



# Regional Collaboration for endangered cetaceans: pooling expertise, resources, and local capacity for cetacean conservation

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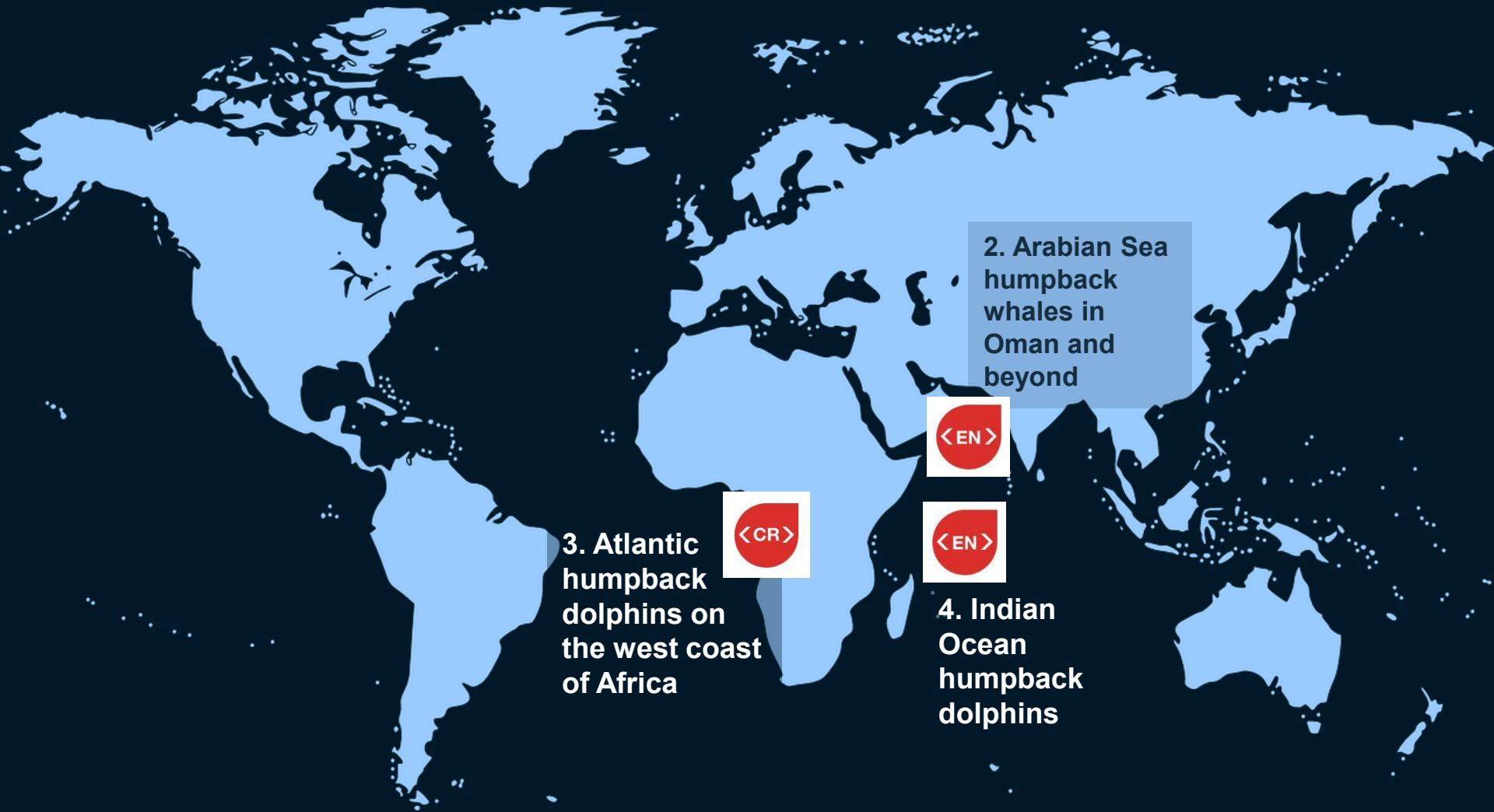
Co-chair of the IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group



**Expert Group Meeting on  
Advancing Marine Mammal Conservation in North-East Asia**

# OVERVIEW

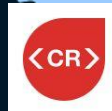
## 1. Context and background



2. Arabian Sea humpback whales in Oman and beyond



3. Atlantic humpback dolphins on the west coast of Africa



4. Indian Ocean humpback dolphins

## 5. Lessons that may be useful for NRFP

# FRAMEWORKS TO SUPPORT REGIONAL COLLABORATION



## International Whaling Commission

- Small Cetacean Task Force
- Conservation Management Plans  
<https://iwc.int/management-and-conservation/conservation-management-plans>



