

INDOCET CONSORTIUM

A Memorandum of Understanding for a Regional cetacean research consortium in the western Indian Ocean

13/10/2022

PREAMBLE

This document serves as a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a regional consortium aimed at cetacean research and conservation across the western Indian Ocean (WIO). It is intended as a platform to bring together researchers actively working on cetaceans in the WIO under a common understanding and partnership. The consortium is dedicated to all cetacean species and its geographic boundaries are 20°E and 90°E and 12°N and 55°S (Northern limit of the Horn of Africa, Southern limit of the Indian Ocean Sanctuary; Fig. 1). The founding members of the Consortium are Salvatore Cerchio, Adèle De Toma-Cadinouche, Violaine Dulau, Ken Findlay, Sabrina Fossette, Claire Garrigue, Francois Xavier Mayer, Laurent Mouysset, Anjara Saloma, Olivier Tyack, Laurène Trudelle, Michel Vely, Andy Willson and Alexandre Zerbini.

The official name and acronym of the Consortium is INDOCET (Indian Ocean Cetacean Consortium).

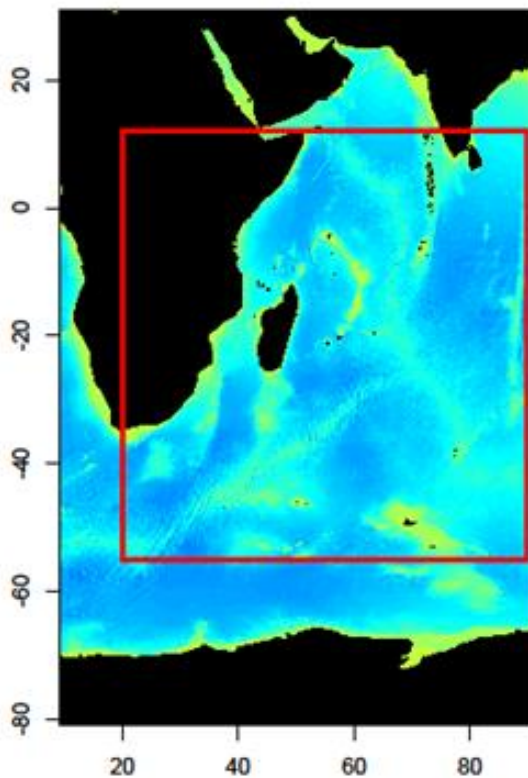


Figure 1. Geographic Boundaries of the Indocet Consortium

VISION

To foster and advance cetacean research and conservation in the western Indian ocean.

CONSORTIUM GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following are the primary goals and objectives for the formation of the Consortium:

1. Advance understanding of biology of cetaceans in the WIO
2. Promote conservation of cetaceans and mitigation of anthropogenic impacts in the WIO
3. Develop capacity in WIO range states for cetacean research and conservation
4. Foster collaboration between research groups
5. Facilitate communication regarding research activities:
 - a. Within the consortium, among members
 - b. As a common voice on cetacean conservation, research and management across the WIO
6. Promote internationally recognized guidelines of research ethics and professional conduct

CONSORTIUM AIMS

The following are the general aims describing how the Consortium will accomplish the above objectives:

1. Advance understanding of biology of cetaceans in the WIO
 - a. Foster research on the biology of cetaceans in the WIO
 - b. Promote exchange of expertise
 - c. Facilitate/encourage publication of peer-reviewed papers
 - d. Develop online information reporting/archiving/data exchange
2. Promote research-based conservation on cetaceans and mitigation of anthropogenic impacts in WIO
 - a. Foster conservation of cetaceans in the WIO
 - b. Provide a platform for advice and expertise on conservation issues
3. Develop capacity in WIO range states for research and conservation of cetaceans and their habitat
 - a. Provide training for biologists, conservationists and managers in the region
 - i. Workshops and short courses
 - ii. Onsite training – field training and internships during field work
 - b. Facilitating academic supervision and opportunities for students
 - c. Development of citizen science programs
4. Foster collaboration between research groups
 - a. Facilitate sharing of existing data, experience and templates
 - b. Facilitate prioritization and development of future common research projects
5. Facilitate communication regarding research activities
 - a. Regular interaction of Consortium members through both physical and virtual meetings
 - b. Public arena (Website, social media)
6. Promote professional conduct and research ethics based on international guidelines, in particular those of the Society of Marine Mammalogy through:
 - a. Guidelines for the Treatment of Marine Mammals in Field Research
 - b. Code of Professional Ethics for the Society of Marine Mammalogy

CONSORTIUM STRUCTURE

The Consortium will comprise an executive committee and 2 levels of membership:

1. Active WIO Members, who are involved in cetacean research in the WIO indicated by one of the following manners:

- Publication record as first author in peer-reviewed scientific journals
- Enrolment in an academic graduate program
- Demonstrated substantive experience in facilitating cetacean research.

