

## The Global Status of the Dugong

Helene Marsh

School of Tropical Environment Studies and Geography, James Cook University

The dugong has a large range spanning at least 37 countries and territories and includes tropical and sub-tropical waters from East Africa to Vanuatu between about 20° north and south of the Equator. A review of the status of the dugong throughout its range was conducted in 2002 with the assistance of more than 100 experts. The major threats were identified as fishing impacts especially gill and mesh nets (36 countries), habitat loss and degradation (at least 33 countries), hunting and poaching (at least 32 countries) and vessel impacts (at least 15 countries). The review concluded that the dugong was at very high risk of extinction in East Africa, India and Sri Lanka, Japan and Palau. The dugong's prospects are uncertain but of concern in the Arabian Gulf, South-East Asia, East and south East Asia and the Pacific Islands, the urban coast of Queensland and close to major Australian Indigenous communities, especially in Torres Strait. The dugong is probably secure in the Red Sea and Western Australia. The habitat loss resulting from the 2004 tsunami must have exacerbated the situation in India and Sri Lanka and parts of South East Asia. On balance, this evidence supports the current listing as vulnerable to extinction at a global scale based on reports of actual or potential levels of exploitation and the decline in area of occupancy (Criteria Val c,d).