



The GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project

Project Progress Report

Reporting Period **From:** December 2015 **To:** July 2016

1. PROJECT GENERAL INFORMATION

National Project Code & Title:	Generating knowledge on dugongs, their critical habitats and threat reduction measures in NW Madagascar, MG 6 - 2110		
Project Partner(s):	Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)		
Location (country, region/ district and commune/ city/ village/ region etc.)	Diana Region, Madagascar		
Of which areas under protection (please indicate the name and size of protected areas or locally managed marine areas, if applicable)	Ankivonjy Marine Protected Area, 139,405 ha Ankarea Marine Protected Area, 135,556 ha		
Project start date	20 November 2015	Project intended completion date	30 September 2018

2. PROJECT PROGRESS

2.1. Narrative of project progress during the past semester by Project Activity¹

¹ Briefly describe progress made during the previous six months highlighting major outcomes/benchmarks achieved during the period.

This period represented the start of the monitoring phase of the project. Activities included progress on the seagrass mapping, completion of the community interview surveys in the northern portion of the study area and deployment of acoustic loggers.

Seagrass mapping

After the seagrass ground truth surveys were carried out in the northern portion of the study area in November 2015, maps were finalized for this region and these guided the deployment of the acoustic loggers. The seagrass maps for the southern portion of the study area are currently being finalized in order to inform both the community interview survey planning for October/November 2016 and deployment of acoustic loggers in April 2017.

Community interview surveys

Community interview surveys were carried out over a two-week period in March 2016. Two experienced interviewers conducted the surveys for the first week and two additional experienced interviewers joined them in the last week to maximize survey effort. There were 126 interviews conducted in 42 villages. Additional interview effort may be carried out in areas where dugongs have been recently sighted or where logistical constraints led to small sample sizes for particular villages. There were a number of villages where dugong hunters were identified, although there were no longer any active hunts due to insufficient numbers of dugongs. There were three villages where there were the most promising records of dugong sightings. We will be forming a collaboration with one of the old dugong hunters in the last trimester of 2016 to show us where dugongs can still be found in the area. The majority of dugong sightings were from July to September and sightings or catches were in low numbers or none in most years, with the highest number of dugong catches recorded for 2014 (4 dugongs caught in nets). The interview survey results, combined with the seagrass mapping, were used to choose two separate areas to focus the deployment of acoustic loggers (Inland from Nosy Komba and Ambaro Bay).

Acoustic Monitoring

Six acoustic loggers were deployed from the 20th to the 26th of April 2016 in NW Madagascar. The deployments were planned for Nosy Komba and Ambaro Bay based on the results of seagrass mapping and community interview surveys. Three loggers were deployed at each site in areas adjacent to seagrass beds where water depth was sufficient to prevent the loggers being exposed during low tide (between 5 to 9 meters – low tide). Given the high number of artisanal fisherman in both locations, there was concern that the loggers may be stolen or tangled in the fisherman's gear. In order to try to mitigate against these issues, the loggers were deployed with a subsurface float and heavy anchor system (20kg concrete blocks), so that they wouldn't be visible at the surface and would not

be easily dragged. The loggers were also labeled carefully with WCS contact details in case they were tangled in the fisherman's nets and removed by the fisherman. Additionally, before deployment, local communities were alerted of the deployments (although not the exact location) in the hopes that they would leave the recorders if they saw them or contact WCS if they became entangled in their nets.

The recorders were set to record continuously at 48 kHz and the recorders were retrieved from 22nd and 23rd of May 2016 in order to change batteries and download the data before re-deploying. There was a report from fisherman after the first deployment that one of the recorders in Ambaro Bay became entangled in a fisherman's nets and dragged away from the original position. The fisherman contacted WCS but unfortunately didn't follow up and meet the WCS staff to help them to locate the recorder. The attempt to recover this recorder failed and there were an additional 2 recorders that were unable to be recovered, 1 in Nosy Komba and 1 in Ambaro Bay. In total there were 2 recorders that were not retrieved in Ambaro Bay and 1 in Nosy Komba. We are actively working to try and locate the lost loggers by posting a reward and notice at three local radio stations (Ambanja, Nosy Be and Ambilobe) to the local fisher communities. A radio message was released 3 times a day starting on the 30th of May until 18 June 2016. Efforts to contact the fisherman who dragged one of the loggers are also ongoing but due to the isolation and poor network coverage in the zone this is proving unfruitful for the time being. So far the recorders have not been retrieved.

Based on these experiences we have concluded that Ambaro Bay has very challenging conditions for deployment as there is very low visibility (less than 1 meter) and therefore a high chance of losing the recorders if they are dragged by fisherman nets. Therefore we have made the decision not to redeploy in Ambaro Bay. Similarly, we have decided to postpone or cancel the deployment of loggers in Nosy Komba until we can assess whether we can work with the fisherman communities in Nosy Komba to check on the recorders and work with WCS to ensure they remain in the area. This situation is being discussed with the GEF project management team to determine next steps.

2.2. Project implementation progress²

² Information provided in "Quarterly Expenditure Report" should be in line with output/activity progress reported in this table.

