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DOCUMENT MC/07	STRENGTHENING USER KNOWLEDGE IN NAMMCO
Submitted by	Secretariat
Action requested	<p>Take note. Consider how NAMMCO includes user knowledge. Discuss whether any additional approaches may be worth further consideration or explication.</p>
Background	<p>In February 2021, the NAMMCO Secretariat participated in an online workshop on Arctic User Knowledge organised by NORDECO (Nordic Foundation for Development and Ecology). NAMMCO was invited to give a presentation on how it brings local knowledge into its advisory and decision-making process and the plans for further strengthening the involvement of local knowledge in the organisation in the future. This document summarises the information given, including a range of options for strengthening the inclusion of user knowing in NAMMCO.</p> <p>Considering how NAMMCO includes user knowledge and possible new pathways forward in the future is particularly pertinent this year due to the discussions in the MCC on narwhal in East Greenland and the ongoing disagreements between hunters and scientists regarding management advice in this case.</p>

1. BACKGROUND

In 2019, NAMMCO was invited to participate in a series of workshops on “Arctic User Knowledge” organised by the Nordic Foundation on Development and Ecology (NORDECO). The aim of this work was to exchange experiences and give users an enhanced voice on resource management in international management bodies. The project aimed to work with NAFO, CITES, ICES and NAMMCO to enhance their capacity to develop robust and innovative policies on the use of local knowledge. While the pandemic prohibited the planned series of face-to-face workshops from being conducted, an online meeting was held in February 2020. NAMMCO was invited to give a presentation at this meeting on how it brings local knowledge into its advisory and decision-making process and the plans for further strengthening the involvement of local knowledge in the organisation in the future.

2. WHY IT IS IMPORTANT THAT NAMMCO INCLUDE USER KNOWLEDGE

Local people have a right to participate in decisions that affect them.

Local people depend on the health and sustainability of the natural resources in their area and therefore have a right to participate in decision-making that affects them. This is widely recognised and is encoded in a range of international treaties, agreements, and declarations, including the Aarhus Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the World Commission on Environment and Development.

Allowing local communities to contribute to advisory processes ensures use of the strongest possible evidence base and facilitates implementation of management measures.

Local people also have extensive knowledge of the natural resources in their area due to their direct engagement with them on a regular basis and their long history of doing so. Their inclusion in assessment and advisory processes is therefore required to ensure that decisions are based on the most comprehensive and robust evidence base available. Furthermore, if management decisions are going to be implemented and followed, it is crucial that local people have had an opportunity to influence these decisions and understand the basis on which they are made.

Sustainability and an ecosystem-based approach to management require taking socio-economic impacts and local knowledge into account.

Assessing sustainability requires not just considering the environmental impacts of an action, but also questions of social and economic sustainability - assessing the so-called triple bottom line. Furthermore, an ecosystem-based approach to management recognises the critical role that human communities play in affecting ecosystems and therefore the importance of including social and economic aspects into management assessments and decision-making. This requires considering, evaluating and including the socio-economic impacts of different management measures in the process of generating advice. This can be done by either having users directly communicate the impacts they foresee or experience, or by having the impacts on local communities analysed, collated and assessed by social science researchers (e.g., sociologists, anthropologists, economists).

Distrust, disagreement and tension inevitably grow when users, scientists and managers have no common meeting ground.

When proposals for management measures are developed by the scientific community alone, this fails to take into account the social and economic impacts that these measures may have on local communities, as well as the knowledge held by those local communities. The proposed management advice will therefore fail to include all of the relevant information and factors that need to be considered. If local people are unable to have their knowledge and the impacts that management measures will have on them included in the assessment, they are likely to strongly disagree with proposed advice. This can create tension and arguments between user and scientific communities, with managers often being caught in the middle. Distrust and misunderstanding will perpetuate unless opportunities for meeting, engaging in dialogue, and sharing concerns and information are created.

3. HOW NAMMCO CURRENTLY INVOLVES USER KNOWLEDGE IN ITS ADVISORY AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

From its very establishment, NAMMCO has sought to ensure effective conservation and sustainable utilisation of marine resources with due regard to the needs of coastal communities. In pursuing this aim, NAMMCO has had a long history of emphasising the importance of including user knowledge and has investigated several different approaches to this over the years. This has, for example, included *work towards developing a Joint Assessment Committee* in which scientists and users would work together to generate management advice (began through species status reports), the *establishment of a specific User Knowledge Working Group* (no longer in operation), and holding an *international conference on the topic of “User Knowledge and Scientific Knowledge in Management Decision-making”* (with published conference proceedings). It was also recognised by the ad hoc Working Group on Ecosystem-based Management that integrating biological and socio-economic aspects is a crucial element of implementing an ecosystem-based approach to management. Despite there being a history of significant effort to include user knowledge in NAMMCO’s advisory process, the avenues currently available are arguably more modest than those available in the past, and only sporadically used or applied in a limited way. In the current practice of generating management advice within NAMMCO, the following avenues are available for including user knowledge:

Council

- National delegations may include members from hunter and user organisations.
- Users may give presentations or make statements at Council meetings (at the discretion of the Chair).
- Local knowledge organisations outside NAMMCO Member Countries can participate in annual meetings as observers.

Management Committees (MC)

- National delegations may include members from hunter and user organisations.
- Users may give presentations or make statements at MC meetings (at the discretion of the Chair).
- User knowledge is a permanent agenda item for joint meetings of the MCs.

Committee on Hunting Methods (CHM)

- Users may be nominated by Member Countries to become Committee Members.
- Users are invited to participate in workshops & expert group meetings organised by the CHM.

