

Using indicators for evaluating, comparing, and communicating the ecological status of exploited marine ecosystems. 2. Setting the scene

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Background is provided to the selection of ecological indicators by the IndiSeas Working Group, and the methodology adopted for analysis and comparison of indicators across exploited marine ecosystems is documented. The selected indicators are presented, how they are calculated is explained, and the philosophy behind the comparative approach is given. The combination of selected indicators is intended to reflect different dynamics, tracking processes that display differential responses to fishing, and is meant to provide a complementary means of assessing marine ecosystem trends and states. IndiSeas relied on inputs and insights provided by the local experts from participating ecosystems, helping to understand state and trend indicators and to disentangle the effect of other potential ecosystem drivers, such as climate variability. This project showed that the use of simple and available indicators under an ecosystem approach can achieve a real, wide-reaching evaluation of marine ecosystem status caused by fishing. This is important because the socio-economics of areas where fishing activities develop differs significantly around the globe, and in many countries, insufficient data are available for complex and exhaustive analyses.

Keywords: comparative approach, ecological indicators, ecosystem effects of fishing, exploited marine ecosystems, IndiSeas.

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