



Supporting Sustainable Inclusive Blue Economy Transformation in African SIDS



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STRENGTHENING AFRICAN SIDS READINESS TO INTEGRATE FISHERIES VALUE CHAINS INTO CONTINENTAL TRADE UNDER THE AfCFTA

1. Background and rationale

African Small Island Developing States face structural constraints to participating in regional and international trade: narrow production bases, geographic isolation, high exposure to climate change, and limited economies of scale. They are at the same time endowed with significant marine and coastal natural capital and a private sector that drives socio-economic growth, which gives the Blue Economy, and fisheries particularly, a strong foundation for inclusive, resilient and sustainable development.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement has been negotiated, and its State Parties are now implementing it. For African SIDS, the task is therefore not to renegotiate the agreement but to assess their readiness, to analyse the gaps between what countries currently do and the requirements of the AfCFTA protocols, and to develop the regional fisheries value chains they can trade under the opportunities the agreement offers. Fishery products are frequently the leading export of African SIDS, yet they flow to markets outside the continent rather than within it, while Africa remains a net importer of fishery products sourced largely from outside Africa (FAO).

This assignment is undertaken under the UNDP-GEF project “Supporting Sustainable Inclusive Blue Economy Transformation in African SIDS”, which works with six African SIDS in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean: Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Seychelles. The Global Water Partnership Southern Africa is the Executing Agency, under the leadership of the African Union Commission and in collaboration with the AfCFTA Secretariat. It operationalises the project’s Component 1 work on aligning the Blue Economy of the SIDS with continental trade.

The AfCFTA Secretariat has already conducted country diagnostics for Cabo Verde, the Comoros and Zanzibar, with an emphasis on the economic empowerment of women in fisheries value chains under the AfCFTA. This assignment builds on those diagnostics and on the in-house country activities led by the Private Sector Unit, the Seychelles fisheries sector study and the Comoros national consultation, rather than repeating country fieldwork. It

focuses on the trade-policy, legal-positioning, standards and advocacy dimension that positions African SIDS fisheries within the AfCFTA.

2. Objective

2.1. Overall objective

Assess and strengthen the readiness of African SIDS to integrate their fisheries value chains into continental trade under the AfCFTA, through a gap analysis against the AfCFTA protocols, a legal-positioning analysis, support to develop regional value chains, targeted capacity building, and an advocacy paper and roadmap, on sustainable principles and foregrounding the women and youth who dominate fisheries processing and trade.

2.2. Specific objectives

- Assess the readiness of African SIDS and analyse the gaps between current national practice and the requirements of the AfCFTA protocols, building on existing diagnostics.
- Analyse the legal positioning of African SIDS within the AfCFTA instruments, as the legal foundation for the advocacy paper and the roadmap.
- Identify and support the development of priority regional fisheries value chains that SIDS can trade under the AfCFTA.
- Strengthen the economic empowerment, leadership, and market competitiveness of women and youth in African SIDS by addressing structural barriers across the post-harvest fisheries value chain, enabling their equitable participation in intra-African trade under the AfCFTA
- Strengthen the capacity of SIDS stakeholders for fisheries market readiness and trade participation, informed by a stakeholder mapping and findings.
- Produce an advocacy policy paper and a prioritised market-readiness and trade-engagement roadmap.

3. Scope of work

The consultant undertakes the assignment under the coordination of the African Union Commission and the supervision of the Executing Agency GWPSA, in collaboration with the AfCFTA Secretariat. The work concentrates on the trade-policy and market-access dimension of fisheries value chains, builds on existing diagnostics and the Private Sector Unit's country activities, and comprises the following components.

