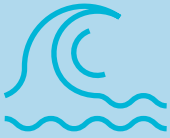


Ocean Country
Partnership
Programme (OCPP)
Interim Evaluation
Belize
Case Study - summary

Department for Food,
Environment, and Rural Affairs
June 2024

About the OCPP



The Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP) is a bilateral technical assistance and capacity building programme that provides tailored support to countries to manage the marine environment more sustainably, including by strengthening marine science expertise, developing science-based policy and management tools and creating educational resources for coastal communities. The OCPP delivers work under three thematic areas: biodiversity, marine pollution, and sustainable seafood. Funding is provided through the overarching Blue Planet Fund (BPF) by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The programme has been engaged in Belize since February 2022.

NIRAS is the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) supplier contracted by Defra. Their work under the banner of OCPP-MEL covers a broad range of activities including process and impact evaluations, MEL system strengthening, support for communications, learning and monitoring throughout the lifetime of the programme, as well as conduct of ad hoc evaluation assignments at the request of Defra.

This document is one of five result summaries based on country case studies conducted as part of the interim evaluation. The others include Ghana, Maldives, Mozambique and Sri Lanka.

OCPP Delivery Partners in Belize

OCPP’s bilateral partnerships are delivered by three British government Arm’s Length Bodies (ALBs):

Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas)

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)

Marine Management Organisation (MMO).

The Global Ocean Accounting Partnership (GOAP) is at the beginning of initiating work in the country.

Together, these delivery partners focus on providing an enabling environment, including technical capacity, equipment infrastructure, compliance and enforcement capacity, and monitoring capacity, to the Government of Belize. OCPP also fund ten scholarships, delivered through the Association of Commonwealth University (ACU) to students at the University of Belize.

Acknowledgements

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Marine
Management
Organisation



