

## **Webinar Report (17th July 2020)**

1. William Emerson provided a presentation of the FAO ABNJ Deep Sea Fisheries (DSF) Project (you can find the presentation on <http://www.apsoi.org/information%20board>). The DSF Project is one of five projects making up the Common Oceans Programme. It is a five-year GEF funded project with a USD 5 million budget, expected to start in early 2022.
2. The DSF is based on the “theory of change”, a planning methodology which intends to identify long term impact and middle term outcome of any project, and to find the solutions and activities that leads to these. William Emerson specified that the outcomes are beyond the project’s direct control; but aims at providing support to RFMOs in their assessment and decision-making to achieve these outcomes
3. The Project is made up of three components  
Component 1: Governance - strengthening and implementing regulatory frameworks  
Component 2: Strengthening effective management of DSF  
Component 3: Improving understanding and management of cross-sectoral impacts on DSF
4. Tony Thompson made a presentation. He focused on science based outputs under component 2 that are of relevance to the SIOFA Scientific Committee (you can find the presentation on <http://www.apsoi.org/information%20board>).
5. Tony Thompson raised the issue of the limitation of data, monitoring and stock assessment for alfonso, deepwater sharks and VMEs. Therefore, He raised the different aspect of data collection and assessment limits. He also announced the intention to have the *R/V Fridtjof Nansen* vessel coming to the Indian Ocean during the project period.
6. The DSF Project is being developed using a participatory approach. It is global in application (and so the above activities will be set in a global context allowing for exchange of information, approaches and ideas among regions), but with the support and interest of SIOFA the Project would like to have the Indian Ocean as one of its key study areas. Thus, the DSF Project would welcome an endorsement from the SIOFA SC to allow the DSF Project to interact with experts from Contracting Parties to help them design a project that meets our needs.
7. Ross Shotton made several remarks :
  - He pointed out that much data are available in documents such National Reports including for Alfonso, but that data remains to a great extent unused;
  - He considered that the main issue with the results from analysis of the database does not rely on the collection and analysis of the data but on its interpretation by the Meeting of the Parties.
  - About certifications he mentioned the existence of some in the SIOFA competence area, e.g.: for Orange Roughy;
  - He acknowledged the shark conservation issue and stressed the importance of identifying species to ensure the usefulness of the database.

- He mentioned the impact of longliners on VMEs compared to trawlers and the need for more scientific which raised the question of the number of observers on the former.
  - He noted that SIODFA had in the past proposed a recolonization study by deepwater benthos in which industry could place settlement plates in deepwater but noted that they needed guidance from relevant experts in the design of the field work and retrieval of the settlement plates. Alas, this work was only going to be possible if industry fully funded the work. He noted that industry was willing to participate but not assume all funding responsibility.
  - He noted that industry should undertake at-sea work at their expense as project co-funding in kind but they expected FAO/GEF to fund their participation in meetings as happens for RFMO participants, otherwise there would be no participation by industry.
8. Lee Georgeson suggested that it would be good to update the FAO deep seas guidelines and he shared concerns noted by Tony Thompson about the sustainability of deep-sea sharks in the southern oceans. He asked William Emerson details on how non-GEF funded projects are included in the deep seas project.
  9. William Emerson answered that the Project and partners identify activities the partners are engaged in that are aligned with the deep seas project objectives. These activities can be included as the partner's contribution to the Project.
  10. Steve Brouwer suggested that the *R/V Fridtjof Nansen vessel is well set up for undertaking acoustic survey*. When coming to the Indian Ocean, this vessel should focus on obtaining broad scale species specific biomass estimate such as for Alfonsino and Orange roughy. These estimates can then be compared to the assessment estimates as a means to ground truth the assessment biomass estimate, as Doug Butterworth noted a one-off biomass assessment would be useful for comparison with the assessment. If possible, these surveys could then be repeated periodically as required. He also noted that a dedicated research vessel may be better placed to gather these data than a commercial vessel that may be limited in area and time through the vessels economic priorities.
  11. Barry Weeber asked if the project takes account of the impact of climate change on stock assessment and deepwater sharks.
  12. Tony Thompson acknowledged that Climate change is a very hot topic currently and that its impact is taken care of in some outputs of the project".
  13. Concerning the database issue, Lee Georgeson noted that SIOFA is a young RFMO and efforts are being made to strengthen database management. He noted the need to focus on the future and the need for observer coverage and data collection to aligned with current and future priorities.
  14. Ross Shotton noted that observers' work can be very unequal in quality and indicated that there is work to be undertaken on that matter. He mentioned the existence of an impressive Australian program to look at climate change (the Indian Ocean Dipole Programme <sup>1</sup>) and its effect on fisheries in the SIO.
  15. Duncan Currie made a presentation of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (you can find details of the presentation on <http://www.apsoi.org/information%20board>).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/iod/>

16. Tony Thompson pointed out the DSF Project also want to work with protecting VMEs inside and outside of existing bottom fishing areas, and so has some of the similarities with the objectives of the DSCC. He specifically mentioned the interest in sponges for their filtering capacity.
17. Lee Georgeson asked Duncan Currie for advice on what DSCC saw as an appropriate set of arrangements for management of vulnerable marine ecosystems in SIOFA.
18. Duncan Currie emphasized the importance of modern technologies to identify VMEs and the need to put in place effective protocols when VMEs are encountered.