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ABNJ Deep Seas Project update

Please note that National Reports and SC Working Group reports shall be classified as working papers

Relates to agenda item: 10.1

Working paper Info paper

FAO

Abstract

The Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep Sea Living Resources in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction Project (ABNJ Deep Seas Project for short) is a five-year project supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and implemented jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment). The UN Environment project component is executed through the UN Environment World Conservation and Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

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**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



**Project update to
SIOFA**

March 2019

ABNJ Deep Seas Project

**Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine
Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction**



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
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About the ABNJ Deep Seas Project

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1. strengthen policy and legal frameworks for sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ deep seas;
2. reduce adverse impacts on VMEs and enhance conservation and management of components of EBSAs;
3. improve planning and adaptive management for deep-sea fisheries in the ABNJ; and
4. develop and test methods for area-based planning.

Project components 1, 2, and 3 are led by the FAO, and Component 4 is led by UNEP-WCMC.

The ABNJ Deep-Seas Project is a five-year project. The total budget for the Project is US\$ 87 million, of which US\$ 7 million is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The remaining US\$ 79 million represent the co-financing from the project's 20 main stakeholders.

More information is available from <http://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/en/>.

Within FAO, the ABNJ Deep Seas Project is an integral part of the Deep-sea Fisheries Programme and many of the activities have contributed to or benefited from co-financing with other projects under the programme. Some of these projects are now phased out, and follow-up activities are managed through the ABNJ Deep Seas Project.

How SIOFA is involved

SIOFA is an important partner of the ABNJ Deep Seas Project and contributes to activities that promote collaboration and sharing of experiences in deep-sea fisheries and associated biodiversity as well as specific activities on capacity building for developing countries. This contribution is coordinated by the SIOFA Secretariat.

SIOFA activities associated with the ABNJ Deep Seas Project contributed an estimated USD 8 778 of in-kind project co-financing at the Project's mid-term.

Recent 2018 activities and upcoming 2019 project activities, include:

The Project Steering Committee

The fourth meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) was held in January 2019 in La Reunion with support from the SIOFA Secretariat, and was chaired by Darius Campbell from NEAFC. The PSC reviewed the Project's ongoing activities, the 2019 workplan, the Project's closure requirements (operational closure in August 2019) and preparations for the Project's next phase.

Global review of Orange roughy their fisheries, biology, and management

The Project supported a workshop to collate data and information and draft the outline of a FAO Technical Paper on the *Global Review of Orange Roughy (Hoplostethus atlanticus), their fisheries,*

biology, and management. The Technical Paper was published in 2018 and is being printed (<http://www.fao.org/3/ca1870en/CA1870EN.pdf>).

Side events at the BBNJ Inter-Governmental Conference in New York

FAO is organizing two side events at the Second Inter-Governmental Conference in New York. The first side event will highlight the RFMOs' role ensuring sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in ABNJ. The second side event (co-organized with UNEP) will focus on cooperation between Regional Seas Programs and Regional Fisheries Bodies.

FAO also organized two side events at the First BBNJ Inter-Governmental Conference in New York. The first side event reviewed deep-sea sponges and other biodiversity, and highlighted results from an ongoing Horizon 2020 Project on deep-sea sponges. A second side event was organized to showcase 10 years of the FAO Deep-sea Fisheries Guidelines.

2nd edition of the Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas

The 2009 Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas is being updated and expanded. A meeting of experts from the eight deep-sea RFMOs was held in May 2016 to confirm the nature and extent of the work, and the review itself is expected to be published in late 2018. The preliminary findings were presented at a side event during the Workshop to Review the implementation of the United General Assembly Resolutions on Deep-sea fishing¹ (New York, 1-2 August 2016). A brochure highlighting these findings is available (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6619e.pdf>). Relevant chapters have been sent to the deep-sea RFMO/As for review and comment and the Review will be published in 2019.

