

## Managing the Blue Economy and Responding to the Environmental Dimensions of a Transnational Governance Challenge

**Authors :** Ivy Chen XQ

**Abstract :** This research places a much-needed focus on the conservation of the Blue Economy (BE) by focusing on the design and development of monitoring systems to track critical indicators on the status of the BE. In this process, local experiences provide an insight into important community issues, as well as the necessity to cooperate and collaborate in order to achieve sustainable options. Researchers worldwide and industry initiatives over the last decade show that the exploitation of marine resources has resulted in a significant decrease in the share of total allowable catch (TAC). The result has been strengthening law enforcement, yet the results have shown that problems were related to poor policies, a lack of understanding of over-exploitation, biological uncertainty and political pressures. This reality and other statistics that show a significant negative impact on the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), warrant an emphasis on the development of national M&E systems, in order to provide evidence-based information, on the nature and scale of especially transnational fisheries crime and under-sea marine resources in the BE. In particular, a need exists to establish a compendium of relevant BE indicators to assess such impact against the SDGs by using selected SDG indicators for this purpose. The research methodology consists of ATLAS.ti qualitative approach and a case study will be developed of Illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) poaching and Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) as component of the BE as it relates to the case of abalone in southern Africa and Far East. This research project will make an original contribution through the analysis and comparative assessment of available indicators, in the design process of M&E systems and developing indicators and monitoring frameworks in order to track critical trends and tendencies on the status of the BE, to ensure specific objectives to be aligned with the indicators of the SDGs framework. The research will provide a set of recommendations to governments and stakeholders involved in such projects on lessons learned, as well as priorities for future research. The research findings will enable scholars, civil society institutions, donors and public servants, to understand the capability of the M&E systems, the importance of showing multi-level governance, in the coordination of information management, together with knowledge management (KM) and M&E at the international, regional, national and local levels. This coordination should focus on a sustainable development management approach, based on addressing socio-economic challenges to the potential and sustainability of BE, with an emphasis on ecosystem resilience, social equity and resource efficiency. This research and study focus are timely as the opportunities of the post-Covid-19 crisis recovery package will be grasped to set the economy on a path to sustainable development in line with the UN 2030 Agenda. The pandemic raises more awareness for the world to eliminate IUU poaching and illegal wildlife trade (IWT).

**Keywords :** Blue Economy (BE), transnational governance, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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