



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

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### DUGONG AND SEAGRASS RESEARCH TOOLKIT

*Prepared by the Dugong MOU Secretariat*

#### Background

1. Systematic understanding of the overall status of dugongs and seagrass ecosystems across the Indo-Pacific region is hampered by inconsistencies in approaches by Range States to research, monitoring, data collection and reporting, such as:

- lack of standardised methods and standard operating procedures for assessing the status and trends in dugong populations and seagrass distribution and status;
- incompatibility of datasets for monitoring of dugongs and seagrass;
- differences in protocols for investigations of dugong mortality and necropsy studies;
- low priority given to studies of dugong and seagrass ecosystems and their conservation; and
- lack of clarity in research questions and consequent wasted effort in using inappropriate techniques and tools.

2. The Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit is a collaboration between TOTAL, Total Abu Al Bukhoosh, Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD), CMS Dugong MOU and the GEF-5 Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project. It represents a significant contribution to the techniques and tools available for dugong and seagrass conservation research globally.

#### What is the Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit?

3. The Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit is a resource that is easily accessible and incorporates decision-making for the selection of appropriate research questions, techniques and tools for dugong and seagrass studies.

4. The Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit will help users to select the most appropriate methodologies for dugong and seagrass research, and the associated human coastal community aspects of these studies, given a specific set of circumstances.

5. For example, the Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit will encourage a user to think through and refine their research question, and then help them to identify the most appropriate research methods to answer their question. The user will be presented with a list of suitable techniques and tools, as well as guidance on selecting the most appropriate technique or tool for their specific circumstance (such as capacity, budget, spatial and temporal scale etc.).

6. In addition to collecting information on dugongs and seagrasses, the Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit can also help users to understand the human community factors that influence dugong and seagrass conservation by helping users to identify threats and possible management solutions.

## Who can use the Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit?

7. The Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit is designed for use by marine natural resource managers (government and non-government), researchers and decision-makers in dugong Range States. It is being developed in a way that will make it accessible for all users, including those with limited technical experience and/or knowledge in dugong and seagrass research and those who are not native English-speakers.

8. The Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit will also be useful to funding organisations enabling them to assess the appropriateness of the proposals they receive, given the budget available.

## Technical Advisors

9. The Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit has been developed by a team of technical advisors from the CMS Dugong MOU's Dugong Technical Group who are experts in dugongs, seagrasses, coastal communities and the marine environment.

10. Dugong Technical Group advisors involved in the project include:

- Dr Christophe Cleguer
- Dr Joshua Donlan
- Dr Amanda Hodgson
- Dr Benjamin Jones
- Prof Helene Marsh
- Mr Len McKenzie
- Dr Nicolas Pilcher
- Dr Richard Unsworth
- Dr Tara Whitty
- Mr Simon Woodley

11. The Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit was developed into an electronic resource by Mr Paul Cooper of IntexDesign.

12. The CMS Dugong MOU Secretariat would like to acknowledge and thank TOTAL and Total Abu Al Bukhoosh, along with EAD, for their significant support and initiative in developing the Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit.