



GCRMN 6 Month Report – to June 2008

GCRMN activities since October 2008 are summarised for this ICRI meeting. This is also a 6 month report to UNEP and the Reef & Rainforest Research Centre acknowledging finance from the USA as counterpart contributions supporting the GCRMN and Reef Check Asia-Pacific.

GCRMN Report ‘Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2008’

- This 304 page report was released simultaneously on 09 December 2008:
 - National Aquarium in Washington DC;
 - IPCC COP meeting in Poznan Poland;
 - Museum für Naturkunde (Museum of Natural History) in Berlin;
 - At the Colombian National Coral Reef Day;
 - The Washington launch was in the National Aquarium by Christine Dawson (Department of State), Jack Dunnigan (NOS Assistant Administrator, NOAA, Christy Loper (NOAA) and Clive Wilkinson.
 - Christy Loper also released ‘Socioeconomic Conditions along the World’s Tropical Coasts’ from the SocMon network.
 - A press conference was held at the Australian Embassy on 10 December with Congressman Brian Baird, David Stuart from the Embassy, Christine Dawson, Kacky Andrews and Christy Loper (NOAA) and Clive Wilkinson.
 - The launch organised by IUCN at the IPCC meeting and chaired by Julia Marton-Lefevre (IUCN Director General) gathered considerable news attention with Olof Linden (WMU, Sweden) doing about 40 media interviews which generated global media reports.
- The report was produced on budget with major contributions from the US Department of State and NOAA, along with financial assistance from UNEP, IOC-UNESCO, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the French IFRECOR group, IUCN, Project AWARE and Japan;
- The print run was 4,000 books, 7,000 CDs plus 4,000 brochures. Copies of books and CDs are available in Phuket for ICRI members; books and CDs were shipped to all 17 Nodes and to major contributors, and more copies remain for distribution;
- Many GCRMN Nodes and participating countries either held Status 2008 report launches to detail their reef status or used the reports to highlight their activities within IYOR ;
- A pre-launch with a 4 page brochure was made at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in October 2008 in association with the US Department of State, CORDIO, SPREP, IYOR and NOAA;

Other Publications

- The planned short book on effective catchment management and coral reefs that reflects the UNEP GPA programmes is being drafted, but delayed on the advice of the GPA office as they are reorganising the GPA network;
- The GCRMN proposes to ICRI either a illustrated brochure or a short (20 - 30 page) booklet on global climate change and coral reefs to summarise the current and potential future impacts of accelerating climate change and coral reefs for release in time for the Copenhagen IPCC meeting in December;
- Production schedules and budgets for these 2 reports will be discussed at the GCRMN Management Group meeting, 19 April 2009 to report to the ICRI General Meeting.

SocMon Network

- In October 2008, IUCN published a new regional SocMon guidelines for the South Asia region;
- SEM-Pasifika Guidelines were published also in October with funding support from the US State Department, to guide socioeconomic assessments in the Pacific. Now SEM-Pasifika is the Pacific SocMon Node;
- Since publication of the Guidelines, socioeconomic assessments have been conducted in Yap, Kosrae, Saipan, and American Samoa, with assessments underway in 6 other Pacific locations with funding support from NOAA, PIMPAC, SPREP, and TNC- Micronesia;
- In December 2008, the first global synthesis of SocMon data was published with support from NOAA and Conservation International;

- SocMon Southeast Asia is planning a side meeting at the World Ocean Conference in May 2009 to discuss future plans for the region. A training workshop is also scheduled for Vietnam and Cambodia in June 2009.

