



**Food and Agriculture
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United Nations**



Project update to the
SIOFA Scientific Committee

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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
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

About the ABNJ Deep Seas Project

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, and implemented jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the United Nations Environment Programme. The UNEP project component is executed through the UNEP World Conservation and Monitoring Centre.

The Project is designed to enhance sustainability in the use of deep-sea living resources and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ through the systematic application of an ecosystem approach. It brings together over 20 partners who work on deep-sea fisheries and conservation issues in the ABNJ globally. The Project aims to:

1. strengthen policy and legal frameworks for sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ deep seas;
2. reduce adverse impacts on VMEs and enhanced conservation and management of components of EBSAs;
3. improve planning and adaptive management for deep sea fisheries in 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 the UNEP-WCMC.

More information is available from <http://www.commonoceans.org>

How is the project relevant to SIOFA

The ABNJ Deep Seas project brings together a range of partners working on deep-sea fisheries and conservation issues in the ABNJ globally. The partnership includes amongst other regional organizations responsible for the management of deep-sea fisheries, Regional Seas Programmes, fishing industry partners and international organizations. SIOFA's neighboring management organizations, CCAMLR, SPRFMO and SEAFO are active partners in the Project.

The southern Indian Ocean is one of the focal areas for the ABNJ Deep Seas Project.

Fishing industry partners operating in the SIOFA area such as the Southern Ocean Deep Seas Fishers Association (SIODFA) and the Sealord Group also contribute to the partnership. It is estimated that SIODFA activities associated with the ABNJ Deep Seas Project will contribute an estimated USD 20 million of project co-financing. And the Sealord Group will contribute an additional USD 14 million of project co-financing through a range of ongoing scientific activities including: its seabed mapping, genetic mapping of elasmobranchs; use of multi-frequency acoustics to count fish, stock discrimination work, and shark programme; and ship time for testing of new technologies and tools.

Recent project activities, include:

Orange roughy stock assessment — use of acoustics data

The Project supported a workshop to review the methodological approach and uncertainties associated with the use of acoustics data in the assessment of orange roughy in the Southern Indian Ocean in January 2017.

The Project Steering Committee

The second meeting of the Project Steering Committee was held in February 2017, and chaired by the Executive Secretary of SIOFA. The PSC adopted the 2017 project work plan, including a range of activities that support the objectives and capacity development needs of SIOFA members.

A review of the international legal and policy instruments related to deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ

This work focused on the international obligations relating to deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity conservation. It included an analysis of current policy and legal instruments, and identification of the challenges in the implementation of current management requirements. The review and a training guide (to improve implementation) were pre-released in August 2016 for the BBNJ Prepcom, and they are expected to be published in early 2017.

Updating the 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, including SIOFA. The Project supports the ongoing maintenance and updating of the systems. (www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/en/).

Global reviews and best practices for the assessment and management of key deep-sea species

A global review of alfoncino, their fisheries, biology and management was published (www.fao.org/3/a-i5336e.pdf) in June 2016. A workshop of orange roughy experts was held in June 2016, and a review of orange roughy biology and assessment will be published mid 2017.

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 2017.

Best practices in VME encounter protocols and impact assessments

The report: Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems – processes and practices in the high seas was published at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5952e.pdf>

The report of the best practices in VME encounter protocols and impact assessments workshop report was published at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6452e.pdf>

Identification guide for deep-sea cartilaginous fishes of the south eastern Pacific Ocean

Both a species catalogue and field identification guide dedicated to the identification of deep-sea cartilaginous fishes of the south eastern Pacific Ocean were published in 2016. The identification guide, available in both English (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6349e.pdf>) and Spanish (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6349s.pdf>), were tested during a training workshop, in November (supported by Norway), and attended by scientists from countries bordering the South and Central Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Data collection manual

A biological data collection manual, based on the additional requirements for reporting on vulnerable marine ecosystems included in the FAO International Guidelines for Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas was published in late 2016 (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6353e.pdf>). The manual is structured into colour coded sections each corresponding to a taxonomic group and each including a set of explanatory and fully illustrated sheets describing the correct methodologies required to collect biological data from marine species in the field.

Review and synthesis of the values of the sectors operating in the ABNJ

The project is undertaking a review of fishing, mining, oil and gas, waste disposal, cable laying, shipping and pharmaceuticals activities in the ABNJ. It will describe the nature and extent of the activities of these sectors; and where possible, quantitative/monetary valuation information.

Report on lessons learned on the scientific methods for describing EBSAs

The CBD Secretariat has reported on practical options for further enhancing scientific methodologies and approaches on the description of areas meeting the EBSA criteria, based on experiences from 12 regional workshops.

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 being undertaken.

2017 activities relevant to SIOFA stakeholders, include:

- Regional and national training to assist, where necessary, countries better integrate **international obligations** relating to deep sea fishing in the ABNJ into national laws and policies.
- Regional and national support to assist countries develop or **strengthen MCS plans** relating to deep sea fishing in the ABNJ.
- Support to the compliance observer program to train Cook Islanders and other Pacific Island professional observers to undertake **compliance observing work** on Cook Islands flagged fishing vessels in the High Seas.
- Collaboration and support to the ongoing work of Sealord on the **development and testing of improved fishing systems**, including implementation of real time fibre optic winch system on vessel in the Indian Ocean; the collection of wideband acoustic data on vessels in the Indian Ocean, and evaluation of species composition, and bottom habitat identification.
- 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. It will be available for testing by project partners interested in deploying the application in 2017.
- Support for the **trialing of electronic monitoring systems** on deep sea fishing vessels operating in the ABNJ to collect information on VMEs. In collaboration with the Cook Islands (Ministry of Marine resources), examine the technical aspects of whether VME encounters can be observed satisfactorily using an onboard camera monitoring system i.e. verification of VME encounters, and (some level of) identification and quantification of VMEs.
- Support to activities related to the assessment of **orange roughy**.
- Collaboration with CCAMLR and SEAFO, **training on port inspection** in for South Africa and Namibia.
- A global review of **traceability** in deep sea fisheries, including an examination of catch documentation schemes and ecolabelling opportunities; and a value chain analysis.
- A global review of **rights based management** in deep sea fisheries in the ABNJ.
- An examination of **monitoring control and surveillance** practices in deep sea fisheries in the ABNJ. Regional workshop
- 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.

Find out more about the ABNJ Deep Seas Project

- Contact the ABNJ Deep Seas Project Coordinator (Chris O'Brien) on chris.obrien@fao.org
- Visit the ABNJ Programme and the ABNJ Deep-seas Project website: www.commonoceans.org

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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 www.commonoceans.org

