

**WORKSHOP ON
“SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF MARINE PROTECTED AREA (MPA) IMPLEMENTATION IN
INDIA: DO FISHING COMMUNITIES BENEFIT?”
CHENNAI**

21 – 22 January 2009

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Marine protected areas (MPAs) are being widely propagated as an important marine and fisheries conservation measure. MPAs are seen as a tool to achieve aquatic biodiversity conservation and habitat protection, protection of endangered species, multi-use management, sustainable extractive use, and cultural-ecological/social protection.

In 2004, the Seventh Meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP7) to the CBD agreed that marine and coastal protected areas, implemented as part of a wider marine and coastal management framework, are one of the essential tools for the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity. The meeting noted that marine and coastal protected areas have proven to contribute to (a) protecting biodiversity; (b) sustainable use of components of biodiversity; and (c) managing conflict, enhancing economic wellbeing and improving the quality of life. Parties to the CBD subsequently agreed to bring at least 10 per cent of the world's marine and coastal ecological regions under protection by 2012.

International experience has indicated that participatory models of conservation and resources management are more effective in protecting both livelihoods and biodiversity, and that communities can be powerful allies in efforts for conservation and management of coastal and marine resources. Empowering indigenous and local fishing communities to progressively share the responsibility of managing coastal and fisheries resources, in keeping with Programme Element 2 on Governance, Participation, Equity and Benefit Sharing in CBD's Programme of Work on Protected Areas could meet the goals of both conservation/management and poverty reduction.

From a fisheries management perspective, there is some agreement that MPAs can be used in combination with capacity control for effective fisheries management. Discussions at the FAO Committee of Fisheries (COFI) have stressed the need to take into account socioeconomic impacts, the need to involve stakeholders in the design and implementation and the requirement for a clear set of objectives (COFI, 2005).

In the case of India, the first MPA was designated in 1967 for the protection of wetlands and of the birds migrating there, even before a specific legal framework for protected areas (PAs) was put in place. According to the Government of India there are 31 MPAs in India, designated mainly in 1980s and early 1990s. The main MPAs in mainland India are the Gulf of Mannar national park and biosphere reserve, Gahirmatha wildlife sanctuary, Gulf of Kutch national park and wildlife sanctuary, Malvan (marine) wildlife sanctuary, and Sundarbans national park and biosphere reserve. There are also several PAs in Andaman and Nicobar islands.

With the objective of documenting and analyzing the experiences and views of fishing communities living in or near different MPAs in India, and suggesting ways in which livelihood concerns can be integrated into the MPA programme of work, ICSF has recently

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undertaken case studies in the Gulf of Mannar national park and biosphere reserve, the Malvan (marine) wildlife sanctuary, the Sundarbans national park and biosphere reserve and the Jamnagar wildlife sanctuary and national park. An earlier study documented the conservation and livelihood conflicts in the Gahirmatha sanctuary.

The studies highlight that though there are policy spaces available for participatory management of MPAs, various legal and institutional issues are hampering implementation of livelihood-sensitive approaches to biodiversity conservation and resources management, with consequences for livelihoods of fishing communities in MPA areas. The very effectiveness of the MPA initiative itself is being impacted as communities do not consider themselves as part of the MPA process.

OBJECTIVES

ICSF proposes to organize a two-day workshop with the following objectives:

- ?? To discuss the findings of case studies and of other experiences of MPA implementation in India, from a fishing community perspective;
- ?? To provide a forum to discuss legal, institutional and other relevant aspects of MPA implementation in India; and
- ?? To put forward proposals for achieving livelihood-sensitive conservation and management of coastal and fisheries resources.

PARTICIPANTS

The workshop will bring together various institutions of the government both at central and state level, fishing community representatives, NGOs, environmental groups and scientists working on the issue of MPAs. A total of 75 participants are expected.

PROGRAMME

The two-day programme will include presentations on the following:

- ?? Case studies of MPA implementation, including by fishworkers from the respective areas.
- ?? Experiences on MPA implementation from the Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar islands
- ?? Overview of the CBD programme of work on protected areas
- ?? Legal and institutional issues in MPA implementation in India
- ?? Specific presentations from relevant national and state government departments on MPA implementation
- ?? Conservation and management initiatives undertaken by fishing communities in different parts of India

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The workshop is expected to:

- ?? Sensitize key stakeholders to issues related to conservation and livelihood;
- ?? Develop an informal multidisciplinary platform of those interested in promoting livelihood-sensitive conservation and management;
- ?? Create greater awareness of community led conservation models and the willingness to support them in an Indian context;
- ?? Orient MPA implementation towards a more participatory and livelihood-sensitive approach.