

Collaborative Pathways to Bridge Oceans and Societies: The IMBeR Human Dimensions Working Group (2016-2025)

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Abstract

Over the past decade, the Human Dimensions Working Group (HDWG) of IMBeR has made significant contributions to understanding the complex interactions between human societies and marine ecosystems. Through its interdisciplinary approach, the HDWG has advanced research, policy, and practice in ocean sustainability. A key achievement has been the development of the I-ADApT framework, a comprehensive tool designed to assess and respond to global changes in marine systems. By using case studies and collaborative workshops, this framework helps researchers, managers, and stakeholders evaluate responses to environmental challenges and make informed decisions. Additionally, the HDWG has initiated and contributed to impactful publications in various outlets. These efforts have strengthened the integration of social and natural sciences in addressing marine sustainability and governance challenges.

The HDWG has also prioritized capacity building and collaboration. It has facilitated international partnerships and training programs that enhance opportunities for early-career researchers while fostering a global network of scientists committed to addressing ocean sustainability issues. This work emphasizes the importance of engaging local communities in research design and decision-making processes, ensuring that diverse voices are represented and that research outcomes are relevant to those most affected.

As IMBeR concludes its 2016-2025 phase, the HDWG's legacy underscores the value of interdisciplinary approaches in addressing interconnected challenges of ocean governance. By promoting co-designed research that involves local stakeholders from the outset, the group has challenged top-down tendencies in marine conservation research. Its efforts highlight the need for equitable, participatory methods that build trust and ownership among all stakeholders. In summary, the HDWG's achievements have laid a strong foundation for advancing sustainable ocean governance through collaboration, inclusivity, and innovative frameworks.