Activities

- Development of the COREMO database by the French group ARVAM in Reunion continues after many programming problems and suggestions for improvement. It is now anticipated that COREMO will be ready for Pacific training in May or June 2009 after pilot testing of the final database and help manuals. The training workshops are scheduled for Palau and Fiji. The involvement of Asian and Pacific agencies and people is encouraged;
- IOC-UNESCO have appointed a new senior scientist, Luis Valdes, jl.valdes@unesco.org to be their representative on the GCRMN Management Group. Luis is a Spanish biological oceanographer with more than 20 years experience in research in the north Atlantic and in representing Spain on many international committees.
- The GCRMN is finalising editing of 70 manuscripts from the Mini-symposium 18 'Reef Status and Trends' for the proceedings, 11th International Coral Reef Symposium in July 2008 (Chairs Christy Loper, Loureene Jones, David Souter, Clive Wilkinson).
- The GCRMN Coordinator attended the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in October after attending a CRISP review meeting in Apia Samoa in September.

Clive Wilkinson
Global Coordinator GCRMN
20 March 2009 (updated 10 April)

News from the Regional Nodes (as they were received):

Netherlands Antilles: Hurricane Omar damaged reefs on Curacao and Bonaire in October 2008 with up to 70% of corals shallower than 5 m on parts of Curacao sandblasted by sand and rubble. Reef monitoring is continuing in St. Eustatius and Curacao. Bonaire Marine Park will hold resilience monitoring training in May with IUCN and TNC and Reef Check training is planned for Saba and St. Maarten to restart regular monitoring. An official launch of Status 2008 was planned to include the Governor and Minister of Environment with lectures at the University; but the books were held by a month-long strike in Guadeloupe. The plan may be revived.

Palau, Micronesia: Palau International Coral Reef (PICRC) has started 2 yearly monitoring of 22 sites, with special monitoring of Ngarchelong State, include the Velasco submerged reef to draft a management plan. Crown-of-thorns starfish have been seen in Malakal and Koror State is reporting disease in Cemetery Reef. They are working with 4 communities to build MPA monitoring capacity with plans in Koror State for training for Koror State Rangers to conduct rapid assessment of ship groundings and to collect socio-economic data on divers' perceptions at dive site for use in establishing sustainable carrying capacity (Packard Foundation project). PICRC is working with Protected Areas Network Office (PAN) to determine indicators for measuring biological effectiveness and the Ebiil Conservation Area has officially join PAN as the first marine site. Unfortunately the Status 2008 Reports arrived after the PICRC anniversary; copies will be distributed in the Marshall Islands in April at a climate change workshop.

India, South Asia: India organized the 1st of 3 national workshops to commemorate IYOR on 21-23 January 2008 at Kadamat Island, the Lakshadweep. The Status and Protection of Coral Reefs 2008 workshop had 49 reef researchers, managers, policy makers, protection enforcement agencies, social workers and students examining:

1. Evolution of the recovery of the reefs after 1998
2. Strategies for strengthening of Management Action Plans:
3. Science and Technology needed for management
4. Capacity building
5. Biodiversity of reefs other than corals
6. Societal issues and alternate livelihood options

The workshop formulated recommendations to enhance monitoring, management and rejuvenations strategies, and participants agreed to implement projects within the Census of Marine Life (IO-CoML). The National Institute of Oceanography and the Administration of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep in India invited 11 students to attend (contact Mohideen Wafar; wafar@nio.org).

Maldives, South Asia: The government has declared a nationwide ban on shark fishing and export of shark products effective for a year from March 2009. They plan to launch the Status 2008 report during World Water Day and World Meteorology Day (22 and 23rd March) by highlighting the state of the health of the reefs at national, regional and global levels to raise awareness on coral reefs and other related works by Maldives government agencies. Earlier launch dates were not possible because the book shipment was delayed by bureaucratic processes.

American Samoa: The Governor, Togiola Tulafono, invited the renowned wildlife artist Wyland during the 2008 US Coral Reef Task Force meeting in Washington, DC. Wyland will paint a marine life mural on the Executive Office Building in Utulei with the message of conserving and protecting our oceans and marine life. The IYOR has helped strengthen awareness about the ecological, economic, social and cultural value of coral reefs and associated ecosystems as well as improve understanding of the critical threats to coral reefs and generate practical and innovative solutions to reduce these threats. The Coral Reef Advisory Group, through education and outreach activities will generate urgent action to develop and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems. Additional IYOR projects include the painting of an underwater coral reef scene on an Aiga Bus, an education trip to the Manu'a Islands to paint a school mural, the revamp of the Coral Reef Advisory Group website, and the creation of an IYOR song/video which was included in the Reef Check international competition.

