



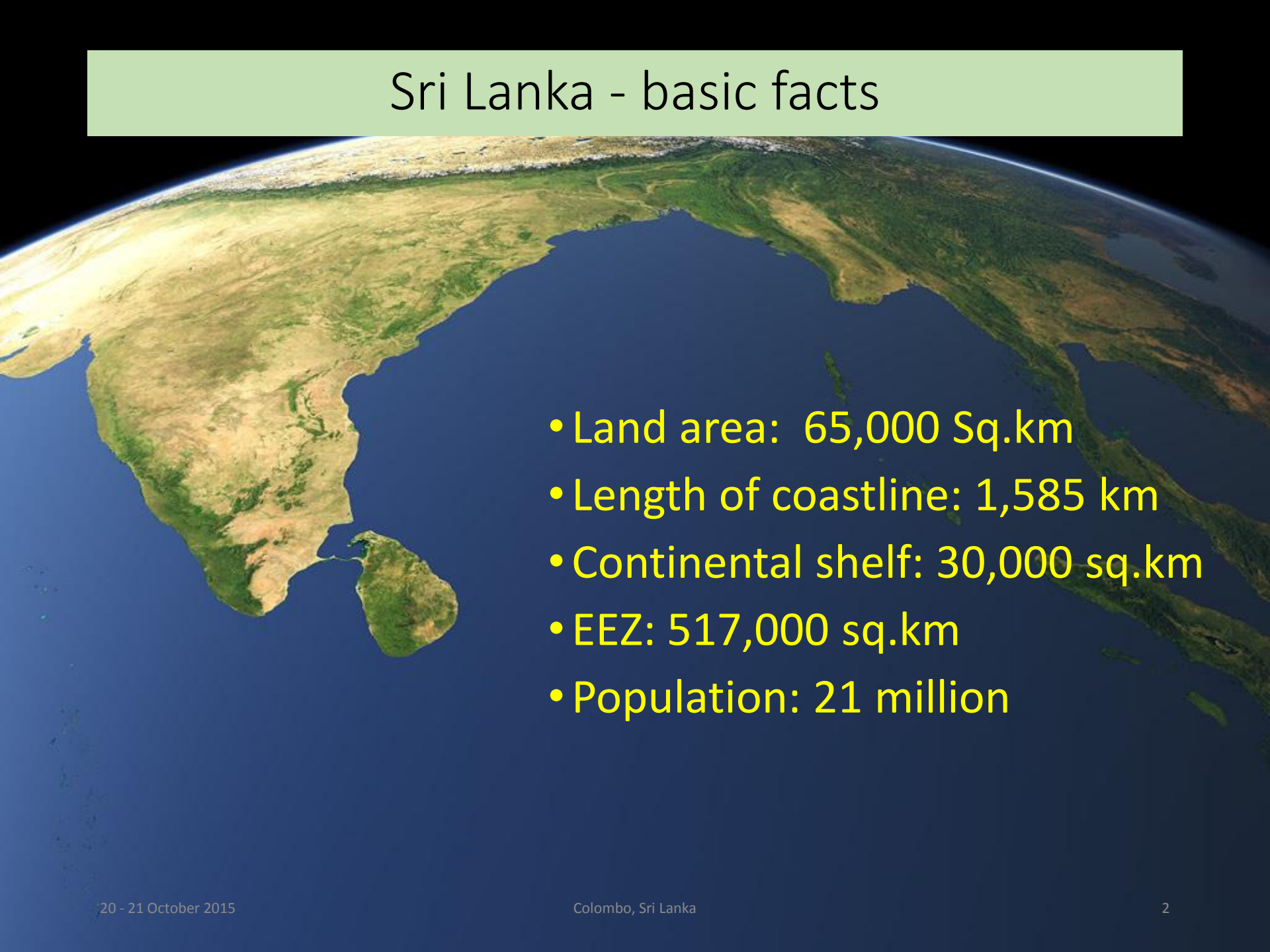
PROTECTING DUGONGS
CONSERVING SEAGRASS
CHANGE FOR COMMUNITIES



COUNTRY PRESENTATION SRI LANKA

INCEPTION WORKSHOP
THE GEF DUGONG AND SEAGRASS CONSERVATION PROJECT
20-21 October 2015
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka - basic facts

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- A satellite image of Sri Lanka and the surrounding Indian Ocean. The island of Sri Lanka is visible in the lower right, with its characteristic shape. The surrounding ocean is a deep blue, and the Indian subcontinent is visible to the west and north. The image is used as a background for the slide.
- Land area: 65,000 Sq.km
 - Length of coastline: 1,585 km
 - Continental shelf: 30,000 sq.km
 - EEZ: 517,000 sq.km
 - Population: 21 million

