



GCRMN Report to ICRI (B): Decisions on the Future of the GCRMN from November 2010

Presented by Clive Wilkinson and Jerker Tamelander, GCRMN

The 2nd part of this report is to inform ICRI of the current status of the GCRMN and possible mechanisms to continue the network in a sustainable manner.

For 14 years, the GCRMN functioned with a single global coordinator, supported by a predominantly voluntary network of 17 Node coordinators and about 60 - 80 country coordinators.

The GCRMN Coordinator launched a process at the April 2009 ICRI General Meeting to change the structure of the GCRMN to ensure greater regional coordination. The rationale was to expand the network to appoint up to 4 or 5 part-time Regional Coordinators while retaining most or all of the 17 Nodes. The reasoning was that a single coordinator could not manage the network and simultaneously expand it to meet increasing demand. The goal was to fund these Regional Coordinators to ensure greater coordination in the regions and better interaction with the ICRI Partners.

Suggestions for a new structure were made to the GCRMN Management Group Meeting in Monaco, January 2010. It was decided that a transition phase be implemented and that the IUCN would be requested to manage the process and report to the ICRI GM in Samoa in November 2010.

It is envisaged that global coordination of GCRMN will continue largely as before, with the Management Group providing overall guidance and a single Global Coordinator leading day-to-day operations and preparation of coral reef Status, Outlook and Thematic Reports, in close collaboration with Regional Coordinators. The ICRI General Meeting requested that a cost-effective and sustainable mechanism be developed for the short to medium-term of the GCRMN. Draft 'Structure and Terms of Reference' documents have been distributed prior to this meeting.

The Management Group and the ICRI General Meeting are requested to review progress during this transition and provide advice on mechanisms for global and regional coordination to increase coral reef monitoring and reporting to assist in decision making for improved coral reef conservation.

GCRMN Activities and Products

The upcoming '*Status and Outlook of Coral Reefs of the Pacific: 2011*' will serve as a model for future regional reports. These will be produced on a rotational basis with one appearing every year, probably commencing with East Asia. A synthesis Global Status and Outlook report is proposed for late 2012, primarily based on more detailed regional reports.

A more detailed update on activities and products is provided in part (A) of this report.

GCRMN Regions - Wider Pacific Region

Current Structure: It is recommended that the 5 Node structure of the Wider Pacific Region be retained with some restructuring to correct anomalies established in 1996. The 1996 structure was predominantly based on political and financial considerations, specifically what existing countries, agencies or institutes could assist the countries in Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia. The structure decided in 1996 was:

- **Micronesia** (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Marshall Ids, Guam, American Samoa) coordinated through the Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC);
- **SW Pacific** (Fiji, Nauru, New Caledonia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu) coordinated through the USP campus in Suva;

- **Polynesia Mana** (Cook Ids, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nuie, Tokelau, Tonga, Wallis & Futuna) coordinated through the CRIOBE Station and now through the Pacific Coral Reef Institute (IRCP) in Moorea. SPREP assisted in coordination of this Node in parallel with CRIOBE;
- **US Pacific** (Hawaii & other islands) coordinated through NOAA along with NOAA the National Marine Fisheries Services and the University of Hawaii
- **Australia and Papua New Guinea** loosely coordinated through the GBRMPA, AIMS and JCU in Townsville.

New Structure Recommendation: That the current 5 Node structure be retained with the following changes in country membership:

- **Micronesia** - CNMI, FSM, Palau, Marshall Ids, Guam, coordinated by PICRC;
- **SW Pacific** - Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu coordinated by USP Suva; ***Kiribati joins to be linked to Tuvalu; PNG 'brought back into the Pacific'***;
- **Polynesia Mana** - American Samoa, Cook Ids, French Polynesia, Nuie, Samoa Tokelau, Tonga, Wallis & Futuna coordinated by CRIOBE IRCP; ***American Samoa and Samoa are included in recognition of the Two Samoas Initiative;***
- **US Pacific** - Hawaii & other islands unchanged and coordinated by NMFS, NOAA and University of Hawaii;
- **Australia** - focused on the Eastern Coast and excluding PNG; coordinated by GBRMPA & JCU.

Development of a Regional Coordination mechanism:

- At the January 2010 ICRI GM representatives of France indicated coordination could be undertaken through IRCP (Pacific Coral Reef Institute) and CRIOBE, Moorea.
- The Director of SPREP, Dr David Sheppard, also expressed a willingness to assist in regional coordination, provided that suitable staff were available and some funding was forthcoming;
- Recently IRCP-CRIOBE and SPREP have been discussing a mechanism to share the regional coordination.