Scientific Committee / Working Groups

- There can be user assistance and involvement in the research projects of national institutes.
- Members of a WG may report on local knowledge during the meetings.
- User input may be requested to assist survey planning.

4. A SPECTRUM OF POSSIBLE APPROACHES FOR STRENGTHENING USER KNOWLEDGE INVOLVEMENT IN NAMMCO

There are various ways in which NAMMCO could strengthen the involvement of user knowledge in its advisory and decision-making processes. These span a wide spectrum of possible actions from those that are relatively simple, small and easy to implement, to those that are ambitious and require significant changes and/or investment of resources. The organisation may see some of these possible actions as relevant and valuable to pursue, but not others. Selecting which of the various possible pathways forward may be appropriate for NAMMCO to further consider and possibly pursue will depend on what value is placed on user knowledge, how the current challenges and limitations of the organisation’s work on this matter are understood, and where it is believed value may be added through strengthened inclusion. In this background document, no selection or prioritisation of the identified possible pathways forward is given. Rather they are simply presented as a spectrum of many possible approaches that the organisation may wish to consider. Given the wide spectrum of possibilities available, the MCJ is invited to indicate which of these may be worth further investigation.

The Secretariat and/or other NAMMCO Committees could then further explicate any option deemed worthy of a more detailed investigation, proposal or cost planning.

Enhance Information Sharing

This represents the lowest level of action NAMMCO could take to further strengthen the involvement of user knowledge in its advisory and decision-making processes and includes actions such as:

- *Establish a list of relevant and interested user organisations from each of the member countries and commit to notifying these organisations of the workplans of all NAMMCO committees.*
- *Develop MoUs with the relevant organisations to agree on information sharing practices and timelines.*
- *Support the further development and use of programs, technologies and databases for collecting and structuring local observations in a way that can be easily shared with those conducting assessments.*

Create Opportunities, Events and Spaces for Users, Scientists, and Managers to Meet

Creating new opportunities, spaces and events in which managers, scientists and users can meet is important for them to be able to exchange knowledge but also to become more familiar with each other's views/needs/realities/interests. It would be important that there be a commitment to support these spaces or host such meetings over an extended period of time (to really allow for the building of familiarity, trust and understanding). It may also be important that they rotate in location and form to highlight the different realities and working modes of the actor groups, and perhaps that they are also guided by professional facilitators. Action along these lines could take forms such as:

- *Commit to carrying out Community Consultations in which managers and scientists meet and hear from users in their local contexts.*
- *Host a series of Dialogue Forums in which managers, scientists and users meet several times over an agreed period to build familiarity, understanding and trust.*
- *Hold Vision Workshops to establish shared interests, goals and plans.*

Facilitate Greater User Engagement in Existing NAMMCO Committees and Working Groups

There are a number of ways in which users could be invited to participate more directly in existing NAMMCO Committees and Working Group (WG) processes. These include:

- *Specifically call for input from users/user organisations before all WG meetings.*
- *Insist that user knowledge be included as an agenda item/point to be considered in all WG meetings.*
- *Encourage user organisations to participate as observers in all SC meetings.*
- *Allow users to be active and invited participants in WG, SC, and/or Committee meetings.*
- *Ask Member Countries to nominate at least one user/local knowledge representative to the Committee on Hunting Methods.*
- *Require that Member Countries always include at least one user/local knowledge participant in their national delegations.*

Strengthen Research Collaborations between Scientists & Users

While scientists and users have some interaction through research projects carried out by the national research institutes, this could arguably be expanded through actions such as the following:

- *Create opportunities for users to be actively engaged in data collection and monitoring practices and ensure that the necessary training and/or financial compensation for time used is available.*
- *Host collaborative workshops to develop a shared set of research questions relevant for management.*

- Develop joint research projects in which users are involved in all aspects, including setting the research question, defining the methods of investigation, collecting data, and analysing results.

Establish Committees to Collate User Knowledge and Assess Socio-economic Impacts

NAMMCO has previously had an active user knowledge working group, however, there has never been any official part of the organisation dedicated to assessing socio-economic impacts to inform the advisory process. Therefore, some options for action in this regard would be to:

- Re-establish the User Knowledge Working Group with participation from relevant user organisations from all Member Countries.

- Establish a Social Science Committee (SSC) to formally assess social, economic and cultural impacts, and aspects of social and economic sustainability relevant to marine mammal management.

- Expand the concept of science used in the organisation to one more representative of “vitenskap” or “wissenschaft” in which the social sciences are included in what is defined as science, thereby opening the possibility that the Scientific Committee could include members and invited experts from fields of social science.

Work Towards Models for Developing Holistic and Integrative Assessments and Advice

While it would be valuable to establish avenues for user knowledge and socio-economic impacts to be included in NAMMCO’s advisory process, the ultimate aim could also be to ensure that there are not different recommendations for management measures coming from various separate and free-standing committees within the organisation, but rather that natural science, social science and user knowledge - environmental, socio-economic and cultural impacts - are all considered together and integrated in the generation of management advice from NAMMCO. This could take place in a number of different ways, such as:

- Have a timeline in which issues are sequentially handled by different committees/working groups in a way that leads to the generation of an integrated assessment and advice - e.g., user knowledge is collated first and fed into a scientific assessment, which is then considered and layered with a socio-economic evaluation of the recommendations.

- Create an integrative panel with responsibility to consider recommendations from different actor groups and write a synthesis report with management advice that integrates all aspects of an assessment.

- Establish a Joint Assessment Committee in which scientists, social scientists and users work together to perform holistic assessments and generate commonly agreed measures for conservation and management.