US Caribbean & Gulf of Mexico: The NOAA Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary is revising the management plan by: exploring boundary expansion to neighboring banks; and placing a no-take/no-dive, research only area on either East or West Bank. NOAA is developing socioeconomic impact assessments of different boundary configurations and doing a biogeographic characterization describing the spatial distribution of fishes, corals and other biota across the shallow water portions of both East and West Bank. NOAA is leading a 10-year repeat study on recreation-tourism in the Florida Keys, including a 5-year update of coral reef use and economic value. Visitor and resident surveys are now being analysed. A socioeconomic impact study of coral bleaching in Florida is underway by Australian economist Hans Hoegh-Guldberg. NOAA is assessing essential fish habitats in protected and non-protected marine areas around the islands of Puerto Rico to create a digital dataset of historical information on essential fish habitats and current fishing and non-fishing activities at priority sites. The goal is to reduce damage by human-related non-fishing activities on coral reef ecosystems and associated fishery resources. Also socio-economic profiles of fishing communities in the US Caribbean are underway to understand socio-economics of the harvesting sector in the U.S. Caribbean. In the USVI, NOAA and partners are using acoustic telemetry to quantify spatial patterns and habitat affinities of reef fishes to define the movements of reef fishes among habitats within and between the Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument, the Virgin Islands National Park, and Territorial waters. A total of 150 fishes, representing 18 species and 10 families were acoustically tagged in nearshore and cross shelf locations on the south shore of St. John with underwater hydrophones providing information on fine to broad scale fish movement patterns and ecological connectivity across habitats.

Southern Tropical Americas: The Node launched 'Status of Coral Reef of the World: 2008' during the National Day of Coral Reefs in Cartagena, Colombia in December along with the release of 1000 copies of the Spanish version of the Coral Reefs Poster and 1000 workbooks with summaries of 'Status of Coral Reef of the World: 2008' in English and Spanish. SIMAC in Colombia monitored Malpelo island (Colombian Pacific) in September, including evaluation of damage agents (colonies with signs of a disease similar to Caribbean White Plague) and *Stegastes arcifrons* territories. In October, they monitored the coral reefs of Rosario and San Bernardo Archipelago (Colombian Caribbean) and installed two new stations on Isla Fuerte as part of a climate change project (INAP). And in November they monitored Tayrona Natural Park, Colombian Caribbean. INVEMAR, as the designated as the focal point for IYOR 2008: provided advice for three TV programs about the Colombian Coral Reef Monitoring System SIMAC; developed a workshop on coral reefs in the framework of the Colombian Seminar of Ocean Science and Technology (SENALMAR); and provided advice to the Ministry of Environment, Household and Territorial Development on IYOR activities.

Red Sea and Gulf of Aden: the Status 2008 reports were distributed during a meeting for the national MPA managers meeting in Jeddah (31 Jan to 1 Feb 2009), also at the PERSGA council meeting in Djibouti (5-7 March 2009) and sent out to the national contact points in the PERSGA region. They have distributed information concerning the IYOR, especially pertinent to activities carried out in the Biodiversity and MPA programme. This included 3 workshops in Jeddah, the coral reef survey field work by the national teams in each of PERSGA country, and during 2 Saudi Arabian national events in Jeddah. The Node has submitted several news items to the IYOR web-site with photos and translated the IYOR logo and brochures from the IYOR web site into Arabic and distributed these at the Regional Seas Conference in Jeddah, 2008 and at other events.

France and overseas territories: A press release to Agence France Presse (AFP) was prepared by the Ministry of Ecology on 'Status of Coral Reefs in the World: 2008' especially highlighting the conclusions and recommendations. Bernard Salvat conducted numerous interviews on Radio, TV and for the print media on global coral reef status and especially on French coral reef territories. There were also interviews and press articles in French Polynesia during the Pacific Science Intercongress in early March, and in New Caledonia.