GCRMN Regions – East Asia Region

At the January 2010 ICRI General Meeting, it was recognised that Japan has provided support for the Southeast Asia and East and North Asia GCRMN Nodes, including ensuring their participation in the 1st Asia-Pacific Coral Reef Symposia and the ICRI East Asia Regional Workshops, and publishing regional reports (East Asia Regional Status Reports published in 2006 and 2010). The Node and Country coordinators play a central role in the establishment of the Asia Pacific Coral Reef Society (APCoRS) to strengthen scientific information sharing in the region.

A GCRMN regional meeting was held during the 2nd Asia-Pacific Coral Reef Symposium (see ICRI GM Report of the 6th ICRI East Asia Regional Workshop) and the following conclusions were made:

- The existing two Nodes are functioning well;
- The Southeast Asia Node includes 7 countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam); and East and North Asia Node includes 5 countries and states (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Taiwan). This structure should be retained with this geographical coverage. Under the new GCRMN regional coordinating structure, the region should be called 'East Asia'. Other countries in the region may be included when Country Coordinators are appointed.
- A Regional Coordinating structure was recognized as potentially valuable to support Node and Country Coordinators, but no institution or funding mechanism was identified. However it was recognised that the Southeast Asia Node Coordinator (Karenne Tun) and East and North Asia Node Coordinator (Tadashi Kimura) have been fulfilling many of the proposed functions of a Regional Coordinator, and should continue in the immediate future.

- The East Asia region will for the time being continue to function with the current Node and Country Coordinators (listed on the www.gcrmn.org). However, the need for a Regional Coordinator (RC) is recognized by the present Node and Country Coordinators, and options for institutional and financial support for regional coordination will continue to be explored.

GCRMN Regions – Wider Caribbean Region

There has been no resolution to determine a regional coordination mechanism for the Wider Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean. This large regions includes 5 Nodes: Northern Caribbean and Western Atlantic; Lesser Antilles including the French and Netherlands islands; Mesoamerican Region including Pacific Coast areas; Southern Tropical America; and US Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.

The structure decided in 1996 was:

- **Northern Caribbean and Western Atlantic** (The Bahamas; Bermuda; Cayman Islands; Cuba; Dominican Republic; Haiti; Jamaica; and the Turks and Caicos Islands) with coordination provided by Marcia Creary who coordinates the former CARICOMP database at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica.
- **Lesser Antilles** including the island chains of the windward islands and including the French and Netherlands Antilles. Only some of the OECS countries have been included in previous Status reports, those reporting include: Anguilla; Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, French West Indies (Martinique, Guadeloupe), Grenada, Netherlands Antilles (Bonaire, Curaçao, St. Maarten, Saba and St. Eustatius), Trinidad and Tobago. Coordination is through French and Netherlands contacts and country coordinators; there is no substantial Node coordination mechanism.
- **Mesoamerican Region including Pacific Coast areas** (Mesoamerican Barrier Reef countries of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, with limited reporting from El Salvador, and Nicaragua). Coordination was formerly through the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef Project, and recently via Melanie McField and Nadia Bood of WWF.
- **Southern Tropical America** (Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama and Venezuela). Coordination is via Diana Gomez of INVEMAR, Colombia with Brazil being semi-independent.
- **US Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico** (Florida, Flower Garden Banks, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands) with NOAA providing the coordination.

The GCRMN has asked for advice from Alessandra Vanzella-Khoury of UNEP Caribbean Regional Seas office in Jamaica, who has assisted the 4 non-US Nodes, and Marcia Chevannes Creary of the Caribbean Coastal Data Centre at the Centre for Marine Sciences, University of the West Indies.

The introduction of Regional Coordinators is seen as beneficial in principle. However, the size and complexity of the region pose a challenge to identifying a single coordination mechanism. The UWI, with campuses on 3 islands and with 14 non-campus countries would be a good choice to host coordination for the insular Caribbean (not the entire region), but budgetary means are not available to cover the costs of hosting a Regional Coordinator. Identification of additional funding or an institution with adequate resources to support a Regional Coordinator is required.

