

Strengthening regional regulatory frameworks and national capacity for handling marine biodiversity data in the Western Indian Ocean – Technical and policy recommendations on data handling and sharing standards

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Abstract

Oceans and coastal areas along the Eastern African shorelines are among the most diverse and productive marine ecosystems worldwide. To sustain the ecological services for future generations and to address potential competing interests about spatial use, sound coastal governance requires careful management of those often fragile ecosystems, especially since stakeholders have different interests concerning the use and protection of marine ecosystems. There are now many opportunities to expedite the process of providing biodiversity data to relevant decision-making institutions at a much faster rate than previously known. There are technical and logistical constraints, institutional and governmental policies, missing scientific capacities or general issues in knowledge sharing that hinder the collection and sharing of in-situ biodiversity data. To meet future conservation and management goals, we will need to identify common monitoring strategies and agree on the essential variables (biodiversity and taxonomic data) that should be observed and routinely exchanged and shared. The proposed framework therefore addresses several main themes of the Nairobi Convention Science-to-Policy Platform workshop: (1) It adds critical information to MSP efforts and data management, (2) Through its approach of standardized monitoring efforts, it will simplify ecosystem monitoring and ecosystem approaches to fisheries.

It is recommended that

- A roadmap vision for the Western Indian Ocean region to be developed and become a model region for the monitoring, handling and sharing of marine biodiversity data.
- A regional inter-sectoral (i.e., academia, government, policymakers, industry, traditional knowledge holders) expert panel be established
- Biodiversity and taxonomic data collection, reporting and sharing through common frameworks be regionally aligned.