



MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND NDU

ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINE No. 23

Undersea Walk

1.0 Purpose of guideline

This environmental guideline for the undersea walk activity has been prepared by the Ministry of Environment & NDU to ensure that all environmental issues are duly taken into consideration by stakeholders.

2.0 Nature of development

Undersea walk is a recreational activity wherein a person walks on the sea floor up to a determined depth (up to 4 metres) with the assistance of an overhead helmet filled with free flowing air which is connected to an air source supplied by an operating centre (an operating centre can be a boat or a platform whether floating or attached to the sea bed or other structure from which the activity is operated).

3.0 Potential impacts

The major environmental issues associated with undersea walk activities are water turbidity and damage of seabed ecosystem. The different aspects, impacts and nuisances related to such activities are listed below:

Activity	Aspects	Impacts/nuisances
Installation of platform /permanent mooring buoys	Sediment disturbance (turbidity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual impacts • Noise • Trampling on Corals • Decrease in light intensity
Boating activities	Increase in water turbidity and risk of oil spill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual impacts • Noise • Affect corals and other organisms
Walking activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in turbidity • Damage to marine ecosystems • Feeding of fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trampling on corals, seagrasses • Affect behaviour of various organisms

4.0 Siting of activity

The site selected shall be outside a marine protected area.

5.0 Environmental conditions

The major environmental issues relating to an undersea walk activity are increase **in water turbidity, damage to seabed ecosystem** and the following environmental conditions shall be observed:

- (i) The proposed site shall have prior approval of the Ministry of Agro- Industry & Fisheries (Fisheries Division) and shall remain a public domain.
- (ii) The exact Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates of the platform shall be submitted to the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries (Fisheries Division) and the Ministry of Environment and NDU.
- (iii) The platform for the undersea walk activities shall be anchored on a sandy bottom devoid of corals, sea grass bed and seaweed. The anchored platform shall not be displaced.
- (iv) The undersea walk activity shall be carried out only along defined and agreed trails, which shall be at a minimum distance of 5 m from any coral fields. The trails shall have prior approval of the Ministry of Agro- Industry & Fisheries (Fisheries Division).
- (v) No coral shall be removed or broken.
- (vi) No marine organism shall be removed from the site.
- (vii) No marine organism, dead or alive shall be imported to the site.
- (viii) Feeding of fish shall not be allowed.
- (ix) All measures shall be taken by the promoter to ensure that the marine ecosystem is not disturbed or damaged.
- (x) The proponent shall monitor the site and submit report on the state of the marine environment on a quarterly basis to the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries (Fisheries Division) and the Ministry of Environment and NDU. Prior to start of operations, the promoter shall carry out a baseline study and place permanent transects on the site for future monitoring.
- (xi) The hose used for supply of breathing air should not damage corals and other marine organisms.
- (xii) The promoter shall be held responsible for any accident that may occur during the activity.
- (xiii) The Department of Environment of the Ministry of Environment and NDU shall be informed in writing of the date of operation of the activity for monitoring purposes.

6.0 Enforcing agency

Under Section 13 of the Environment Protection Act 2002, the enforcing agency for the environmental media is as follows:

S. No	Environmental media/ pollutant	Enforcing Agency
1	Issues related to waters in the zone	Ministry of Agro-industry and Fisheries (Fisheries Division)

The above-mentioned enforcing agency shall monitor compliance with the conditions falling under its purview.

7.0 Offences

As per section 85 of the Environment Protection Act 2002, any person who contravenes this act or any regulations made thereunder shall commit an offence, unless it is otherwise specifically provided, shall:-

- (i) on a first conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 50, 000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.
- (ii) On a second or subsequent conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding 100,000 rupees and to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 8 years.

For further information, please contact

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