



Memorandum of Understanding on the  
Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and  
their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia

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**SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF  
MARINE TURTLE USE AND CONSERVATION - ADDENDUM**

**Executive Summary**

1. Over the past two decades, socio-economic studies addressing the issues of resource use by coastal communities, economic and traditional valuation of turtle products, as well as cultural and social implications of human-turtle interactions, have been conducted in practically all IOSEA Signatory States. These issues have been most widely investigated in Australia, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and the United Republic of Tanzania.
2. Most socio-economic studies appear to have been conducted on the impacts of human activities on marine turtles. Studies assessing the consequences of coastal development/light pollution on nesting beaches have been published in most IOSEA countries. Investigations of marine turtle–fisheries interactions have been published in slightly more than half of the countries (mostly in France, India and Thailand) and some important studies conducted on this topic in Malaysia and Madagascar have yet to be concluded. However, marine turtle–fisheries interactions generally appear to be under-investigated in the Indian Ocean compared to other ocean basins, notwithstanding several related workshops and studies carried out in past years at regional/sub-regional levels. Levels of trade, use and consumption of turtles, as well as their socio-economic drivers, have been investigated in many countries, especially in Indonesia, Madagascar and Viet Nam. A smaller number of states – mostly in South-East Asia and in the Western Indian Ocean – explored indigenous knowledge of marine turtles, social resilience, and ways to assimilate tourism into turtle conservation. Further studies on socio-economic and cultural implications of marine turtle conservation would be useful to provide better guidance to policy-makers and conservationists.
3. Past awareness-raising activities conducted around the IOSEA region have focused primarily on children, mostly carried out by national or local governments. The IOSEA Year of the Turtle campaign organised in 2006 contributed to a peak in awareness-raising activities in IOSEA countries. Apart from the use of traditional outreach materials such as publications and broadcasts, other creative approaches – including competitions, interactive games, theatre plays and rallies – were reported in almost half of the Signatories. Beach cleaning events and public releases of turtle hatchlings, mostly organised by private resorts and businesses, are relatively common. Nine Signatories were reported to have permanent information centres dedicated to marine turtles. A few innovative approaches that may offer potential for replication elsewhere were found in Comoros, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Philippines, Seychelles, and United Republic of Tanzania. However, in general, the impact of these education initiatives remains mostly unevaluated.

4. Some initiatives to facilitate alternative livelihoods for local communities were identified in most IOSEA Signatories, often with little or no indication of actual outcomes. The most common incentive adopted is of an *indirect* nature, including training for development of new skills (mostly done by NGOs); provision of loans or subsidies – notably in India and Sri Lanka; assistance in the establishment of ecotourism groups and consortiums (notably in Madagascar); and financial compensation of artisans or egg collectors following bans on turtle trade – in India, Indonesia and Seychelles. Incentives to facilitate the conversion of resource users towards lesser-impact livelihoods were reported in less than a half of the Signatories; and towards turtle-based ecotourism, in less than a quarter. Some countries also created *direct* incentives by employing local communities for turtle conservation activities, mostly for beach monitoring and patrolling, but also for turtle rescue (in Viet Nam) and ghost net collection (in Australia). Some noteworthy “substitution by distraction” approaches were also reported in France and Indonesia.
5. Fishers were involved in various aspects of marine turtle conservation and management in two-thirds of the Signatories, mostly in the mitigation of turtle–fisheries interactions. They have been engaged in management committees or management agreements towards the mitigation of interactions, notably in Madagascar. At the time of writing, Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) were on-going in eight countries, mostly in the SEA+ sub-region. Training in sustainable fishing practices, most often in the use of TEDs, was reported in seven countries, notably in Bangladesh; and de-hookers, line-cutters, circle hooks and properly-sized fishing nets were distributed to operators in at least five countries, most often by governments. Rewards or cash incentives given to fishers who release turtles caught accidentally were reported in four countries. Examples from Australia, France and Kenya stand out as models for encouraging fishers to play an important role in turtle conservation. Fishers have also been involved in data collection. National on-board observer programmes have been implemented in nine countries, sometimes by the fishers themselves after adequate training. They have also provided inputs to by-catch studies and satellite tagging programmes, very effectively so in France.
6. The education sector has been assimilated into turtle conservation efforts in all but five IOSEA Signatory States. Schools and universities have provide lectures on marine turtle conservation and the topic has also been introduced in school curricula through arts competitions, drama, singing and writing activities and school trips. Eco-clubs have been created to foster student participation. South Africa went a step further by implementing so-called “eco-schools” in and around the iSimangaliso National Park. Public schools have also actively engaged in turtle conservation, mostly through beach clean-ups, but also through nest protection (e.g. India) and marine turtle and nest adoption schemes (e.g. Malaysia). The education sector is also involved in turtle-related data collection. Finally, specific awareness-raising activities intended for the general public were voluntarily organised by teachers, school kids and university students in Bangladesh, India and Mauritius.
7. Private sector involvement in marine turtle conservation, most often on its own initiative, was reported in sixteen countries, notably in Malaysia. In the past, actors involved have included hotels and resorts, aquariums, fishing industry councils and other private consortiums, multinational firms, local consultancy firms, tour operators, diving clubs, shop owners and private island landowners. Most field-based conservation initiatives undertaken by the private sector centre on captive breeding and hatchery programmes, followed by clean-up activities, beach monitoring, and turtle rescues in dedicated hospitals. Moreover, private stakeholders have been involved in the management of sanctuaries/MPAs, notably in Malaysia; and have participated in National Committees for marine turtle conservation in at least four countries. The private sector has sponsored NGO activities, donated directly to NGOs, and helped raise funds for conservation programmes. It has also played a role in educating the general public on turtle

conservation issues, through adoption schemes, nest watching (in Seychelles) and dedicated awareness-raising events (e.g. often practiced in Thailand). Finally, the private sector been directly involved in marine turtle research in at least five countries.

8. Involvement of indigenous communities in marine turtle conservation activities and data collection was reported in all but three countries, and most initiatives were taken in the last ten years. The main actors working towards local community participation were local NGOs, followed by international NGOs and governmental and private initiatives. Conservation activities that have engaged indigenous communities in the past have ranged from beach cleaning and monitoring to egg relocation, tagging, ghost net collection, and participation in research programmes. Community-based management of turtle habitats was noted in eight countries, most successfully in Australia through turtle committees and the involvement of indigenous rangers, but also in Bangladesh, Comoros and Indonesia.
9. Future efforts should concentrate on developing social mapping programmes to better understand the human components of marine turtle use and conservation in order to strengthen community support for conservation activities and to improve their efficacy; diversifying awareness-raising and education media and assessing their efficacy and impact; judiciously expanding ecotourism where it may offer a sustainable, non-consumptive use for marine turtles; involving stakeholders in all aspects of resource management and research in order to improve the effectiveness of conservation activities; and, above of all, documenting and evaluating the successes and failures, implementation challenges and lessons-learned from these activities.