## Convention on Migratory Species

- Concerted Actions
- Species Action Plans
- MoUs and regional agreements (e.g. ACCOBAMS)



## International Union for the Conservation of Nature

- Resolutions
- Yellow Sea Working Group
- CSG Integrated Conservation Planning for Cetaceans (ICPC)



# 1. ARABIAN SEA HUMPBAC WHALES



- Remain within the Arabian Sea Year-round
- Fewer than 100 individuals off Oman
- Genetically isolated from other Indian Ocean populations
- Limited information from outside Oman
- Pervasive threats from fishing, port construction and shipping, oil and gas





ARABIAN SEA WHALE NETWORK



شبكة حيتان  
بحر العرب

January 2015:

# Arabian Sea Whale Network (ASWN)



Supported by EWS, WWF and the US Marine Mammal Commission



# The Arabian Sea Whale Network



## Flagship species

The Arabian Sea Humpback Whale (*Megaptera Novaeagliae*) but collaboration on all large whales

## Participation from Experts and Conservationists in 10 Arabian Sea Range states

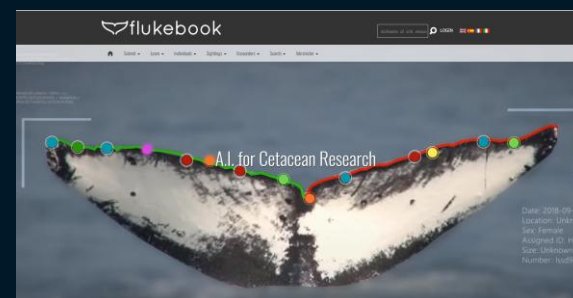
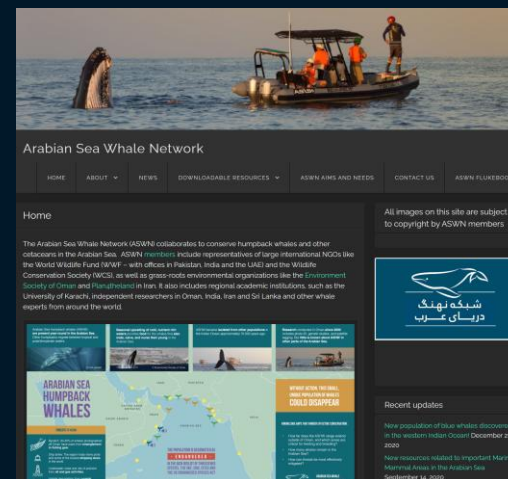
WWF (International, Pakistan, India and UAE), WCS, Emirates Wildlife-WWF, Environment Society of Oman, Five Oceans Environmental Services, Plan4theLand, University of Karachi, Kuwait Public Authority for Agriculture and Fisheries and more!

## Expert Advice and support from:

International Whaling Commission, IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group, US Marine Mammal Commission, Convention on Migratory Species

# Initiatives under the ASWN

- **2016: Website:** [arabianseawhalenetwork.org/](http://arabianseawhalenetwork.org/)
- **Email forum:** Regular sharing of information and events, advice and support
- **Training workshops:** Stranding and entanglement response (Oman 2015), new online data platform (Oman 2018)
- **Regional online data platform with Flukebook.org**
- **Working toward a joint IWC-CMS Regional Conservation Management Plan:** CMS Concerted Action in 2017, extended in 2020 and 2024. CMP will be up for endorsement in CMS and IWC in 2026





# Concerted Action for ASHW by Convention on Migratory Species

May 2017: Drafted by ASWN members  
October 2017: Endorsement by CMS COP  
February 2020: Extended to 2024  
February 2024: Extended to 2026

