SC8-Obs04

ABNJ Deep Seas Project report to SPRFMO SC8 2020

FAO

ABNJ Deep- Sea Fisheries Project update for the 8th SPRFMO Scientific Committee Meeting

3-8 October 2020

ABNJ Deep- Sea Fisheries Project

under the Ecosystem Approach

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
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Summary

The achievements from the first phase (2014-2019) and the development of the second phase (2022-2027) of the FAO ABNJ Deep-Sea Fisheries under the Ecosystem Approach (DSF) projects are described. SPRFMO was a key partner during the first phase and made valuable contributions to help meet the project's objectives.

The DSF Project in its second phase will support the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries, with a focus on data-poor stocks, significant adverse impacts on VMEs, and deepwater sharks. It is hoped that SPRFMO's expertise in these matters will make a strong contribution to the DSF Project. Further, expertise from other regions will be brought to SPRFMO, allowing for the global development in these important areas of concern.

The DSF Project also wishes to contribute to an understanding of the application of international instruments by RFMOs and fishing nations, including the implications of the BBNJ negotiations, to position the fisheries sector as key players in ocean governance.

1. Introduction

This report provides an update on the recently concluded ABNJ Deep-Sea Project (2014-2019) and preparations for the DSF Project (2022-2027). Key project activities from the ABNJ Deep-Sea Project (2014-2019) are included in the Annex.

2. The ABNJ Deep-Sea Project (2014-2019)

The Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-Sea Living Resources in Areas beyond National Jurisdiction Project (ABNJ Deep Sea 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 was executed though the UN Environment World Conservation and Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

The Project was designed to enhance sustainability in the use of deep-sea living resources and biodiversity conservation in the areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) through the systematic application of an ecosystem approach. It brought together over 20 partners who worked on deep-sea fisheries and conservation issues in the ABNJ globally. The Project aimed 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 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 were led by FAO, and Component 4 was led by UNEP-WCMC.

The ABNJ Deep-Sea Project was a five-year project. The total budget for the Project was USD 87 million, of which USD 7 million was funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The remaining USD 79 million represented 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-Sea Project was an integral part of the FAO Deep-sea Fisheries Programme and many of the activities 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 were managed through the ABNJ Deep-Sea Project and the upcoming Deep-Sea Fisheries Project.

How SPRFMO was involved

SPRFMO was an important partner of the ABNJ Deep-Sea Project. SPRFMO was involved in the design of the Project and contributed to activities that promoted 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 was coordinated by the SPRFMO Secretariat.

The final Project Steering Committee meeting

The fifth and final meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) was held in January 2020. The PSC reviewed the project's progress, terminal evaluation and preparations for a second phase to the Project. The Project closed in December 2019.

3. The ABNJ Deep-Sea Fisheries (DSF) Project (2022-2027)

The second ABNJ Common Oceans programme follows on from the first Common Oceans Programme, with some similarities and some differences. It will operate through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) GEF-7 mechanism receiving funding form their International Waters priority area. The Concept Notes for the Common Oceans programme and five projects were approved by GEF Council in June 2020. The DSF Project has a USD 5 million budget. The projects are:

- Sustainable management of tuna fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the areas beyond national jurisdiction
- Deep-Sea Fisheries under the Ecosystem Approach (DSF Project)
- Building and Enhancing Sectoral and Cross-Sectoral Capacity to Support Sustainable Resource Use and Biodiversity Conservation in Marine Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
- Strengthening the stewardship of an economically and biologically significant high seas area – the Sargasso Sea
- Global Coordination Project for the Common Oceans ABNJ Program (GCP)

The programme and projects are currently being developed with an anticipated submission date to GEF of early 2021 and a start date planned for January 2022.

The DSF Project has three technical components and a fourth component on knowledge management, communication, and monitoring and evaluation. The three technical components are:

1- Governance - strengthening and implementing regulatory frameworks
2- Strengthening effective management of DSF
3- Improving understanding and management of cross-sectoral impacts on DSF

The fourth component on communication, knowledge management and project monitoring will be undertaken in collaboration with the GCP.

