



ROPME/WD-EBM-2

Concept Paper on Regional EBM Strategy for ROPME Sea Area

1- Introduction

Ecosystem services are the benefits that people obtain from ecosystems. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment analyzed 24 ecosystem services, and found that 15 were being degraded or used unsustainably. The decline in ecosystem services strongly affects the world's most disadvantaged people, impeding sustainable development, and presents a considerable barrier to achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty and hunger.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment grouped ecosystem services into four categories:

- provisioning services, such as the supply of food and water;
- regulating services, which help to stabilize ecosystem processes such as climate and water storage and purification;
- supporting services, including soil formation and nutrient cycling; and
- cultural services, such as recreational, spiritual, religious and other non-material benefits.

These ecosystem services include services as varied as water supply, waste treatment, fisheries, natural hazard protection, regulation of air quality, regulation of regional and local climate, prevention of erosion, spiritual fulfillment, and aesthetic enjoyment.

Fisheries are in a particularly critical state at a global scale. They are being exploited well beyond sustainable levels while demand continues to grow. At least one quarter of important commercial fish stocks are overharvested. Fisheries involve two important paradigms: conservation and fisheries management. While conservation deals with fisheries and their environment, fisheries management focuses on achieving sustainable exploitation of the resources for the benefit of human well-being.

ROPME Sea Area:

The ROPME Sea Area is located in subtropical zone surrounded by arid land masses. It has a rich biodiversity including mangroves, seagrass, and coral reefs. Mangroves and coral reefs of RSA provide living space for hundreds of marine species. RSA is also rich in marine plants where four species of seagrass and 232 species of seaweeds are identified. Underpinned by the biodiversity, the ecosystems provide essential services to maintain human well-being in the region such as provisioning of desalinated water. In addition, the ecosystems support fisheries, aquaculture, minerals, shelters to marine biota /migratory fish and birds, recreation and tourism.

However, the fragile ecosystems are exposed to numerous natural and anthropogenic stresses derived mainly from climate change, dust storms, pollution, overfishing and intensive coastal reclamation.

In response to the concerns degradation of RSA shared among countries, the eight governments of the region (Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) adopted the Kuwait Convention and Action Plan in 1978. The

Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) was established in the following year. Since then ROPME is serving as the nerve centre for implementation of the Convention.

Ecosystem-Based Management:

The Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) finds its foundation in the interdependence between ecosystem health and human well-being. It takes ecosystem as a whole system rather than looking at separate issues, species or functions. In this context, it is widely accepted that, as an example, conventional fishery management has proven to be of limited performance, while better understanding and practice of Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) is increasing.

Traditional environmental management approaches are based on sectors or biomes (geographically and climatically linked natural communities). In this way, ecosystem concerns have been considered as outside of other social concerns, ignoring interdependency of ecosystem services and human needs. These sector-based approaches have resulted in fragmentation of decision-making for the management of same ecosystems.

The general failure of this sectorial approach meant that a radical shift in thinking about environmental management is needed. A more holistic view of the links between ecosystem service delivery and human needs – an *ecosystem approach* – may be the last and best hope for living sustainably on the threatened planet.

Experiences indicate that there is no single way to implement the ecosystem approach, as it depends on local, provincial, national, regional or global conditions. Indeed, there are many ways in which ecosystem approaches may be used as the framework for delivering the objectives in practice. The application of the Ecosystem Approach is a long process that would continuously develop and adjust itself on a time scale of several years before it reaches its final stage.

This conceptual approach to ecosystem management might be new to many governments and stakeholders. It would require explanation of the underlying rationale and the concept of ecosystem services, the ecosystem approach and drivers of change. It would require as well new technical and institutional approaches to environmental management at all levels. Moreover, it would require new understanding, new knowledge and ways to organize it, and new methods of applying the Ecosystem Management concept to the management of action on-the-ground. The proposed steps for implementation of ecosystem approach are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, and are subject to change as further input and initial results feed back into the process.

2- ROPME Regional EBM Strategy

- Why does ROPME propose to develop a regional EBM Strategy?
- How is the strategy related to Kuwait Action Plan and Conventions / Protocols
- Success indicators, monitoring for the implementation of the strategy

3- Global Targets relevant to the ROPME EBM Strategy

In developing the ROPME EBM Strategy, it is crucial to consider current development in international targets with regards to oceans and seas. Of particular importance to the development of ROPME EBM Strategy would be following goals and targets:

Aichi Biodiversity Targets:

At the 10th Conference of Parties, Member States of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Among the 20 targets, the following targets are most relevant to EBM in marine and coastal ecosystems:

“Target 6: By 2020, all fish and invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants are managed and harvested sustainably, legally and applying ecosystem based approaches, so that overfishing is avoided, recovery plans and measures are in place for all depleted species, fisheries have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems and the impacts of fisheries on stocks, species and ecosystems are within safe ecological limits.”

“Target 10: By 2015 the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.”

“Target 11: By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape.”

Sustainable Development Goals:

In September 2015, Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Member States are ultimately responsible for achieving the targets but existing regional platforms will certainly play important roles in providing assistance to countries. ROPME in this sense has capacity and experience to provide technical assistance to participating countries particularly with regard to the ocean-related SDGs. The most relevant SDG Goal among others would be the Goal 14, “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”.

4. Objective

The objective is to develop a Regional Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) Strategy. This region-wide EBM Strategy will set a common vision and catalyse policy coherence based on ecosystem-based approaches across sectors in ROPME Sea Area.

5. Proposed Preliminary Plan

The development of Regional EBM Strategy for RSA will be conducted through four phases as described below:

Phase	Activity
Phase I (6 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organization of a Regional multi-stakeholders workshop on EBM to agree on approaches for the development of an Regional EBM Strategy - Identification and analysis of stakeholders, individuals, organizations and agencies across sectors. - Identify common goals, interests and objectives - Preparation of region wide assessment of state-of-the-art in the management of ROPME Sea area ecosystem with identification of management gaps -
Phase II (10 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation of valuation of major ecosystems in ROPME Sea area - Preparation of an outline for strategy (strategic framework) to be reviewed by key stakeholders - Organization of multi-stakeholders meetings to agree on a strategic framework Wider stakeholder consultation in the region (such as online-public consultation)
Phase III (5 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finalization of the Regional EBM Strategy document based on the strategic framework agreed in Phase II - Development of monitoring and follow-up scheme - Organization of a High-level Regional Workshop to adopt the Regional EBM Strategy
Phase IV up to5years??	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Application of Regional EBM Strategy - Implementation of operational strategy, follow up and monitoring. - Develop the institutional reform if needed

4- Expected Outcomes/Outputs

Outcomes

- Building capacity of national stakeholders in EBM for management of ecosystem.
- Identify barriers, difficulties in the implementation of ecosystem approach
- Adaptation of UNEP concept of ecosystem approach; develop regional concept and approach for ROPME Sea area

- Provoke institutional (revisit Kuwait Action Plan) changes in management of environment based on the Regional EBM Strategy.
- Improve the monitoring programme guided by the Regional EBM Strategy
- Paving the road for national replication of EBM
- Promote a regional replication of application of ecosystem approach in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and West Asia region.

Outputs

- A scoping study analyzing existing EBM mechanisms, policies and activities as well as their gaps in ROPME area.
- A strategic framework for Regional EBM Strategy
- Final Regional EBM Strategy document
- Final workshop reports