



Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats throughout their Range

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE DUGONG MOU

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Meeting with an indication of the broader context and additional areas of activity that complement the *Dugong, Seagrass and Coastal Communities Initiative* (DSCC Initiative) that will need to be addressed by the Secretariat for the foreseeable future in order to progress the comprehensive and effective implementation of the Dugong MOU Conservation and Management Plan (CMP), and to receive feedback on this approach.

Background

1. Agenda Item 10.4 in part, and Agenda Item 11 describes the progress of the development of the DSCC Initiative from 2010 to 2012. The fundamental principle contained in the DSCC Initiative is that successful conservation is built on providing human communities whose actions threaten the species and ecosystems of concern with incentives to change.
2. Addressing the direct and indirect of human-related impacts and seagrass habitats and ensuring their protection are key objectives of the Dugong MOU Conservation and Management Plan (CMP)¹. These objectives also recognise that adequate acknowledgement and attention to solving conservation and management issues confronting dugongs and their critical habitats which addresses direct, indirect and external factors as they impact on wider policy and institutional contexts will also be critical. The nine objectives of the CMP are:

Objective 1: Reduce direct and indirect causes of dugong mortality

Objective 2: Improve understanding through research and monitoring

Objective 3: Protect, conserve and manage habitats for dugong

Objective 4: Improve understanding of dugong habitats through research and monitoring

Objective 5: Raise awareness of dugong conservation

Objective 6: Enhance national, regional and international cooperation

Objective 7: Promote implementation of the MOU

Objective 8: Improve legal protection of dugongs and their habitats

Objective 9: Enhance national, regional and international cooperation on capacity building

Conservation Goals

3. As outlined in Doc.11, the development of the DSCC Initiative has been in response to the evidence of increasing threats to dugong population and their habitats in many Range States – as detailed in the SS1

¹ http://www.cms.int/species/dugong/dugong_cmp.htm

report². The DSCC Initiative targets people in rural coastal communities in low-income nations, where current fishing and hunting activities are adversely affecting dugongs and their habitats and where the capacity/willingness to change is currently limited by socio-economic factors. The overall focus of the DSCC Initiative is to change the behaviour of the people in target communities through incentives that provide improved economic, cultural and social conditions, coupled with stewardship, monitoring and evaluation.

4. While the initial focus is on addressing community level impacts, this important effort by itself will not be sufficient to gain lasting changes to all human activities that affect dugongs and their habitats. Much more substantive effort will also be required at other levels, for example working with governments to halt the rapid expansion of external factors which impact dugongs and their critical habitat such as unsustainable port developments, land use practices and industrial coastal development.
5. Indeed external trends (e.g. expanding illegal trade in wildlife products; demographic pressures) and vested interests (e.g. illegal logging, mineral extraction or unsustainable agricultural practices) are often overlooked, or avoided because these are considered too difficult to address.
6. Thus, it is vital that social, political and economic issues at the local, national, trans-national and regional levels are confronted and addressed in an integrated approach if conservation of dugongs and their seagrass habitat across Range States is to have any chance of success.
7. In the longer term, depending on the success of the initial efforts to change behaviour, it may be possible to seek higher conservation goals that promote population recovery and habitat restoration.

Basis for Community Change

8. The overall goal of the DSCC Initiative is to change the behaviour of those people whose current activities (e.g. fishing and hunting practices) endanger populations of dugong and/or their habitat, especially seagrass beds.
9. The threats facing dugong and seagrass conservation are created by conflicts between different human values placed on dugongs (and their habitats) and activities that affect those values. Those human values range from preservation of dugong as a species to commercial exploitation for protein. For some people dugongs have no value. The values placed on seagrass vary from high conservation value as nursery habitat for juvenile fish and crustacean species to low value as a dumping ground for solid wastes and terrestrial sediments.
10. If high conservation and economic values for dugong and seagrass are to be maintained or recovered, these conflicts will only be solved by changing those human activities that adversely affect those values, or the perception of the value of those species and ecosystems.
11. For low income rural coastal communities, subsistence and artisanal fisheries and hunting are the main source of protein and income but often at the expense of dugongs and seagrass. Changes in behaviour of target communities will require sufficient incentives (e.g. alternate/higher income, a greater diversity of protein sources, higher prices, recovery of cultural practices, alternatives to current activities, greater awareness or rewards for changing behaviour) and/or disincentives (penalties, enforcement community pressure) to alter/replace those practices which impact dugongs and their habitats.
12. Long term success in improving conservation outcomes is expected to come mainly from voluntary changes in behaviour through providing incentives that promote more buy-in by the community. The benefits from the alternate activity/income stream include those that improve socio-economic wellbeing at a community level, should enhance the uptake of stewardship of dugongs and their habitats.