DSF Project Objective

The project objective is 'to ensure that deep-sea fisheries in the ABNJ are managed under an ecosystem approach that maintains demersal fish stocks at levels capable of maximizing their sustainable yields and minimizing impacts on biodiversity, with a focus on data-limited stocks, deepwater sharks and vulnerable marine ecosystems.'

The DSF Project will achieve its objective by working with RFMOs and member States to increase their capacity to work together, and with other sectors, to share experiences and cooperatively develop new and efficient tools, that will allow for improved monitoring and management of the fish stocks and impacts on biodiversity. The DSF Project will support activities, beyond the RFMO's core role of fish stock management that will lead to better assessments of data-limited stocks (which amount to some 50 percent of the exploited deep-sea fish stocks), improvements in risk assessments on non-target species including deepwater sharks and VMEs, and on improvements to monitor biodiversity and ecosystem health. The DSF Project will allow up-scaling of smaller studies and initiatives undertaken by project partners and uptake of the developed tools through direct support to GEF-eligible developing nations. The DSF Project, in conjunction with FAO's role of supporting fisheries management in the high seas, will also allow for further implementation of the FAO's own binding and voluntary instruments to be trialled and implemented by RFMOs and industry.

The DSF Project will facilitate increased cooperation and exchange among the RFMOs. This will build on successful initiatives started under the ABNJ Deep-Sea Project, and greatly assist the newer RFMOs and develop opportunities for those coastal States that are members of RFMOs but do not have DSF.

A more detailed overview of the DSF Project is available in the Project's Concept Note[1].

Inception Workshop

The Inception Workshop for the DSF Project was held virtually in two sessions. The SPRFMO Secretariat (Craig Loveridge) participated in the Workshop's session on 26 August 2020. The purpose of the Workshop was to formally introduce the DSF Project to potential partners, to describe the development of the project to date, and to highlight the participatory nature of the project design process.

The Workshop reviewed the DSF Project's outputs and the activities under each outcome (see Annex 1: Theory of Change). This provided an opportunity to receive feedback on the planned activities and to assist in the preparation of the in-kind funding amounts to be provided by the partners. Discussions will continue with partners as the activities are further developed.

The Workshop also went over requirements associated with GEF-funded projects, and in particular the separation of the project's Implementing Agency (FAO) and Executing Agency functions.

The Workshop Report is being finalized.

SPRFMO Role

The goal of the DSF Project's partnership strategy is to bring together skills, expertise and resources from a diversity of stakeholders to achieve the DSF Project's objective. SPRFMO, with its history of managing fishery resources in the South Pacific, is a key DSF Project partner. The DSF Project will over the coming months identify how SPRFMO's ongoing and planned activities could support the Project's objectives. The DSF Project will consult with SPRFMO to establish if SPRFMO is willing to commit these activities as in-kind contributions to the DSF Project.

SPRFMO support during project development

To maintain a participatory approach and to ensure expert guidance, the DSF Project requests that SPRFMO recommends one expert for each of the outputs shown in the Theory of Change (Annex 1) that are relevant to SPRFMO to help guide the work activities under these outputs during the development of the project. The workload for this service is expected to be small amounting of around a few days at most over the project development period (mainly review short documents and providing suggestions on coordination and activities).

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[1] https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/project_documents/PFD_CP%252002%2520DSF%2520Revised.docx