Updating the FAO VME Portal and DataBase

The VME Portal provides general information on VMEs, and the VME DataBase contains information on VME-related measures in ABNJ for each regional fisheries body. The Project supports the ongoing maintenance and updating of the systems. (www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en/).

Regional VME processes and experiences with their application

In late 2016, the report *Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems – processes and practices in the high seas* was published (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5952e.pdf>) and summarizes the regional processes and practices in place for VMEs and their management.

The 3rd PSC also agreed for the Project to develop a sister VME publication, focusing on the science behind the identification and management of VMEs by region. Work is underway to identify the primary author and develop the publication outline. The deep-sea RFMO/As will be contacted for their input and review of the relevant chapters.

Deep-sea fisheries and VME regional workshops

The ABNJ Deep Seas Project is collaborating with SIOFA on the organization of a VME Workshop to be held in association with the First Meeting of the SIOFA Protected Areas and Ecosystems Working Group on 18-19 March 2019.

The ABNJ Deep Seas Project has previously collaborated on the organization of two vulnerable marine ecosystem (VME) regional workshops in 2016. The first was for the Mediterranean region, held in collaboration with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) in July, and the second was held for the eastern central Atlantic region, in collaboration with the

¹ United Nations General Assembly Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) Workshop to Discuss Implementation of Paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of resolution 64/72 and paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 of resolution 66/68 on Sustainable Fisheries

Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) in November. Workshop reports can be found here:

Indian Ocean 2012 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3311e.pdf>

Southeast Atlantic 2013 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4923e.pdf>

North Pacific 2014 – <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5319e.pdf>

Western Central Atlantic 2014 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4329e.pdf>

Mediterranean Sea 2016 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6685e.pdf>

Eastern Central Atlantic 2016 – <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7609b.pdf>

Climate change and deep-sea ecosystems

The ABNJ Deep Seas Project partnered with the Deep-Ocean Stewardship Initiative and its working group of climate change experts to better understanding the consequences of climate change for deep-sea ecosystems and deep-sea fisheries. The working group met on 25-26 August in Woods Hole, USA to discuss questions including: What are the major climate change features affecting the deep ocean and its associated biodiversity? What impacts might these features have on the functioning of deep-sea ecosystems? How might climate impacts affect deep-sea fish and fisheries? Which regions and fisheries might be most vulnerable? Which other species are vulnerable? What essential ocean variables are important to monitor in order to assess the risks to deep sea species and communities due to climate change?

The project supported scientists and experts from seven of the eight regional bodies managing deep-sea fisheries to participate in the workshop and contribute their expert knowledge. The project also supported the participation of a deep-sea coral and sponge expert from the SponGES project to cover the non-fish species that might also be vulnerable to climate change. A report from the meeting will be published in 2019.

Catch documentation schemes for deep-sea fisheries

A report on catch documentation schemes (CDS) for deep-sea fisheries will be published in 2019, taking into account comments received on a draft version circulated in 2018. The report considers options available for catch documentation schemes applied to deep-sea fisheries, taking into account the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Catch Documentation Schemes. The report explores and makes recommendations on the organisational and institutional modalities that could be applied to deep sea-fisheries CDS.

Rights-based management in deep-sea fisheries

A workshop on the application of rights-based management (RBM) to deep-seas fisheries is scheduled for April 2019. The workshop will evaluate the potential contribution of rights-based management to deep seas fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction. This will include the contribution of RBM to managing overfishing, overcapacity, and the impact of fishing on the ecosystem. The workshop will also consider how RBM might affect developing countries and developed countries. The mechanics - how RBM might be integrated into the current DSF management regimes – will also be discussed.

Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance for deep-sea fisheries

The project has completed a review of regional and international MCS frameworks and requirements for deep-sea RFMO/As. The review was the basis for a MCS workshop that took place December 2018 for SIOFA and SEAFO members. SEAFO and SIOFA members were invited to review their MCS frameworks in light of the report, identify gaps in their MCS frameworks and develop plans of actions to address the gaps. A Workshop report summarising the meeting's findings will be published in 2019.