3.1. Readiness and gap assessment of policy and institutional frameworks

Conduct a desktop review of national, regional and continental policies, institutional arrangements and relevant stakeholders involved in blue economy governance and fisheries trade, including their responsiveness to gender equality and youth inclusion. Assess the readiness of the SIDS and analyse the gaps between what countries currently do and the requirements of the AfCFTA protocols and the specific provisions of the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade. Identify the structural, institutional, technical, socio-cultural barriers and capacity gaps that hinder effective participation, and the priority measures required. Identify the priority regional fisheries value chains that SIDS can develop and trade under the AfCFTA, focusing on post-harvest and trade nodes dominated by women and youth

and the conditions needed to make these value chains tradable and inclusive. The assessment covers the six SIDS at desk level and builds on the AfCFTA Secretariat's existing diagnostics (Cabo Verde, Comoros, Zanzibar) and on the Private Sector Unit's country activities (the Seychelles study and the Comoros consultation).

3.2. Legal-positioning analysis of African SIDS within the AfCFTA architecture

Conduct a focused analysis of the positioning of the six African SIDS within the legal instruments of the AfCFTA. This analysis provides the legal foundation for the advocacy paper and the roadmap and covers at least the following.

- Review the Tariff Concession Schedules submitted by each African SIDS (sensitive products, exclusion lists, liberalisation calendar) against priority blue economy products.
- Assess the application of the Rules of Origin (Annex 2 of the Protocol on Trade in Goods) to fisheries and aquaculture products, with recommendations on the cumulation rules (bilateral, diagonal, full) most beneficial to SIDS.
- Identify the leverage offered by Special and Differential Treatment (Article 6 of the Protocol on Trade in Goods) for the implementation timelines of African SIDS.
- Identify opportunities under the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade for artisanal fisheries and post-harvest value chains, where women represent most operators.
- Identify opportunities under the AfCFTA Protocol on Digital Trade, including the dematerialisation of SPS certificates, electronic Certificates of Origin (e-CoO), and cross-border payments through the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS).
- Map non-tariff barriers affecting blue economy exports of African SIDS through the AfCFTA NTB Reporting Mechanism (tradebarriers.africa).
- Stem integrated analytics to overcome SIDS vulnerabilities and seize the opportunities of the AfCFTA

3.3. Advocacy policy paper including roadmap for market readiness and trade engagement

Develop an advocacy-oriented policy paper and practical roadmap to strengthen the visibility, market readiness and participation of African SIDS fisheries in regional, continental and international trade, particularly under the AfCFTA. The deliverable will consolidate findings from the readiness and gap assessment, legal analysis, stakeholder mapping and validation workshop, and set out strategic recommendations and prioritised short-, medium- and long-term actions covering standards and certification, sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, labelling and packaging, customs and tariff arrangements, digital trade readiness, cold-chain and storage infrastructure, trade corridors, market access and coordination through the Island States Commission. It will identify responsible stakeholders, implementation pathways and linkages with the project's national fisheries demonstrations, and will be finalised for submission to regional and continental decision-makers, partner institutions and development partners.

3.4. Technical review workshop

Convene a virtual technical review workshop with the AfCFTA Secretariat, the African Union Commission and the participating SIDS to present the findings of the readiness, gap and legal-positioning analysis and the draft policy brief for review and comments. The workshop is held before the capacity-building phase, so that the capacity programme and the advocacy paper rest on the reviewed findings.

3.5. Targeted capacity building

Design and deliver a tailored gender responsive capacity-building programme, aligned with existing AfCFTA capacity-building materials, directed at public institutions and AfCFTA national committees, trade and standards or SPS authorities, and private-sector and fisheries value-chain actors. The programme covers the AfCFTA instruments and the relevant protocols; market-access and trade-facilitation mechanisms for fishery products; standards compliance and product certification, with the focus on the sanitary safety of products and SPS compliance and on engagement with standards bureaus and quality-assurance bodies; and the requirements of trade-supporting infrastructure, including cold-chain systems, storage and logistics. The consultant develops the training materials, delivers a two-day workshop ensuring equitable participation of women and youth, ensures the materials can be adapted into online modules for the African SIDS Learning Management System, and facilitates knowledge exchange between SIDS institutions and relevant regional organisations.