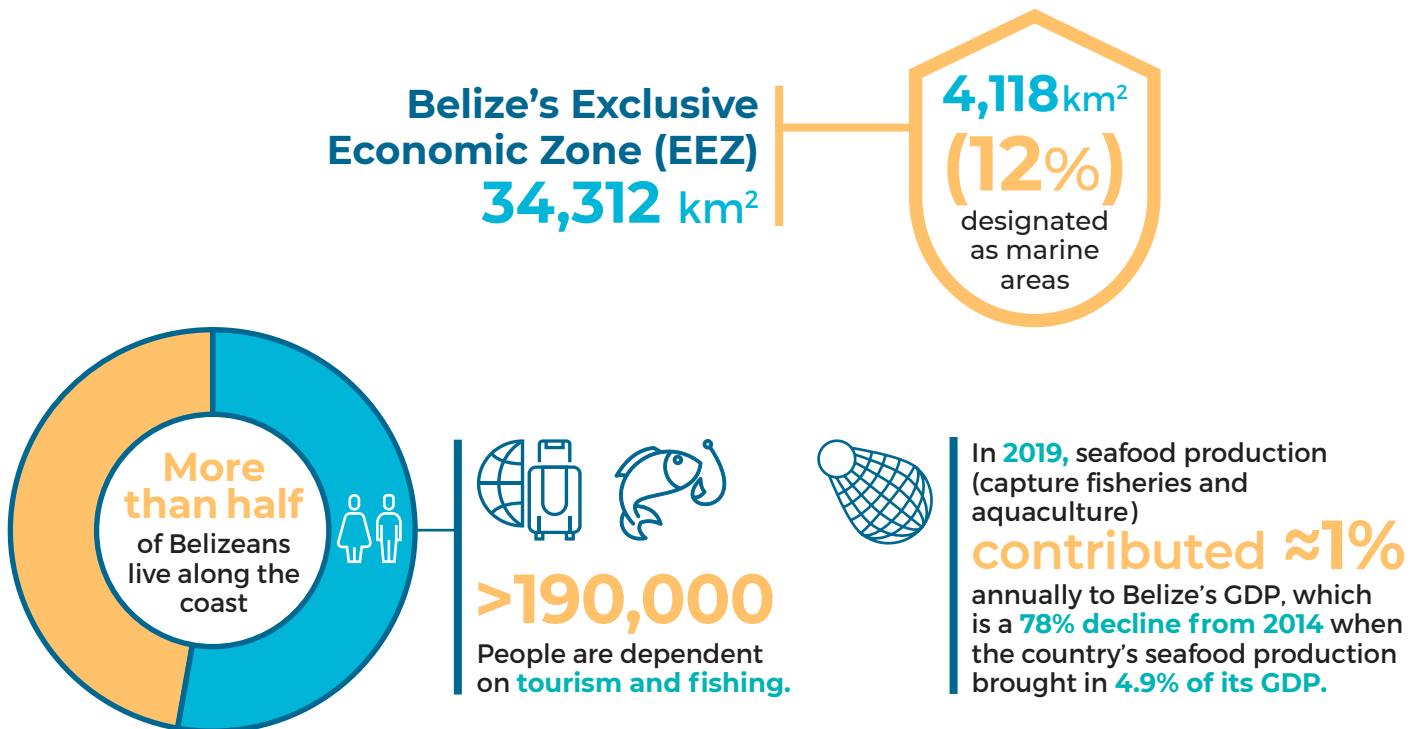
Findings at a glance



- The OCPP in Belize has created a relevant, demand-led work package that is strongly aligned with stakeholder priorities, though some key government stakeholders have suggested revisiting conversations on priorities to strategize for the future.
- The programme is achieving strong results in marine pollution and sustainable seafood, many of which have the potential to lead to lasting impacts.
- The ALB delivery team has received praise for its technical calibre, coordination efforts, and responsiveness to government needs. However, stakeholders have noted inefficiencies in programme delivery citing factors such as approval bottlenecks, a lack of full time in-country presence from the OCPP delivery team, and poor communication.
- There is a concern among stakeholders that when OCPP's exits from Belize, it risks leaving a gap in the technical assistance and resources needed to respond to the country's marine environment challenges.
- Although the sustainability of OCPP's support in the country remains uncertain, there are some positive signs that measures will be in place before the programme ends, such as the programme identifying sustainable financing options.

Belize's marine economy

The interim evaluation of OCPP in Ghana involved a deep dive investigation into the design and implementation quality of the programme between August 2022 up to March 2024. Evaluators focused on the programme's structure, governance and management to analyse the likelihood of the programme achieving its intended outcomes and impact and identify early indications of its contributions.



¹ <https://mpatlas.org/countries/BLZ/>

² Tess Geers, Sarah Bedolfe, Janelle Chanona, 'State of Belize Fisheries Report 2020,' Ocean, June 2020. https://belize.oceana.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/State_of_Belize_Fisheries_Report_2020.pdf

³ Ibid, p.11.

Seeking long term change to Belize's marine environment



The rich marine biodiversity of Belize is threatened by pollution, unsustainable fishing, and coastal development, endangering the livelihoods of coastal communities. Although the country is recognised as a leader in marine conservation and has recently undertaken a number of legal and institutional actions, these efforts have been hampered by a lack of scientific knowledge, data and practical resources.

The programme's ambitions lie in addressing these issues by improving policies and regulations before moving towards enhanced collaborative action by stakeholders to manage and protect their marine environments effectively and sustainably. The long term outcome of OCPP in Belize is that partners can better address the challenges to their marine environments and biodiversity, enhance marine dependent livelihoods, and the wellbeing of those that depend on them, sustainably, equitably and inclusively.

The Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCPP) has identified four pathways through which the programme can deliver change in the way these issues are addressed in Belize, through the generation and use of scientific knowledge to better inform policymaking and action.

- **Capacity building and technical assistance:** Providing expertise towards sustainable marine ecosystem science and better marine environment monitoring.
- **Governance and regulation:** Supporting the creation of evidence-informed policies, frameworks and plans for sustainable marine ecosystem management, governance and budgeting.
- **Science, education and knowledge exchange:** Conducting study pilots and environmental and needs assessments and facilitating cross-sector collaboration to enhance knowledge sharing, learning and innovation.
- **Value chain and market access improvements for seafood:** Fostering market linkages for sustainable seafood and highlighting the vital link between marine biodiversity and marine pollution to the private sector.

Key findings



The interim evaluation of Belize involved a deep dive investigation into the design and implementation quality of the programme between February 2022 until the end of May 2024. Evaluators focused on the the programme's design and delivery, relevance, coherence, efficiency and potential sustainability, as well as analysis of the likelihood of the programme contributing to its intended outcomes and impact..



⁴ Identified as 'causal pathways' in the Belize Theory of Change and aligned with OCPP's programme level Theory of Change which was refreshed with support from the NIRAS MEL team in 2023.



Meeting Belize's needs



Successes and strengths

- OCPP in Belize is effectively addressing the marine needs and priorities of most stakeholders, working closely with them to establish a clear vision and objectives from the beginning.
- The technical expertise of the OCPP delivery team is highly valued by in-country partners.
- The delivery team is taking steps to ensure gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) and safeguarding are better considered.
- Despite the absence of a MEL framework, the delivery team has adapted delivery based on their own learning and lessons from OCPP's predecessor, the Commonwealth Litter Programme (CLiP).



Areas for improvement

- Stakeholders lack clarity on how OCPP activities are aligned to broader programme outcomes. OCPP activities are felt by some to be predetermined, and have gaps such as addressing key priorities such as Blue Economy support. In response, some government stakeholders have asked to revisit and refine the programme's strategy.
- More consistent community engagement is needed across thematic workstreams to foster transformational change.
- GESI considerations are underdeveloped, and a GESI analysis could help the team identify gaps and needs.



Coherence with others working in the same space



Successes and strengths

- OCPP's work in Belize aligns well with the wider OCPP portfolio and builds on previous efforts made by CLiP and Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme
- Activities also align with national and international policies, including the Belize Marine Litter Action Plan and Blue Bonds Agreement.
- The programme has made strong regional and international links to other small island developing states (SIDS) links through the Waste Recycler's Association and WREN's Maritime Ports Feasibility study.
- Duplication of work has been minimised through comprehensive stakeholder mapping and collaboration with other donors.