Active WIO Researcher members may:

- a) Be part of the Executive Committee
- b) Lead a Consortium activity and engage in fundraising on the behalf of the Consortium
- c) Attend Consortium meetings and engage in discussion at the meetings
- d) Contribute to Consortium fora and provide written summaries on their research and/or science-based conservation work to the annual report of the consortium

2. Associate Members, active in cetacean research in other regions, through nomination and invitation. Same criteria for Active WIO members, but outside of WIO consortium regional boundaries

Associate members may:

- a) Occupy the associate member portfolio within the Executive Committee
- b) Attend Consortium meetings and engage in discussion at the meetings
- c) Contribute to Consortium fora and provide written summaries on their research and/or science-based conservation work to the annual report of the consortium
- d) Provide expertise, advices and feedback regarding cetacean research and conservation in other parts of the world.

MEMBERSHIP

Active WIO members may join the Consortium upon applying online via the Indocet website. Decision by the Executive Committee will be based upon submission of:

- Brief cover letter describing background and expertise
- Curriculum Vitae

The decision of the Executive Committee will be based on a two-third majority in an open vote. Any rejection of an application will be justified.

Associate members may join the Consortium upon invitation by the Executive Committee.

A member can request their membership to be discontinued by notifying the Executive Committee in writing at any time.

A person's membership can be revoked by a two-third majority vote of the Executive Committee if they fail to fulfil or comply with the Memorandum of Understanding or violate Consortium **Guidelines of Research Ethics** or **Code of Professional Ethics**.

CONDUCT OF MEMBERS

- The members of the Consortium shall not make any commitments or take any position on the behalf of the Consortium without authorisation of the Executive Committee.
- Members will not apply for funding for Consortium activities without authorisation by the Executive committee.
- The name of the Consortium should not be used to advertise commercial activity without the authorisation of the Executive committee.
- Members will endeavour to exchange information, knowledge and expertise. Data exchange may necessitate the signature of specific agreement.
- When appropriate, on matters of mutual interest (geographic, topical, taxonomic), members will consult other Consortium members, with the aim of aligning their effort and enhancing coordination of their respective activities on cetaceans.
- When consulted, and as far as possible, members will assist each other and provide scientific and technical advice to other members, within their field of expertise.
- Members will endeavor to provide regular updates of their activities relating to cetacean research and conservation.
- Members will be informed on a regular basis on the activities that are taking place within the frame of the Consortium.
- Members will abide by the prescribed code of conduct and code of ethic of the Consortium.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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- The Executive Committee will comprise 5 to 8 members, including:
 - 1 chair
 - 2 co-chairs
 - Up to 5 additional members, one of which will be an outside regional member (from Associate Membership)
- The roles and responsibilities of the Executive Committee will be to:
 - Review new membership
 - Review proposals for joint Consortium activities
 - Coordinate activities of the Consortium and plan regular meetings
 - Validate documents to be released by the Consortium
 - Facilitation role, including liaison with other groups, conventions and organisation

Selection process for Executive Committee:

- Any Active Member can request directly to the Executive Committee to become a member when a vacancy arises (or Associate Member in the case of the outside regional member).
- The standing Executive Committee will vote on the acceptance of the nominee, and choose among nominees when there are more than the available vacancies. if there are more nominees than vacancies, preference will be given to the one whose country/region is not or is the least represented on the standing Executive Committee.

- Executive Committee members will make good faith effort to fulfil EC membership responsibilities, or voluntary step down once they feel they can no longer do so.
- The Chair and co-chairs reserve the right to request an Executive Committee member to voluntarily step down if they are not fulfilling their responsibilities.

MODIFICATION OF THE MoU

Members can request revision of the Memorandum of Understanding at any time. Changes will be reviewed by the Consortium members during the annual meeting.

Any modifications to the Memorandum of Understanding will require a two thirds majority vote of all voting members (where such voting members comprise 50% of the membership).