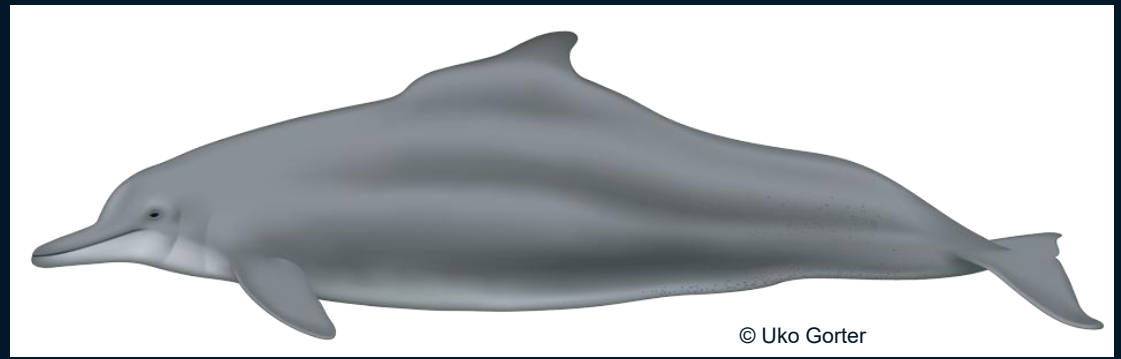




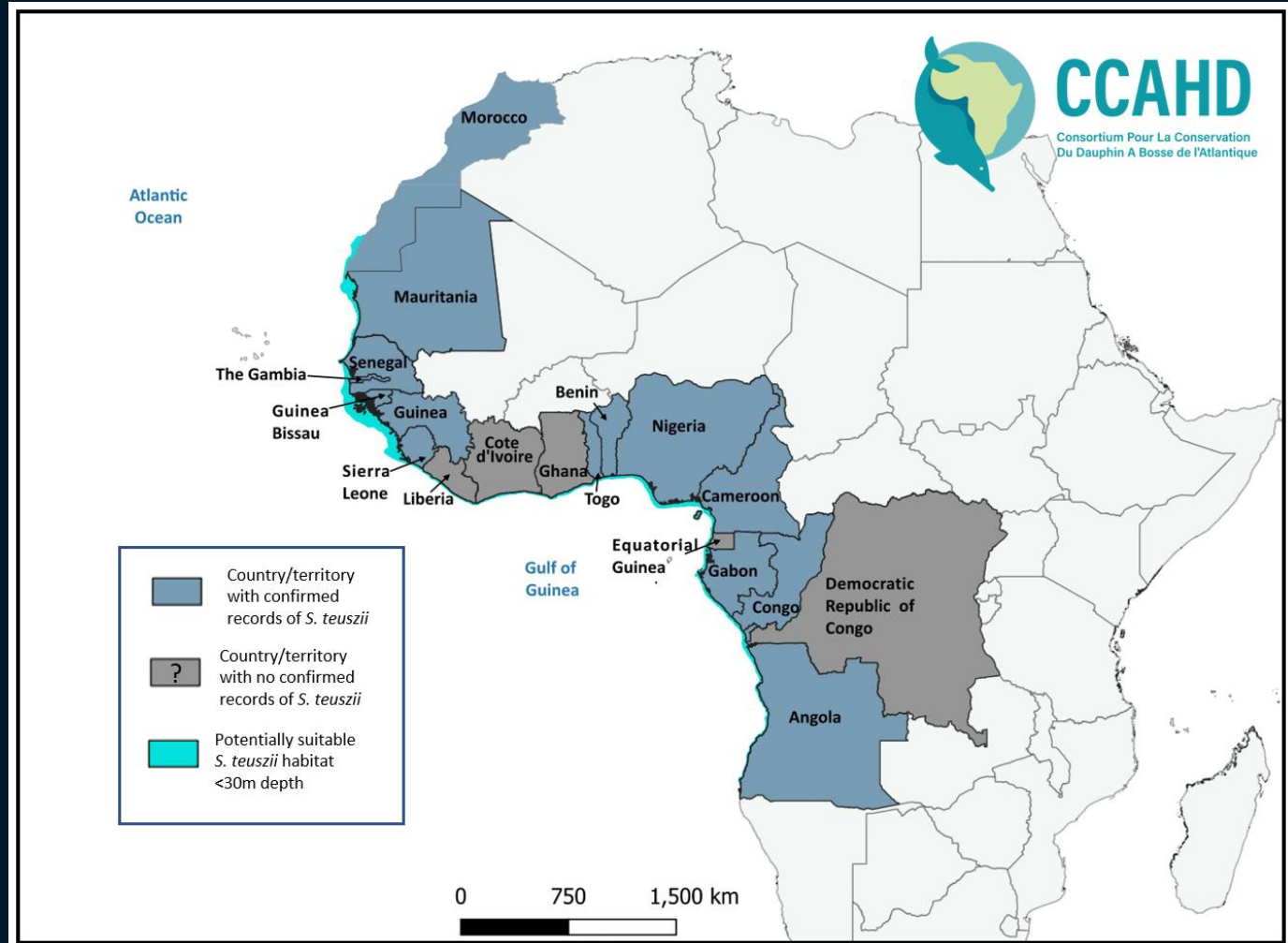
## 2. ATLANTIC HUMPBAC DOLPHINS



- ONLY on Atlantic coast of Africa



- 7000km range
- Fewer than 3000 thought to remain
- Dispersed in small isolated populations
- Confirmed records from 14 of the 19 countries within suspected range





