Coordination

The consulting firm will work under the direct supervision of the Global Water Partnership Southern Africa (GWP-SA), the Executing Agency for the UNDP-GEF Project “*Supporting Sustainable Inclusive Blue Economy Transformation in African SIDS*”. GWP-SA will provide overall technical and administrative oversight, review and approve all deliverables, and serve as the primary liaison with the firm. The firm’s Team Leader will maintain regular communication with GWP-SA, submit progress reports in line with the agreed work plan, and ensure the quality and timeliness of all outputs.

A regional coordination team comprising focal points from each of the six participating SIDS (Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Seychelles) and partner institutions will be established to support the assignment. These focal points will facilitate access to national data and stakeholders, participate in validation of outputs, and ensure country-specific inputs are reflected in the regional deliverables. The consulting firm will work closely with GWP-SA and the regional focal points to ensure alignment, coherence, and effective implementation across all participating countries.

9. How to apply

Interested candidates are invited to submit their applications by email to gwpsaprourement@gwp.org, with a copy to Shamiso.Kumbirai@gwpsaf.org and immaculee.uwimana@gwpsaf.org, no later than 30 April 2026. The application should include the following documents:

- Curriculum Vitae of experts (CVs)
- Cover Letter
- Proposed Methodology (5 pages maximum) and proposed pricing of each identified deliverables under section 4

GWPSA will evaluate the proposals or CV's received against each other based on the criteria stated above. GWPSA reserves the right to negotiate any aspect of your proposal before conclusion of a Contract for the Assignment. GWPSA furthermore reserves the right to reject all proposals or CV's submitted without giving any reason. GWPSA may discontinue or suspend without responsibility or liability to any Bidder including (without limitation) any liability for any costs or expenditure incurred by, or inconvenience caused to, any Bidder.

The proposal shall be prepared in the English language. The financial proposal should be expressed in US Dollar and payment for the Services will be made in the same currency.

10. Taxes

A withholding tax will be deducted from the Consulting Firm invoices at the default rate of 15%, or 10% where a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) is applicable for the respective country. GWPSA will provide the corresponding tax certificates and shall not be liable for any additional taxes payable to the tax authority/authorities in the Consultant's country of origin.