Southeast Asia: A variety of IYOR activities and events were organized between September 2008 and February 2009, including education, outreach, and coral reef monitoring activities. For example, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam participated in locally-organised coastal and reef cleanup activities in September 2008 as part of the Ocean Conservancy's yearly International Coastal Cleanup. Numerous talks and lectures on coral reef were given throughout the region, and student-based activities and competitions were organized to promote coral reef awareness and appreciation. The IYOR team in Singapore spearheaded the drafting of the Singapore Blue Plan which will be launched at the Asian Dive Expo in April 2009. In Thailand, the Marine Biodiversity Research Group from Ramkhamhaeng University and the Office of National Research Council of Thailand, organised a national seminar in September 2009 to discuss coral reef management issues in Thailand. Long-term coral reef monitoring continued across the region, under various national and sectoral programmes. In Singapore, a launch of Status 2008 report was held on 04 February 2009 in conjunction with a public lecture on Sustainable Development of Coasts and Oceans by Dr Chua Thia-Eng, chair of the East Asian Seas Partnership Council on the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia. The dates for the 2nd Asia Pacific Coral Reef Symposium have changed to 20-24 June 2010 in Phuket, with the theme: "Collaboration for Coral Reef Conservation in a Changing Climate"

South West Pacific: Ed Lovell and Ken MacKay attended the 11th ICRS in Florida in July, 2008 and presented: 'A Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network assessment of hard coral cover from 1999-2007' (indicating rapid recovery from bleaching events); 'Coral reef status of the South West Pacific: 2007'; and 2 posters 'Monitoring seawater temperature and coral community response across Fiji, an archipelago-wide monitoring programme' and 'Building regional taxonomic capacity supports marine management and biodiversity conservation efforts'. Temperature loggers continue to be deployed in monitoring sites around Fiji to establish baseline thermal data and SST anomalies to determine bleaching thresholds, and to identify resilient coral reef areas to assist in management and protection and to establish a database to communicate data to national stakeholders. Cherie Morris presented a poster at the Pacific Science Inter Congress (PSI) in French Polynesia in March, 2009 on 'Coral reef status of the South West Pacific: 2007' and a flash presentation on ReefBase Pacific for science and education (copies of ReefBase Pacific DVD version 2.0 have been distributed). The World Resources Institute (WRI), ICRAN, and the Institute of Marine Resources, University of the South Pacific, facilitated the 'Reefs at Risk Revisited: Pacific Regional Workshop' in March, 2009 for participants from government, NGOs, academia etc. to provide input on WRI's methodology for modelling threats to coral reefs in the Pacific. Participants also assessed the suitability of COREMO database for the Pacific region. Robin South used the workshop to launch and distribute 'Status 2008'. The 'Status of Coral Reefs in the SW Pacific: 2007' is in press and some hard copies will be available soon; country reports will be online at ReefBase Pacific database by the end of April. CRISP funding for coordination of the SW Pacific Node ended on 31 March. Ken MacKay has left Fiji and Cherie Morris is acting as Node Coordinator, but without ongoing funding.

South West Indian Ocean Island States: Moderate bleaching was observed on Grande Comores (*Pocillopora*, *Acropora* and *Porites*) and other islands are being surveyed in April. In Madagascar, Alisdair Harris of Blue Venture observed bleaching and mortality of *Pocillopora* which often occurs at this time of the year, and requests that methods from Kenya be adapted to standardise bleaching levels. On Mauritius, Meera Koonjul reported serious bleaching on line transect measures with definition of bleaching into 3 categories. Similarly some bleaching has been observed on la Réunion, with more detailed monitoring now being conducted. Bruce Cauvin from la Réunion has been appointed as the Node coordinator, replacing Jude Bijoux from the Seychelles (thanks Jude for your help).