## International organisations



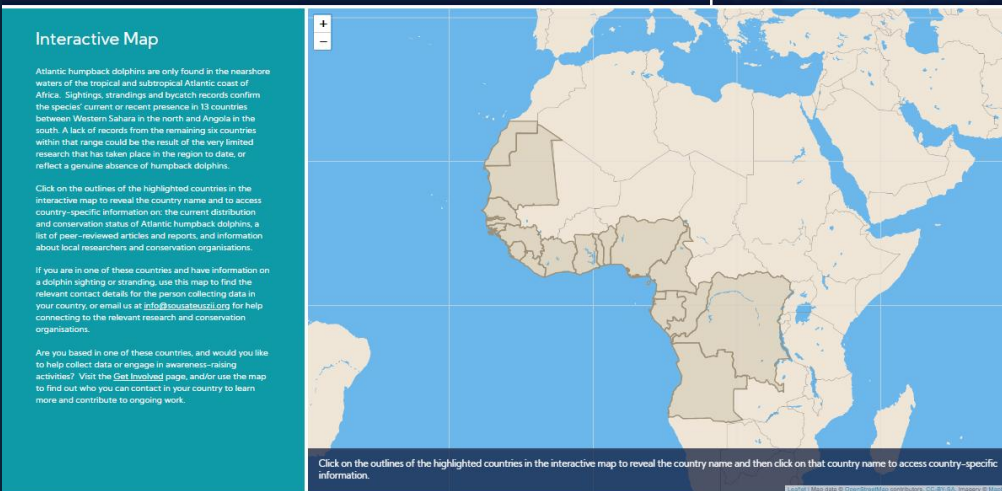
## Donors



## International and range country partners







# The Consortium for the conservation of the Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (CCAHD).....






- Formed in 2020
- Website: **Sousateuszii.org**
- Over 100 partners from around the globe, including from all 19 possible range states
- Independent scientists, local/national NGOs, International NGOs, IGOs, MPAs, government agencies, and more....

## Mission statement

Working towards the long-term sustainability of Atlantic humpback dolphin (*Sousa teuszii*) populations and their habitats through research, awareness, capacity-building and action.



# Relevant International Conventions

| Country/Territory                | <br>Abidjan<br>Convention | <br>International<br>Whaling<br>Commission<br>(IWC) | <br>Convention on<br>Migratory Species<br>(CMS) | <br>CMS Western<br>African Aquatic<br>Mammals MoU | <br>Convention on<br>Biological<br>Diversity (CBD) | <br>CITES |
|----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| Angola                           | yes  | no   | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |
| Benin                            | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |
| Cameroon                         | yes  | yes  | yes  | no   | yes   | yes  |
| Cote D'Ivoire                    | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | yes  | no   | yes  | no   | yes   | yes  |
| Equatorial Guinea                | yes  | no   | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |
| Gabon                            | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |
| Ghana                            | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |
| Guinea                           | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |
| Guineau-Bissau                   | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |
| Liberia                          | yes  | no   | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |
| Mauritania                       | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |
| Nigeria                          | yes  | no   | yes  | no   | yes   | yes  |
| Republic of Congo                | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |
| Senegal                          | yes  | yes  | yes  | no   | yes   | yes  |
| Sierra Leone                     | yes  | no   | no   | no   | yes   | yes  |
| The Gambia                       | yes  | yes  | yes  | no   | yes   | yes  |
| Togo                             | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes  | yes   | yes  |



# CMS Single Species Action Plan for the Atlantic humpback dolphin

Unanimously adopted by the CMS Conference of Parties in February 2024

UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.5.2/Rev.2/Annex 2

## DRAFT SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN FOR THE ATLANTIC HUMPBAC DOLPHIN (*Sousa teuszii*)



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# Framework led by threats that need to be addressed