DSF Project - Theory of Change
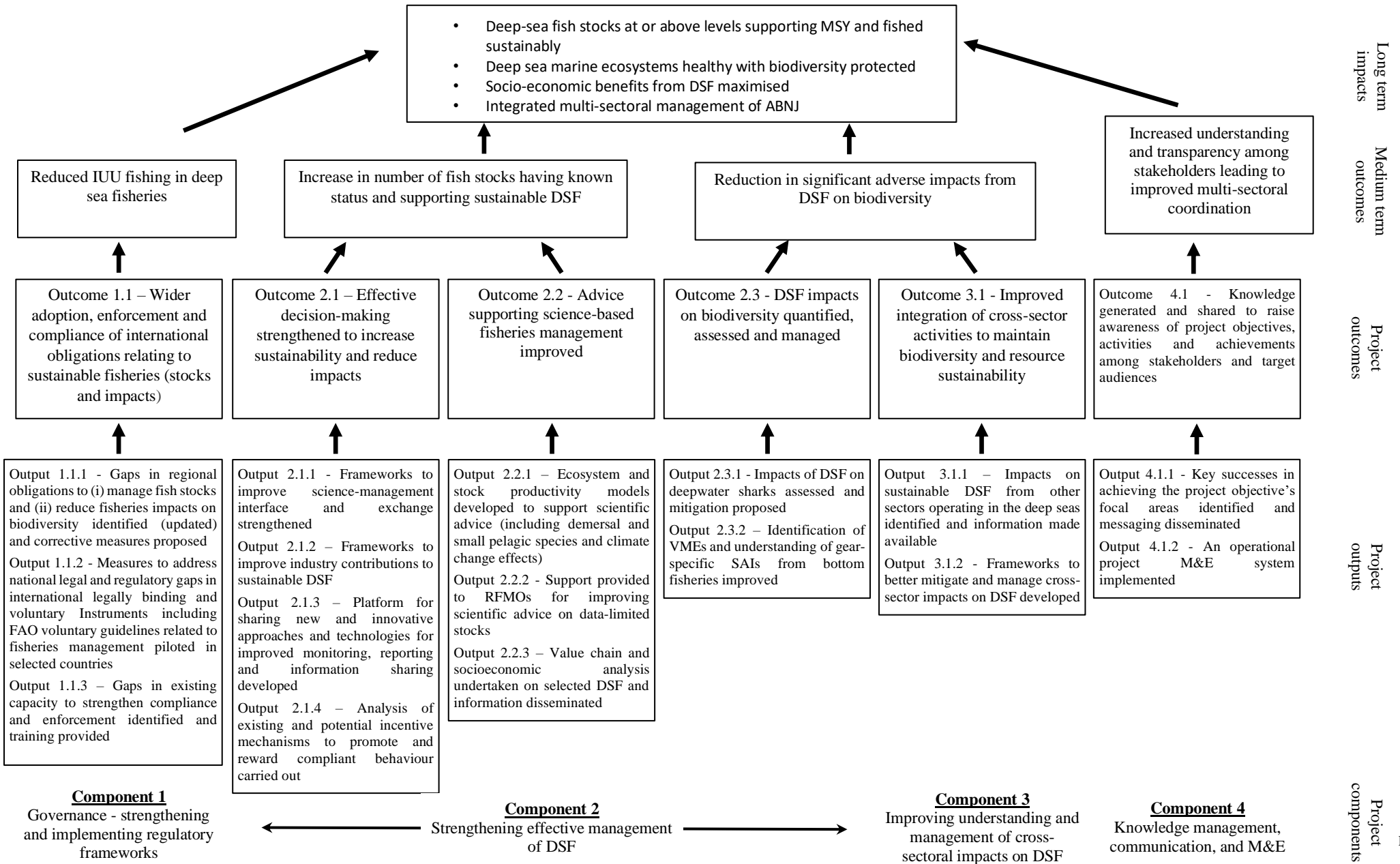
Annex

ABNJ Deep Sea Project Key Outputs

Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas in 2016

The *Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas in 2016* is an extended update of the FAO FAO *Worldwide review of bottom fisheries in the high seas* that was published in 2009. It summarizes the status of high seas bottom fisheries worldwide using 2016 data. The review is centered on regional chapters covering the major Ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ or high seas). Summary chapters precede the regional descriptions, dealing with ecosystems and resources, bottom fisheries, and management. This review highlights the considerable changes that have occurred in the monitoring and management of the high seas deep-sea fisheries by RFMOs, including the regulation relating to total allowable catches and reducing impacts on both target and bycatch species. The Review can be accessed here.