Areas for improvement

- Collaboration between the ALBs was initially disjointed but this has improved, notably through regular cross-ALB meetings.



Caption:
Members of the Belize Recyclers and Waste Management Association at the launch event in April 2024.



OCPP is collaborating with government departments, international development assistance donors and NGOs to form the **Belize Waste Recycler's and Waste Management Association**, which will coordinate the Belize's waste management sector. The role of the Association is to bring previously disenfranchised groups, such as recyclers, into the formal labour market.



Programme’s delivery and use of resources



Successes and strengths

- The ALB delivery team has demonstrated their ability to adapt and deliver in the Belize contexts.
- The Country Coordinator and technical leads that deliver the work have established strong relationships with key in-country stakeholders.
- Stakeholders have noted the delivery team’s close interaction with government officials and their openness in addressing their needs and listening to their concerns.



Areas for improvement

- The delivery of the programme in Belize by ALBs is perceived by some stakeholders to be somewhat inefficient.
- Factors contributing to inefficiencies include unclear guidance on what the programme can fund, bottlenecks in approval processes, an over-reliance on the intermittent in-country missions by delivery partners, a lack of full-time in-country presence and poor communications on what has been done and achieved from delivery partners.
- The programme lacks a robust MEL framework although was underway to address this shortcoming.

✓ A large factor that has contributed to efficient programme delivery is the strong relationships the programme has established through the Country Coordinator and the technical leads that deliver the work. Partners highlighted their specific technical lead counterparts by name in a feedback session, stating that the experience of working with the technical leads has been very positive.





Meeting programme objectives



Successes and strengths

- The programme in Belize has achieved significant results and both intermediate and outcome-level changes in marine pollution and sustainable seafood.
- Technical assistance and capacity building have greatly enhanced the Department of Environment’s ability to manage marine resources effectively.
- In collaboration with Belizean scientists and stakeholders, two notable scientific and research papers have been published and are available online:
 - [“A Blue Future: developing a national marine litter action plan in SIDS - lessons learnt in Belize”](#), Maxine Monsanto, et. al.³³
 - [“Recommendations for Protected Area Management Effectiveness Assessments \(PAME\) in Belize’s marine environment.”](#)
- Many of the results achieved were built on the foundations previously laid by the CLIP programme. For example, the Hummingbird Analytical Laboratory at the University of Belize and the laboratory of the Department of Environment are a part of the OCPP’s microplastic network. This network has allowed these laboratories to produce comparable baseline and monitoring assessments.



Caption:
FTIR-microscope at the Hummingbird Analytical Laboratory at the University of Belize.



Belize has enhanced capacity to sustainably managing their marine environment.

OCPP is strengthening animal health systems by delivering training to **conduct laboratory analyses and respond to biosecurity threats in important value chains, such as shrimp and tilapia.** This work has increased the capacity and capability of the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) and Ministry of Agriculture and ensures government facilities are effective in identifying, preventing and managing disease to reduce production losses.



Areas for improvement

- Many in-country stakeholders have cited the lack of an in-country presence as a barrier to the programme’s overall effectiveness, suggesting a need for a more localised approach to delivery of support.



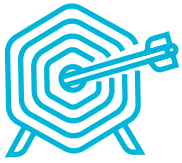
Belize is taking action to effectively and sustainably manage and protect their marine environments

The programme has **enabled Belize to implement its National Marine Litter Action Plan** by providing equipment and training that has **increased capacity and capability of stakeholders to conduct laboratory analyses.** These stakeholders include the Department of Environment, who now have the laboratory equipment and training necessary to monitor for plastic pollution. The equipment and training has also allowed the Department of Environment to implement the 2020 Law of Banning Single Use Plastic.



Caption:
Tilapia hatcheries in Belize supported by the OCPP.





Programme impact



Successes and strengths

- The programme is well-positioned to address marine environment and biodiversity challenges in Belize and lead to positive impacts
- Marine pollution and sustainable seafood are showing strong performance and contributing to outcome-level change.



Caption:
Lab equipment provided by OCPP to Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA)



Areas for improvement

- More investigations into the poverty alleviation element of OCPP's work are needed.
- Current positive impacts generated by the programme for vulnerable groups is limited at this time. The Belize Recyclers and Waste Management Association is one positive coordination output from the programme that has direct engagement with disenfranchised communities within Belize. The programme needs to further integrate GESI work, particularly in seaweed aquaculture.



Delivering lasting benefits




Successes and strengths

- There are positive signs that the delivery team will be able to ensure a measure of sustainability before the programme exits, such as the programme identifying sustainable financing options.
- Positive examples of sustainability in intervention design can be useful for newer OCPP bilateral partnership countries.
- The Sustainable Financing workstream, use of a train-the-trainer model, and the development of a transition plan will all increase the likelihood of sustainability of OCPP in Belize.



Areas for improvement

- There is currently no sustainability or transition plan in place for OCPP in Belize. It is understood that Transition Strategy templates should be available for the delivery teams to use by the end of 2024.

 The Department of Environment is using the OCPP-trained scientist to train another laboratory assistant, demonstrating use of a train-the-trainer approach to ensure sustainability.





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