2 http://www.cms.int/species/dugong/meeting_of_sigs_1/meeting_report.pdf

Persuading power brokers in communities of the need to change will be one critical factor in achieving success.

Building Capacity and Policy/Regulatory Changes

13. The focus of the DSCC Initiative over the next 3 years is primarily on rural coastal communities at selected sites. Larger scale activities, particularly in many parts of the developing and developed world, that affect dugongs and seagrass e.g. commercial fisheries, ports and marina developments and associated dredging, land based runoff of sediments and pollutants will also need to be effectively addressed in the longer term.
14. Thus, change will need to take place at other levels – international, regional, provincial, national as well sectoral. Strengthening community capacity and governmental processes will be important in this area. The Secretariat plans to identify key development threats, in consultation with Range States, during and beyond the life the GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project for subsequent policy and regulatory change.
15. The four focus areas in the GEF Project which can provide a framework for both short and long term activities are:
 - Community-based stewardship of seagrass-dependent biodiversity;
 - Innovative, market-based incentive mechanisms (inclusive of but not limited to environmental mortgages, environmental loan facilities and valuation of ecosystem services) promote and sustain responsible fisheries and other practices that reduce damage to dugong and seagrass ecosystems;
 - Barriers to critical knowledge needed for decision-making for effective conservation of seagrass-dependent biodiversity;
 - Seagrass-dependent biodiversity conservation priorities and measures incorporated into relevant policy, planning and regulatory frameworks (i.e. international, regional, national, local, coastal and sectoral, as appropriate).

Sponsorship and Donor Partners

16. The DSCC Initiative brochure³ has been developed to provide a clear incentive to potential donors and partners to the Initiative. Securing strategic sponsorship/industry partnerships for funding will be an important and ongoing activity that is expected to scale up over the next 3 years, to allow the expansion of the GEF project objectives to additional sites not covered by the GEF contributions. The brochure provides the rationale for approaching potential donors.
17. The Secretariat will actively pursue additional sponsorship from new partners and donors with the support of consultants with professional expertise in fund raising, communications and marketing (see: Agenda Item 9.2).

Regional Collaboration and Synergies

18. As highlighted in Doc. 12, additional sub-regional projects which facilitate cross-border projects and effective communications to enhance and improve conservation outcomes will be required. The Secretariat will continue to seek additional sub-regional projects in the course of negotiations with Range States in the effective implementation of the Dugong MOU CMP.

³ http://www.cms.int/publications/pdf/dugong_seagrass_coastalcommunities.pdf

Monitoring and Evaluation

19. An urgent component of the DSCC Initiative in the next 3 years and in the longer term is the development of a monitoring program that measures the achievement of outcomes and provides reliable evidence which documents the impact arising from the Initiative. Monitoring will need to be designed specifically for individual pilot projects, and maintained long after the initial pilot projects are completed.
20. The Secretariat will develop, in consultation with the Dugong Technical Group (subject to endorsement, see: Doc 11.4), a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system to be implemented in tandem with the rollout of the GEF project and pilot projects which has appropriate indicators that link biodiversity conservation and livelihood interests.

Communication Strategies

21. The Secretariat will work to identify novel communication strategies that are relevant and appropriate for targetting communities and other audiences using both modern technology (e.g. smartphones and other appropriate electronic means) and traditional means of communicating (e.g. brochures, facts sheets and poster).
22. Traditional communication strategies more often than do not have a lasting or measurable impact, and the Secretariat will work to develop/identify mechanisms/tools to measure the effectiveness of communication strategies and make these available to Range States.
23. As noted above, novel communication strategies can target key segments of society though careful choices of tools: Where internet and the use of smartphones are widespread, electronic tools might reach audiences faster and in a more recognizable manner. Where these are lacking, traditional communication tools which are culturally relevant but custom-tailored to local traditions and values will be identified.

Actions Requested:

The Meeting is requested to:

- a) Endorse the emphasis proposed by the Secretariat, in consultation with Signatory States, for the planning in the foreseeable future, through the DSCC Initiative and implementation of the Dugong MOU CMP.
- b) Provide any suggestions and feedback to the Secretariat.