Project Area



Significance of the project area



Has the largest seagrass meadows, coral reefs, mangroves in the country

Has the largest marine protected area (The Bar Reef Marine Sanctuary)

Threats and Issues

- Over-exploitation of marine resources
- Use of destructive fishing
- Inadequate implementation of laws and regulations
- Lack of adequate resources for implementation
- Gaps in policies and regulations

Resource exploitation in the project area



Fisheries



Destructive and illegal fishing activities

Indiscriminate netting

Blast fishing

Over-exploitation of
fishery resources

Fishing spawning
aggregations of reef and
semi-pelagic species



Some information about dugong

- The dugong is protected under the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance
- There had been a fishery for dugongs in the early 20th Century
 - 100 – 150 dugongs were taken annually in the Mannar District in the 1950s
- There is heavy fishing pressure in the area where dugongs are present, including destructive fishing practices
- Dugongs are very rare now
- Dugong is highly threatened in the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay, probably critically Endangered
- Two dugongs were killed in 2010
- Two more were killed in Sep and Oct 2015

The Sunday Times of 13 Sep 2015 reported the death of the dugong

Murder of a mermaid

- *By Malaka Rodrigo*
- *Police inquiry into rare dugong killed in Mannar*

Police are investigating the tragic killing of a dugong, the rare creature possibly believed to be a “mermaid” in olden times, in Mannar after the Navy came across a group of fishermen chopping up the mammal’s flesh on South Bar beach.

- A local resident, Mohammed Haleem, said the Navy handed over the culprits to police and wildlife officers last week, and that they are out on bail.



Project partners

- Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC)
- National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)
- Biodiversity Education And Research (BEAR)
- Ocean Resources Conservation Association (ORCA)
- Turtle Conservation Project (TCP)



Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC)

Objective

- Improve communication and collaboration amongst all relevant stakeholders to enhance dugong and seagrass conservation. Strengthen legislation and establish protected areas.

Detailed activities

Governance & Policy level involvement

- Marine conservation centre
- Communication network
- Data collection
- Training
- National Plan of Action
- Best practices guideline
- Steering Committee

National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA)

Objective

- Ensuring seagrass ecosystem values are incorporated into coastal area planning in Sri Lanka.

Increasing scientific knowledge, mapping, providing Information for Coastal planning

Detailed Activities

- establish a database on species and the status of sea grass beds
- Identify dugong feeding areas based on distribution of seagrasses
- produce maps of sea grass beds
- plot the study sites using GIS

Objective

- Development of a multiple-community-based marine resource management plan in the Gulf of Mannar and Palk bay. Habitat and species protection. Develop communities to protect the dugongs and seagrass meadows.

Detailed activities

Management Planning, establishment of MPAs, conservation of species and habitats

- Develop community conservation groups
- Identify sensitive area for MPAs and establish through DWC.
- Support the DWC in conservation and declaration of MPAs
- Support the DWC to get them declared as MPAs.

Biodiversity Education And Research (BEAR)

Objective

Improve awareness , and obtain community support for conserving the *Dugong dugong* in Sri Lanka

**Enhance
awareness
among local
communities**

Detailed activities

- Focussed interviews to obtain information on sightings and strandings
- Educate fisher communities , school children and other stakeholders including government officials using printed and electronic material
- Sensitize stakeholders to protect the dugongs and their habitat.

Ocean Resources Conservation Association (ORCA)

Objective

- Determine the status of the seagrass meadows and collect information on the dugongs

Providing scientific information on seagrass meadows and dugongs

Detailed activities

- Survey of seagrass meadows
To identify habitat types, condition, key fishing areas and use for other activities such as tourism
- Information on dugongs, their occurrence, strandings and sightings

Sri Lanka Turtle Conservation Project (TCP)

Objective

- Providing incentives to local communities in return for wise stewardship of coastal habitats
- Development of alternative livelihoods
- Awareness & education

**Community
awareness,
alternative
livelihoods**

Detailed activities

- creating awareness
- socio economic impact assessment
- introduce alternative livelihood
- Arresting destructive fishing

Expected outcome of the project

- Improved policies for the conservation of dugong, other megafauna, ecosystems: seagrass, corals and mangroves.
- Environmental awareness and education among stakeholders and school children increased
- Community involvement ensured for dugong and seagrass conservation with better understanding
- A system for better communication and effective enforcement established
- Dugong management plan integrated into national development planning
- Protected areas established increasing the overall marine protected areas in Sri Lanka

Acknowledgements

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&
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Thank you



Thank you for your attention!

Sri Lanka project partners
DWC, NARA, IUCN, BEAR, ORCA & TCP