4. Methodology

The methodology is desk-based and builds on existing evidence. The consultant conducts a documentary review and a trade-flow analysis for fishery products across the six SIDS, drawing on ITC Trade Map, UN Comtrade and FAO data, and on the AfCFTA Secretariat's existing country diagnostics and the Private Sector Unit's Seychelles study and Comoros consultation, rather than new primary country missions. Virtual consultations can be facilitated by GWPSA, and the AfCFTA Secretariat as required for additional information. The findings and the draft policy brief are presented for review and comment at a technical workshop with the AfCFTA Secretariat, the AUC and the SIDS before the capacity-building phase. The approach is gender-responsive throughout and grounded in sustainable Blue Economy principles. The consultant sets out the detailed methodology, work plan and stakeholder mapping in the inception report.

5. Expected deliverables and timeline

All written outputs are submitted in English. The cost for translations of any key relevant documents will be borne by the project.

Table 1. Deliverables, indicative effort and validation

Deliverable	Description	Timeline	Amount (USD) To be provided by consultant
1. Inception report	Refined methodology, workplan, and stakeholder engagement approach.	Within 3 weeks of	

		contract start	
2. Readiness, gap-analysis and legal-positioning report	Assessment of the policy, institutional, stakeholder, value-chain and legal readiness of the six African SIDS to participate inclusively in fisheries trade under the AfCFTA.	End of Month 2	
3. Advocacy policy paper	Development of an advocacy policy paper and practical roadmap setting out priority actions to strengthen the market readiness and trade participation of African SIDS fisheries under the AfCFTA.	End of Month 5	
4. Capacity Building Package and training report	Development and delivery of a capacity-building package, including training materials, facilitation and a report documenting participation, key outcomes and recommendations from the training workshop. (Word, PPT, etc)	End of Month 6	
Total			

6. Level of effort and team composition

The assignment will be undertaken by a team of two experts under a deliverables-based contract over a six-month period. Performance and payment will be linked to the satisfactory completion and acceptance of the agreed deliverables.

6.1. Lead consultant: regional trade and blue economy expert

The lead consultant is responsible for the overall delivery of the assignment. The responsibilities include leading the readiness and gap assessment and the legal-positioning analysis; coordinating with the participating SIDS, the AfCFTA Secretariat, the African Union Commission and relevant regional institutions; convening and facilitating the technical workshop; designing and facilitating the capacity-building programme; leading the advocacy policy paper; developing the roadmap; and ensuring coherence across all deliverables, integrating the inputs of the technical expert.

6.2. Short-term technical expert: fisheries value chains, standards and AfCFTA legal instruments

The short-term technical expert provides specialised input on the legal and operational aspects of fisheries market integration. The responsibilities include the analysis of rules of origin, tariff schedules and the relevant AfCFTA protocols as applied to fishery products; technical analysis of standards compliance, certification and quality assurance and of trade-supporting infrastructure, including cold-chain and storage; support to the capacity-building modules on standards, certification and the AfCFTA legal instruments; and technical inputs to the market-readiness components of the roadmap.

7. Qualifications and experience

7.1. Lead consultant

- Advanced university degree (master's or higher) in international trade, economics, public policy, development studies, environmental policy, blue economy, or a related field.

- At least ten years of relevant experience in international trade policy, regional economic integration, or economic development.
- Demonstrated expertise in African regional trade frameworks, particularly the AfCFTA and its protocols, and related regional integration processes.
- Proven experience in policy analysis and the preparation of strategic policy or advocacy documents.
- Experience in blue economy, ocean-based sectors or natural-resource value chains, and in designing capacity-building, is highly desirable; experience with African regional institutions, SIDS or multilateral organisations is an asset.

7.2. Short-term technical expert

- Advanced university degree (master's or higher) in trade facilitation, supply-chain management, agricultural or fisheries economics, industrial development, quality infrastructure, or a related field.
- At least seven years of relevant experience in market access, value-chain development, trade facilitation or standards compliance.
- Demonstrated knowledge of the AfCFTA legal instruments (Protocols, Annexes, Tariff Concession Schedules, Rules of Origin), with at least two documented assignments.
- Operational understanding of the SPS and TBT frameworks (Codex Alimentarius, WOH/OIE, IPPC) as applied to fisheries and aquaculture products is highly desirable.
- Demonstrated experience with product-certification systems and quality infrastructure, and with trade-supporting infrastructure including cold-chain and storage; experience in African markets or small island economies is an advantage.