Economic Value of Ecosystem Services from the Deep Seas and the Areas beyond National Jurisdiction

This study estimates the total economic value (TEV) of services provided the deep sea. It includes the provision of deep-water fish, the harvest of precious corals, the use of substances of marine origin as pharmaceuticals, the extraction of deep and ultra-deep oil and the potential mining of mineral resources from the seafloor, carbon sequestration carried out by the deep seas, the importance of scientific research in the deep seas, and touristic activities with submersibles. The TEV assessed for the deep-sea ecosystem as a whole is estimated at USD 267 billion per year. Ninety two percent of the economic value originates from abiotic resources (oil and minerals), 5 percent from biotic resources (fish, corals and pharmaceuticals of marine origin), 2 percent from cultural services (scientific research and tourism/recreation), and 1 percent from carbon sequestration. The study can be accessed here.

Deep Sea meeting

A Deep Sea meeting on 7-9 May 2019 highlighted project results. The meeting included sessions on governance and policy, deep sea science and monitoring, and deep sea management. Over 40 participants, including representatives from partner organizations and other stakeholders from multiple sectors within the ABNJ, attended the meeting. The participants were invited to give presentations on key topics and discuss emerging issues concerning ABNJ governance and deep-sea research, monitoring and management. While significant progress has been made in the management of deep-sea fisheries and in the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, the ABNJ still faces threats from climate change, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The meeting report can be accessed here.

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

The Project supported a workshop to collate data and information on orange roughy. The Workshop results are available in the report *Global Review of Orange Roughy (*Hoplostethus *atlanticus), their fisheries, biology, and management* (FAO Technical Paper 622, 2018). The orange roughy review can be accessed here.

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

FAO organized two side events at the Third BBNJ Inter-Governmental Conference on 19-30 August 2019 in New York. The first side event focused on the role of RFMOs in the 21st century. The second side event's theme was Science to Policy in Practice -- Multi-Institutional Collaboration in ABNJ.

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, including SPRFMO. 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.

Deep-sea fisheries and VME regional workshops

The ABNJ Deep Sea Project collaborated with SIOFA to organize a VME Workshop on 19-20 March 2019. The workshop was attended by SIOFA and international experts and included sessions on VME mapping, VME indicator taxa, encounter protocols, protected area protocols and selection of protected areas.

The ABNJ Deep Sea Project has also 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 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 Sea 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 the 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 than might also be vulnerable to climate change. A technical paper from the meeting has been published: http://www.fao.org/3/ca2528en/ca2528en.pdf.

Catch documentation schemes for deep-sea fisheries

A report on catch documentation schemes (CDS) for deep-sea fisheries has been published as FAO Technical Report 629 (2018)[2]. 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 ABNJ deep-seas fisheries met on 10-12 April 2019. The workshop evaluated the potential contribution of rights-based management to deep seas fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The Workshop Report is being finalized for publication.

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[2] www.fao.org/3/CA2401EN/ca2401en.pdf

Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance for deep-sea fisheries

A workshop on ABNJ deep sea MCS met on 10-12 December 2018. The Workshop was attended by selected SIOFA and SEAFO members. SEAFO and SIOFA members were invited to review their MCS frameworks in light of their regional obligations, to identify gaps in their MCS frameworks and develop plans of actions to address the gaps. The workshop was informed by a review of regional and international MCS frameworks and requirements for deep-sea RFMO/As that has been undertaken by the ABNJ Deep Sea Project. The Workshop report can be accessed here.

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 (Fisheries Law in Practice) training workshop took place on 22-24 October 2018, with participants selected countries from the SIOFA and SEAFO regions. Training was conducted on the use and application of the step-wise guide. A follow-up assessment of the implementation of international legal instruments in national legislation is being undertaken with selected countries from SIOFA and SEAFO.

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 Sea 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 Sea Project supports exchange between SponGES and fisheries experts. Information materials 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.

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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 partnership includes regional organizations responsible for the management of deep-sea fisheries, Regional Seas Programmes, the fishing industry and international organizations. The Project aims to:

- strengthen policy and legal frameworks for sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the ABNJ deep seas;

- reduce adverse impacts on VMEs and enhanced conservation and management of components of EBSAs;

- improve planning and adaptive management for deep sea fisheries in ABNJ; and

- develop and test methods for area-based planning.

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/