**Table 2:** Risk matrix of threats to *S. teuszii*, based on the severity of each threat and the likelihood that it is present/pervasive in the species' habitats.

| Likelihood     | Consequences    |       |                  |  |                   |
|----------------|-----------------|-------|------------------|--|-------------------|
|                | Not Significant | Minor | Moderate         | Major  | Catastrophic      |
| Almost Certain |                 |       |                  | Habitat loss and degradation, including oil spills, coastal construction, etc. | Fisheries bycatch |
|                |                 |       |                  | Data deficits  |                   |
|                |                 |       |                  | Resource and capacity deficits   |                   |
| Likely         |                 |       | Prey depletion   | Utilisation of meat for bait, wildmeat trade, or food                          |                   |
|                |                 |       | Underwater noise |  |                   |
| Possible       |                 |       |                  | Climate change   |                   |
| Unlikely       |                 |       |                  |  |                   |
| Rare/unknown   |                 |       |                  |  |                   |

# Framework for Action

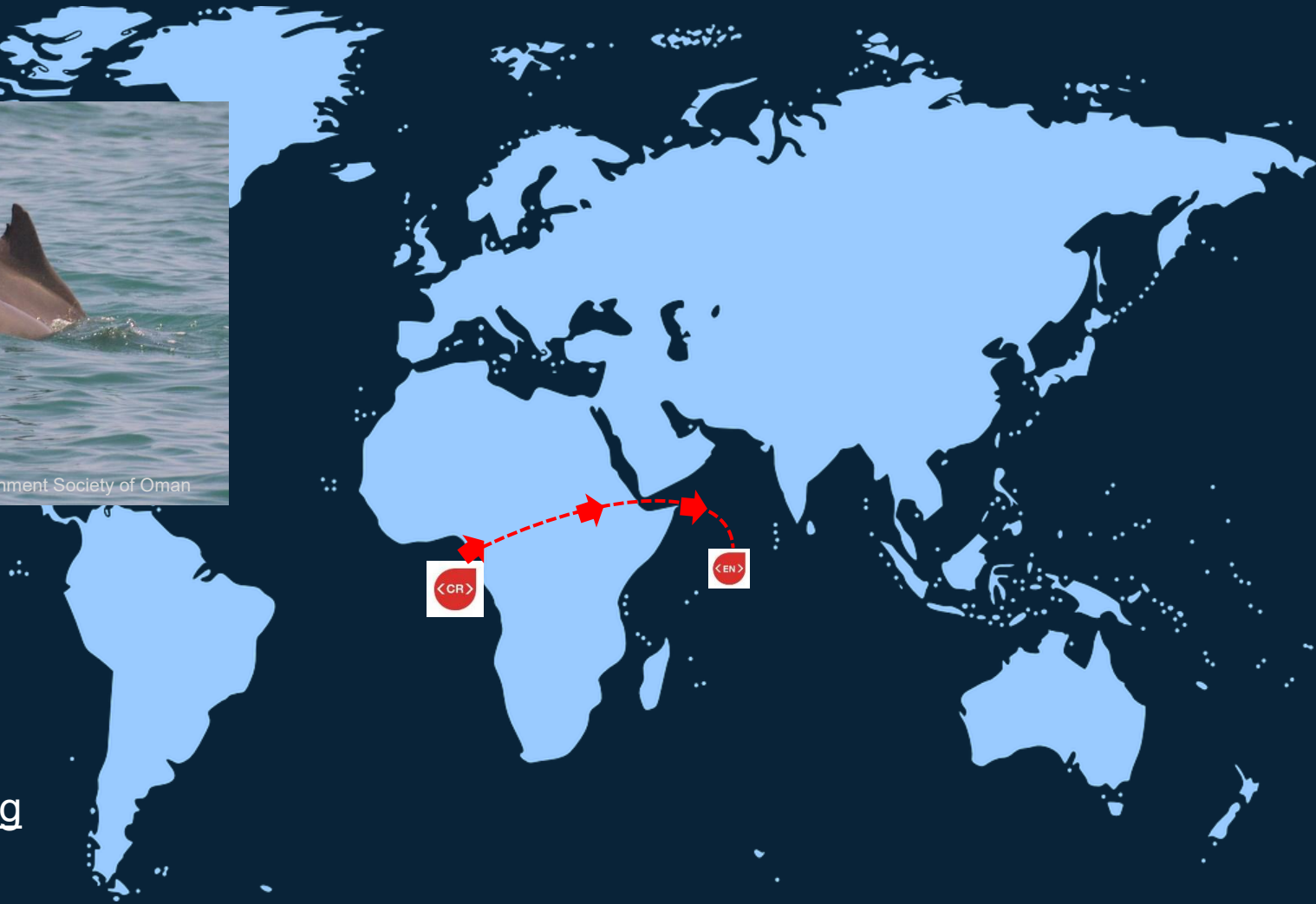
| Threat 1. Fisheries bycatch (Risk ranking: Catastrophic)  |  |   |                   |
|---|--|---|-------------------|
| Result  | Action   | Priority (Essential, high, medium, low) | Timescale         |
| <b>Objective 1:</b> Improve knowledge of where <i>S. teuszii</i> bycatch is occurring, and what types of fisheries/fishing gear is responsible so that appropriate mitigation measures can be designed and implemented. |  |   |                   |
| 1.1 <i>S. teuszii</i> bycatch hotspots are mapped in order to know where to target mitigation efforts   | 1.1.1 Conduct Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) surveys in coastal communities in as many <i>S. teuszii</i> range countries as possible (Annex 1, Sec 1.3).   | Essential                               | Immediate - Short |
|   | 1.1.2 Conduct Bycatch Risk Assessments (e.g. Hines et al 2021) in all those locations where sufficient information is available on fishing effort and <i>S. teuszii</i> distribution (Annex 1, Sec 1.7).   | High                                    | Short             |
|   | 1.1.3 Catalyse and support the formation of stranding/bycatch reporting networks (Annex 1, Sec 3.6).   | High                                    | Short             |
|   | 1.1.4 Conduct training for stranding responders to be able to identify signs of fisheries interactions (Annex 1, Sec 3.5)  | High                                    | Short-medium      |
| 1.2 Fisheries and fishing gears most often involved in <i>S. teuszii</i> bycatch are identified and described.  | 1.2.1 Conduct LEK surveys in coastal communities in as many <i>S. teuszii</i> range countries as possible. (Annex 1, Sec 1.3).   | Essential                               | Immediate - Short |
|   | 1.2.2 Include observations of active fishing effort in protocols for boat-based surveys (Annex 1, Sec 1.1 and 1.2).  | High                                    | Immediate-short   |
| <b>Objective 2:</b> Develop and test viable bycatch reduction methods   |  |   |                   |
| 2.1 Viable bycatch reduction methods are tested and available for use in similar fisheries in the <i>S. teuszii</i> range.  | 2.1.1 Identify fishing communities willing to collaborate with research teams to develop and trial reduction methods – could include time-area closures, alternatives to gillnets, etc. (Annex 1, Sec 1.8) | High                                    | Immediate-short   |