DEEP-FLIP training on international instruments relevant to deep-sea fisheries and associated biodiversity

The project has partnered with legal consultants to develop a step-wise guide for the integration of international legal instruments related to deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity in the ABNJ into national legislation of selected pilot countries. The first DEEP-FLIP training workshop took place October 2018 in Thailand, with selected countries from SIOFA and SEAFO participating. The Workshop purpose was to assist States, where necessary, to better integrate international obligations arising from deep-sea fisheries instruments into national laws and policies. The workshop included SIOFA and SEAFO representatives responsible for policy, legal and operational aspects in connection with deep-sea fisheries. Training was conducted on the use and application of the step-wise guide. A Workshop report will be published in 2019.

Area-based planning

Reviews of institutional arrangements and legal instruments in the Southeast Pacific and Western Indian Ocean have been completed (<http://wcmc.io/WIOdata> and <http://wcmc.io/SEPdata>). Global marine datasets of biodiversity importance to these regions have been identified and published. Area based planning workshops were held in Southeast Pacific (with CPPS countries) and Western Indian Ocean (with Nairobi convention countries) resulting in capacity development assessments.

Deep-sea sponges in the North Atlantic

FAO is collaborating with the Horizon 2020 SponGES project, which aims to develop an integrated ecosystem-based approach to preserve and sustainably use deep-sea sponge ecosystems of the North Atlantic. The ABNJ Deep Seas Project is assisting the SponGES Project by identifying the types of information needed to improve understanding of the economic elements of the sponge resources in the North Atlantic region, and devising a draft methodology to estimate the value of sponges (this will be reviewed with experts from the SponGES Project to understand the practical limitations of the methodology). Furthermore, the ABNJ Deep Seas Project supports exchange between SponGES and fisheries experts. Information material from this project are available and science-policy dialogues, initiated by FAO, are ongoing and to which SIOFA or SIOFA experts are invited to contribute.

North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) Joint Commission-Scientific Council Working Group on Ecosystem Approach Framework to Fisheries Management (WG-EAFFM)

AT NAFO's invitation representatives from SIOFA and SEAFO participated in the NAFO WG-EAFFM meeting in August 2019. The meeting provided guidance on practical considerations related to the implementation of the ecosystem approach and the application of NAFO's Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) Road Map. The meeting provided examples of how EAF advice compares to single species stock assessment, and integrating trophic level interactions and climate change predictions.

Ongoing activities of interest to SIOFA stakeholders:

- An electronic application for reporting at-sea observations from deep-sea fishing vessels is being developed by the Information Technology Division of FAO. This application, **SmartForms**, will include an initial set of forms for VME reporting requirements, developed in consultation with regional partners. It will be available for testing by project partners interested in deploying the application in 2019.
- A feasibility study on the use of **electronic monitoring systems** on deep-sea fishing vessels operating in the ABNJ to collect information on VMEs is underway. In collaboration with SIOFA and the Cook Islands (Ministry of Marine resources), it will examine technical aspects related to the use of electronic monitoring systems in these vessels.

- Support to activities related to improving the assessment of **orange roughy** and other deep-sea species.
- An analysis of the **EAF practices** implemented by regional bodies with a mandate for the management and conservation of deep-sea fishing in the ABNJ is being finalized. The draft final report has been sent to the Deep Sea RFMOs for comments.
- An **Ecosystem Risk Assessment Workshop** reviewing current approaches to ecosystem risk assessment, their application to fisheries and biodiversity conservation and their strengths and weaknesses in their effectiveness in achieving identified objectives associated with their application is planned for July 2019.

Find out more about the ABNJ Deep Seas Project

- Contact: William Emerson (William.emerson@fao.org) and Jessica Fuller (Jessica.fuller@fao.org)
- Visit the ABNJ Programme and the ABNJ Deep-seas Project website: <http://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/en/>

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The ABNJ Deep Seas Project started in September 2015 and is one of four projects under the GEF Common Oceans Programme. More information is available from <http://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/en/>