GCRMN Regions – Wider Indian Ocean Region

Preliminary discussions regarding a regional GCRMN Coordination mechanism in the Wider Indian Ocean have taken place, and a progress update will be provided at the meetings in Samoa. A strong request was made for consultation at the January ICRI GM in Monaco.

There are 5 Nodes: the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden; the ROPME Sea Area; Eastern Africa; South-West Indian Ocean Island States; and South Asia. Strong regional organisations include CORDIO and WIOMSA, the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association. Both the Nairobi Convention and the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme have established Coral Reef Task Forces.

The structure decided in 1996 was:

- **Red Sea and Gulf of Aden** (Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia Sudan and Yemen; with Eritrea and western Somalia as associated states. Israel is considered elsewhere). The node is coordinated through PERSGA in Jeddah with Mohammed Kotb performing that role.

- **ROPME Sea Area** (Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates; Iraq has no coral reefs). Coordination is performed by INCO, the Iranian National Center for Oceanography, with Peyman Eghtesadi Araghi and Abdolvahab Maghsoudlou as coordinators.
- **Eastern Africa** (Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa; Somalia is theoretically included but not functional). Coordination is from Kenya with Nyawira Muthiga (WIOMSA) and David Obura (CORDIO) variously performing the role of coordinator.
- **South-West Indian Ocean Island States** (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, La Reunion (France), and the Seychelles). The Indian Ocean Commission has assisted and coordination is now with Bruce Cauvin on La Reunion.
- **South Asia** (Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka). SACEP in Colombo has assisted the coordinator Arjan Rajasuriya in Sri Lanka.

GCRMN Management Group

The current composition of the Management Group is: IOC/UNESCO, UNEP, IUCN, the World Bank, CBD, GBRMPA, WorldFish Center and the ICRI Secretariat. The active GCRMN partners (SocMon, Reef Check, ICRAN, CRISP, WRI and CORDIO) are invited to attend Management Group meetings and frequently Node Coordinators at ICRI GM also attend. Major GCRMN supporters such as the US Department of State and NOAA are also invited to attend. The Management Group meetings report to the ICRI GM and Secretariat through the Chair, currently held by Carl Gustaf Lundin of IUCN.

A draft GCRMN Structure and Terms of Reference document was circulated for comments during 2010. This seeks to clarify GCRMN coordination structure and operational procedures.

Conclusions:

There has been mixed progress in determining mechanisms for stronger regional coordination of the GCRMN. Active discussion has taken place in East Asia and the Wider Pacific, leading to in-principle agreements on a way forward. Less progress has been made in the Wider Indian Ocean and Caribbean, but discussions are underway.

Financial support for GCRMN Global Coordination is primarily provided by US Department of State, with support from other institutions mainly allocated for specific outputs. The introduction of regional coordination mechanisms is a means to strengthen the sustainability of GCRMN as a network, with financial responsibilities shared among a broader range of organizations.

Continued efforts are needed to augment the available financial support for global coordination, in order to enable and facilitate the work of one part time global coordinator with 4 (or more) regional coordinators also operating part time (e.g. about 30% each). Where possible coordinators could operate at a higher level (e.g. about 50% each) and also undertake other tasks of ICRI coordination.

Any increase in activities and funding will require active involvement of ICRI Partners willing to act as host institutions for these coordinators. The GCRMN requests that host institutions support the Global and Regional Coordinators with financial, administrative and logistical support as needed for them to carry out their duties.

The GCRMN Management Group and ICRI GM are invited to examine the structure of the GCRMN to determine the most efficient and sustainable means to meet the increasing requests for more monitoring data and information to guide coral reef managers and policy formulators.

The ICRI GM and ICRI members are invited to:

1. Take note of progress in developing regional coordination structures in the Pacific and East Asia regions, and assist in consolidating these arrangements;

2. Express thanks to the employers of the GCRMN Node Coordinators in Southeast Asia and East and North Asia for their generosity in supporting GCRMN coordination and encouraging them to continue this support.
3. Support as possible further discussions on development of regional coordination mechanisms that meet the needs of the Wider Caribbean and Wider Indian Ocean regions;
4. Advice and support the GCRMN Coordinator and Management Group in identifying further institutional and financial support for regional coordination mechanisms;
5. Consider the Draft GCRMN Terms of Reference and Structure and advice on whether the operational procedures and principles identified therein provide appropriate and sufficient guidance for GCRMN as an ICRI Operational Unit.

Clive Wilkinson and Jerker Tamelander
GCRMN Global Coordination
November 2010