# 3. INDIAN OCEAN HUMPBAC DOLPHINS



[www.hudonet.org](http://www.hudonet.org)



# Working groups, webinars, fundraising.....

Biological Research

Threats & Solutions

People

Policy

Network Success

**Threats and Solutions Working Group:**

Investigating the drivers of the decline of humpback dolphins with emphasis on potential management options.

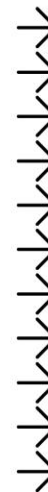


Distribution of Indian Humpback dolphin *sousa plumbea*. Click on the location to read more.

- 01 South Africa
- 02 Mozambique
- 03 Madagascar
- 04 Mayotte
- 05 Tanzania
- 06 Kenya
- 07 Somalia
- 08 Djibouti
- 09 Eritrea
- 10 Sudan
- 11 Egypt
- 12 Saudi Arabia



- 13 Yemen
- 14 Oman
- 15 United Arab Emirates
- 16 Qatar
- 17 Bahrain
- 18 Kuwait
- 19 Iraq
- 20 Iran
- 21 Pakistan
- 22 India
- 23 Sri Lanka



# What seems to work....

1. Be open to the unexpected.
2. Trust your network partners.
3. Share experiences, expertise and limelight.
4. A logo can help to create a shared identity and sense of purpose.



5. A website can help to create an external 'face' for those wanting to support the network.
6. Coordination or administrative support is essential to organise collaborations and maintain momentum.
7. Face-to-face meetings are invaluable for fostering networks. Frequent 1-1 communications help to maintain relationships.





A close-up photograph of a dolphin's tail fluke as it breaks the surface of the water. The tail is dark and sleek, with a prominent splash of white water around the base. The background is a calm, blue-grey sea.

**Thank You!**