8. 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. Consultant's qualification and experience			

Lead consultant	• Advanced university degree (master's or higher) in international trade, economics, public policy, development studies, environmental policy, blue economy, or a related field. • At least ten years of relevant experience in international trade policy, regional economic integration, or economic development. • Demonstrated expertise in African regional trade frameworks, particularly the AfCFTA and its protocols, and related regional integration processes. • Proven experience in policy analysis and the preparation of strategic policy or advocacy documents. • Experience in blue economy, ocean-based sectors or natural-resource value chains, and in designing capacity-building, is highly desirable; experience with African regional institutions, SIDS or multilateral organisations is an asset.	30	30
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Short-term technical expert	• Advanced university degree (master's or higher) in trade facilitation, supply-chain management, agricultural or fisheries economics, industrial development, quality infrastructure, or a related field. • At least seven years of relevant experience in market access, value-chain development, trade facilitation or standards compliance. • Demonstrated knowledge of the AfCFTA legal instruments (Protocols, Annexes, Tariff Concession Schedules, Rules of Origin), with at least two documented assignments. • Operational understanding of the SPS and TBT frameworks (Codex Alimentarius, WOAHOIE, IPPC) as applied to fisheries and aquaculture products is highly desirable. • Demonstrated experience with product-certification systems and quality infrastructure, and with trade-supporting infrastructure including cold-chain and storage; experience in African markets or small island economies is an advantage.	20	20
Subtotal			50
2. Quality of the technical proposal			
Technical approach and methodology	The proposed approach and methodology are clear, coherent, practical and well aligned with the ToR, demonstrating a sound understanding of the assignment and appropriately addressing the key areas of work, including the use of existing evidence and trade-flow data to assess the readiness and gaps of the six African SIDS against AfCFTA requirements; analysis of relevant AfCFTA legal and	35	35

	trade instruments, standards, SPS requirements and non-tariff barriers; identification and prioritisation of viable fisheries value chains for intra-African trade; and integration of gender, youth and sustainable Blue Economy considerations		
Implementation Plan	The proposal should demonstrate: • A realistic and feasible work plan, with clear activities, milestones and timelines aligned with the required deliverables. • Logical sequencing and interlinkages of activities, demonstrating how the assignment will progress from inception through analysis, validation and completion of the final deliverables.	15	15
Subtotal			50
TOTAL TECHNICAL SCORE		100	100

9. Institutional arrangement and reporting

The assignment is carried out under the direct supervision of the Global Water Partnership Southern Africa, the Executing Agency for the UNDP-GEF project, which provides technical and administrative oversight and reviews and approves all deliverables in collaboration with the AfCFTA Secretariat and under the overall coordination of the African Union Commission. The AfCFTA Secretariat provides substantive guidance on the trade-integration dimension. The consultant maintains regular communication with the Executing Agency, submits progress reports in line with the agreed work plan, and ensures the quality and timeliness of all outputs. A regional coordination team of national focal points from the six participating SIDS and partner institutions supports the assignment, facilitating access to national data and stakeholders, participating in the validation of outputs, and ensuring that country-specific inputs, including those from the Private Sector Unit's country activities, are reflected in the regional deliverables.

10. HOW TO APPLY

Interested candidates are invited to submit their applications by email to gwpsaprocmement@gwp.org, with a copy to Jailson.Lopes@gwpsaf.org and immaculee.uwimana@gwpsaf.org, no later than 12 October 2026. The application should include the following documents:

- Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Cover Letter
- Proposed Methodology (3 pages maximum) and proposed pricing of each identified deliverable under section 5. All costs related to travel for the training workshop will be covered by GWPSA.