Outputs & Activities ³	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of end of reporting period expressed in %	Describe any problems in delivery and any changes/mitigation action required.
Output 3.1 Critical knowledge gaps (dugongs and seagrass ecosystems) identified and surveys initiated/ completed			
3.1.1 Seagrass habitat mapping using high resolution satellite imagery	July 2016	80%	There were delays in processing the contract for the seagrass mapping contractor, which have led to delays in finalising the work. The work will be completed by the end of July. This will have no effect on other project activities.
3.1.2 Passive acoustic monitoring surveys along the NW coast to monitor identified key dugong habitat	January 2018	10%	Six acoustic recorders were deployed in April 2016. Unfortunately only 3 recorders were retrieved in June 2016. The likely cause of the lost recorders was interaction with fisher nets and therefore the acoustic monitoring has been halted until we discuss the situation with the GEF advisory team to discuss next steps (more information in section 2.1)
3.1.3 Community interviews in habitat hotspots to analyse threats acting on dugongs	January 2018	50%	Community interview surveys were carried out in the NW study area from Ankivonjy MPA in the South to Ambaro Bay in the north in April 2016. Although further interview surveys may be conducted in this region, this completed the interview surveys for this portion of the study site.
Output 1.3 Integrated community			

³ Outputs and activities as described in the project proposal or in any updated project revision. Expand table as necessary.

Outputs & Activities ³	Expected completion date	Implementation status as of end of reporting period expressed in %	Describe any problems in delivery and any changes/mitigation action required.
management plans (conservation and monitoring of dugong and seagrass ecosystems)			
1.3.1 Participatory process to identify tailored dugong conservation measures suitable for trialing in Ankivonjy and Ankarea MPAs	April 2017	0%	
1.3.2. Implementation and monitoring of identified dugong conservation measures in Ankivonjy and/or Ankarea MPAs and monitoring of effectiveness	March 2018	0%	
Output 3.3 Conservation-relevant information and guidance (dugongs and seagrass ecosystems) collated and disseminated			
3.3.1 Communications material with new information on status and threats of dugong populations and relevant conservation strategies for PA managers prepared	March 2018	0%	
3.3.2 Communication with national and international stakeholders on dugongs distribution, threats, and successful conservation actions	June 2018	0%	

2.3. Risk and risk management

Please describe internal and external risks (examples included in brackets) that could affect successful implementation of project activities and the proposed risk mitigation measures.

Risk group	Description	Risk level (Low/Medium/High)	Mitigation measures
Project Management (team capacity, internal communication, co-financing, budget, financial management, reporting, etc.)	1. Issues were identified with the performance of one staff member who was originally intended to have responsibility for logistics and local management of the GEF dugong project in coordination with the technical advisor and project coordinator.	Low	The staff member has since been let go and we have advertised for a replacement for the position.
Socio-cultural issues (external communications, capacity of and work with stakeholders, cultural aspects)	1. Interaction between fishers and acoustic recording devices	Medium	The acoustic loggers were deployed with a subsurface float and heavy anchor system (20kg concrete blocks), so that they wouldn't be visible at the surface and would not be easily dragged. The loggers were also labeled carefully with WCS contact details in case they were tangled in the fisherman's nets and removed by the fisherman. Additionally, before deployment, local communities were alerted of the deployments (although not the exact location) in the hopes that they would leave the recorders if they saw them or contact WCS if they became entangled in their nets. It has been

			decided to not redeploy in Ambaro Bay because of the remaining high risk. Additional mitigation measures, including surveillance by community members, will be implemented for future deployments around Nosy Komba and in the south of the study area.
Political risks (Political stability in country, political impacts on the project)	Nothing to report		
Environmental risks (severe weather events/ disasters, natural causes negatively affecting project areas, habitats and species)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are difficulties working in NW Madagascar during December and April due to wet season. In April 2016, a cyclone, Fantala (cat. 5), came close to NW Madagascar. 2. In the southern portion of the study area, from Mahajanga north to Nosy Iranja, there is low accessibility by road to villages and potential limitations in accessing sites to deploy acoustic recorders. 	Low	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Field work is only planned for times outside of the wet season to ensure the greatest chance of success. 2. We are collating information on site access from NGOs working in the region, as well as other researchers with extensive experience conducting marine research in this area. All available satellite information will also be used to aid in field work planning.
Other (please specify)			

3. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

3.1. Please describe activities for monitoring and evaluation carried out during the reporting period.

Examples include: baseline data collection, stakeholder surveys, field surveys, steering committee meetings to assess project progress, peer review of documentation to ensure quality, mid-term review, etc. Do not include routine project reporting.

Baseline data was collected on seagrass and dugong presence in the northern portion of the study region using a combination of seagrass mapping using remote sensing, community interview surveys and acoustic monitoring (see section 2.1 for further details). Information is currently being collated in consultation with in country collaborators to inform baseline data collection in the southern portion of the study area for 2017.

Commented [SD1]: Hum, I agree. Maybe we just repeat for : - seagrass monitoring and interviews surveys for baselines?

Commented [AC2]: Agreed it is not clear. Let's leave like this and Maya can let us know if she has comments.

Commented [MR3]: A little unclear of what this section is asking for as it overlaps with section 2.1 in my mind? Let me know if you think more should be added here

4. OTHER INFORMATION

4.1. Meetings⁴

Meeting type ⁵	Title	Venue	Dates	Convened by	Organised by	No. of participants	Report issued Y/N	Language	Dated
No meetings to report									

4.2. List(s) of meeting participants⁶

⁴ Expand table as necessary


⁵ Meeting types: e.g. expert group meeting, project inception workshop, training workshop/seminar, partners consultation workshop, project Steering Committee meeting etc.

⁶ Expand table as necessary

No.	Name of participant	Nationality
	n/a	

4.3. Documents, other printed materials, videos, and soft products (such as CDs or websites)

No	Type ⁷	Title	Author(s) Editor(s)	Publisher	ISBN	Publication date
1	Newsletter	Launch of website for GEF financed dugong conservation project in northwest Madagascar	Alison Clausen	WCS		May 30 th 2016

Name of Project Manager: Melinda Rekdahl		Name of Project Manager Supervisor: Alison Clausen	
Signature: 	Date: 1/7/2016	Signature:	Date:

⁷ Documents and printed material types: e.g. technical publication, meeting report, technical/substantive report, brochures, media releases, etc.