



Collaboration between the Nansen Programme and the Large Marine Ecosystem Programmes



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ABSTRACT

Norwegian development cooperation in fisheries has been taken place since the early 1950s and the Nansen Programme, now operating as the EAF-Nansen Project, has been one of its major representatives. The Nansen Programme has cooperated with developing nations, institutions and national and regional projects over the last forty years, representing an important mechanism for development assistance in the field of fisheries for the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). The scope of the co-operation has changed over the years to respond to emerging needs and challenges in partner countries. Since the Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) concept appeared in the global marine science and governance agenda, the Nansen Programme was seen as an important partner for the regional projects in Africa that emerged from the concept. The Nansen Programme has collaborated with the Agulhas and Somali Currents LME (ACSLME) project, the Benguela Current LME (BCLME) project and its successor the Benguela Current Commission (BCC) as well as the Canary Current LME (CCLME) project and the Guinea Current LME (GCLME) project. In South Asia, the Nansen Programme has also collaborated with the Bay of Bengal LME (BoBLME) project. This paper chronicles the nature of the collaboration and the mutual benefits accruing to all the parties.

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1. Introduction

Norwegian development cooperation in fisheries dates back to the early 1950s with the Indo-Norwegian fisheries project in Kerala (1952–72). The Institute of Marine Research (IMR) has been involved from the start in India – and over the years in a series of bilateral projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This work has mainly been financed by the Ministry of Foreign affairs – either directly or through the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). However, the major project in fisheries development cooperation since the mid 1970s has been the Nansen Programme, conducted as a close co-operation between the funding agency Norad, FAO, IMR and the different partner countries and regions. This contribution will provide a brief history of the Programme and its contribution to the LMEs.

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2. The Nansen Programme

In the late 1960s the idea was launched in Norway to build a research vessel to assist newly independent countries with mapping their fishery resources. In 1974 the Nansen Programme was initiated by the Government of Norway and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) to assist developing countries to strengthen the contribution of their fishery resources to food security and growth.

The initial phase of the Programme, which was an exploratory one, started in 1974 with the launch of a research vessel *Dr. Fridtjof Nansen*, with the main objective of assessing the abundance of available resources in the Indian Ocean, which at that time was one of the least known oceans in the world.

During this first phase the surveys discovered new fisheries resources, but did also identify areas with weak resource bases for development of fisheries. From the start, the fisheries investigations (trawl and acoustic surveys) were accompanied with oceanography observations – collecting data on temperature, salinity and oxygen.

Around 1981, and with the extension of their jurisdiction to 200 nautical miles by many coastal nations, the Programme entered into a new phase and carried out detailed mapping of resources within the EEZs of West Africa, East Africa, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, Southeast Asia, the Pacific coast of Central America and the Northern Coast of South America, in partnership with national research institutions. During this phase, co-funding was provided by UNDP/FAO to the order of 40% of the project amount up to 1983, then reduced to 20% and to a nominal amount since 1987 (Saetersdal et al., 1999).

Since 1993, and coinciding with the deployment of a new *Dr. Fridtjof Nansen* vessel, a new phase started aimed at developing capacity in fishery research and management in Southwest Africa, mainly Namibia, Angola and South Africa. During this phase the Nansen Programme was instrumental for the establishment of the BENEFIT (Benguela Environment Fisheries Interaction and Training Programme) as a platform for collaborative research work on transboundary resources and the Benguela Current ecosystem overall. Annual surveys were carried out off Angola and in Namibia which resulted in a unique time series of data on the fish resources in those regions. While the surveys still were focusing on monitoring fish stocks, a capacity development component within fisheries research- and management was added to the Programme. Geographically, much effort was spent in the Benguela and Canary current areas, with partner countries as South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania and Morocco. Particularly in Namibia, the Nansen Programme combined with bilateral assistance from Norway – gave a sector wide development approach in fisheries research, management and control (coast guard).

Starting in 1995, through an agreement with FAO, annual surveys were also carried out of the small pelagic resources off Northwest Africa as well as ad-hoc capacity development activities. The need to broaden the scope of the activities in Northwest Africa and to formalize FAO's technical contribution to the Nansen Programme in general led to the development of the FAO project “International cooperation with the Nansen Programme” in 1999. This project expanded the scope from

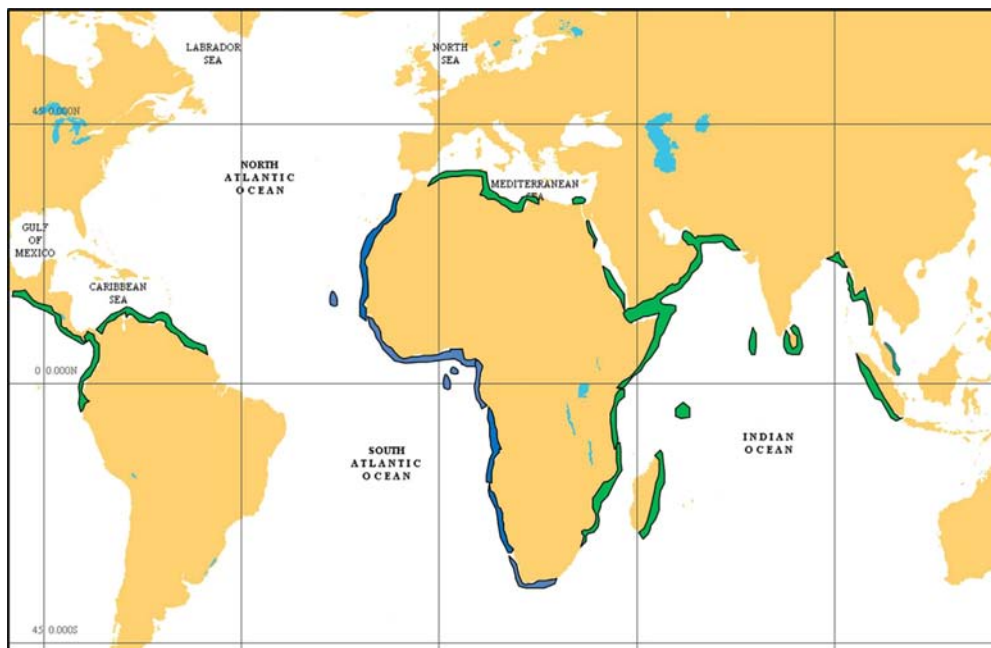


Fig. 1. Areas covered by the RV *Dr. Fridtjof Nansen* during 40 years of activity (blue and green). Some areas (particularly off West Africa, blue) have been covered systematically over longer periods of time thus resulting in unique time series. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

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