



# **Beyond the Nets:**

## Building participatory pathways for Andaman's fisheries

**Dakshin Foundation April 2025**





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Venture  
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# Beyond the Nets:

*Building participatory pathways for  
Andaman's fisheries*

Dakshin Foundation

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## List of Abbreviations

ANI	Andaman and Nicobar Islands
ANET	Andaman Nicobar Environment Team
ANIMFR	Andaman and Nicobar Islands Marine Fishing Regulation
ANCZMA	Andaman Nicobar Coastal Zone Management Authority
APL	Above Poverty Line
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FD	Fisheries Department
GIS	Geographic Information System
IPZ	Island Protection Zone
IT Dept	Information Technology Department
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSK	<i>Matsya Seva Kendras</i>
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PMMSY	<i>Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana</i>
PRI	<i>Panchayati Raj Institution</i>
ToR	Terms of Reference
SSF	Small-scale Fisher
UT	Union Territory of India
UTIs	Urinary Tract Infections
WLPA	Wildlife Protection Act
WASH	Water, Sanitation & Hygiene



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## Executive Summary

Fisheries in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI) present both significant opportunities and pressing challenges. While there is scope to expand and strengthen the sector, this must be done in a regulated and consultative manner to ensure the equitable and sustainable use of marine resources alongside the social and economic development of local fishing communities.

Building on years of Dakshin Foundation's engagement with fisheries in the islands, a rapid-issue mapping exercise was carried out across South Andaman, followed by systematic cluster-level consultation meetings involving fishermen, boat owners, fish sellers, and traders. The purpose of these consultation meetings was to create a platform for dialogue, where fishers could share their concerns and collectively envision solutions. This report documents the process and its key outputs, including priority issues identified, solutions proposed, and recommendations for the administration.

Key issues highlighted by fishers included declining catches due to overfishing through unsustainable practices and weak enforcement of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Marine Fishing Regulation 2003 (ANIMFR), diminishing profits, difficulty in accessing schemes and entitlements, and inadequate infrastructure and administrative support for small-scale fishers. The lack of fisher collectives, challenges faced by women fish-vendors, issues related to hygiene and sanitation, threat of crocodile attacks, and concerns around protected areas were also raised.

These dialogues aimed to capture the everyday challenges faced by fishers, identify systemic issues, and create a platform for developing locally relevant solutions. The key solutions that emerged centred on better enforcement of the ANIMFR, the need for active participation of fishing communities in collective fisheries monitoring and management, improving infrastructure for small-scale fishers (SSFs), and ensuring that government schemes and subsidies are structured to benefit local communities with maximum reach and easy accessibility. This document aims to contribute to building a strong, sustainable, and inclusive fisheries sector in the islands.





## Introduction

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI), located in the Bay of Bengal, are known for their unique marine ecosystems, which provide vital resources for local fishing communities. The coastal waters around the archipelago constitute 28% of India's Exclusive Economic Zone, and the islands account for 24% of the country's coastline. Fishing is central to the livelihoods of communities living here (Advani, et al., 2013), with over 400 commercially important species (Rajan, Sreeraj, & Immanuel, 2021) found in these waters. According to the Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Andaman & Nicobar Administration (2024), there were 26,521 fishers and 3743 fishing crafts in ANI in 2024.

During the 1960s, fisher families from mainland states such as Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal were settled in different parts of the islands to develop commercial fishing and marine fisheries in the ANI. Initially, around 322 families were relocated to engage in marine activities such as harvesting, processing, and marketing fish, with the aim of meeting local demand and contributing to the nation's fisheries sector (Prasad and Allah Baksh, 2020).

Since 1908, the fisheries sector in the ANI has witnessed several shifts. The commercial fisheries industry was primarily focused on shell fisheries, especially *Trochus niloticus* and *Turbo marmoratus*. Due to overharvesting, a shellfishery ban was enacted in the islands in 2001. In 1975, sea cucumber fisheries had gained prominence in the export market, but it was banned in 1982. Mechanised fishing began in 1908 with the introduction of the trawler, *Golden Crown*, by the British government (Advani, et al., 2013). Elasmobranch fisheries began in the ANI in the 1960s, peaked during the 1980s, and later faced increasing restrictions, culminating into a total ban in 2001. The total ban on elasmobranch fishery was later relaxed, allowing the fishing of all but nine protected species, and a closed season for shark fisheries was declared in 2009 (Advani, et.al., 2013). Fisheries in the Andamans have repeatedly shown this boom-and-bust pattern, a feature characteristic of fisheries which have limited management and community stewardship and are driven by market forces.

The waters around the ANI are known to hold abundant fisheries resources, mostly in its offshore waters. However, most fishing activities in the ANI have so far been concentrated in its nearshore areas, rarely targeting fish resources beyond 6 to 10 nautical miles. Highly productive nearshore ecosystems like coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds help support these fisheries while providing other essential services such as coastal protection and carbon sequestration (Roy & George, 2010). The concentration of fishing activities along the shallow coastline has put immense pressure on the fish stocks, threatening the health of these productive ecosystems and the livelihoods of local communities. While there is immense potential to build and strengthen a





fisheries-based economy in the ANI, development in this sector needs to be rooted in ground realities and based on scientific evidence and participatory processes.

Dakshin Foundation's research on the fisheries of the islands for over a decade-and-a-half indicates that interlinked internal and external factors have rendered fisheries extremely vulnerable and unsustainable today. Rapidly expanding export markets (Whittingham, Campbell, & Townsley, 2003), subsidies promoting increased mechanisation, diminishing collective action among small-scale fishers, poor implementation of the provisions of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Marine Fishing Regulation, 2003, persistence of non-selective fishing by trawl nets and ring seines, and pressures from the tourism sector are a few of the issues that have led to overexploitation of nearshore resources and degradation of the habitats that support the fisheries (Kaliyamoorthy, Dam Roy, & Sahu, 2023), (Sumaila, Bellmann, & Tipping, 2016), (Advani, 2020).

Economically, fishers are affected by low market prices, lack of transparent and standardised pricing, limited market access, poorly designed schemes and subsidies (Karthick, 2024), and poor infrastructure and cold chain facilities (Kanchana, S., & Rajamohan, S. 2022). Socio-economic and health challenges include respiratory problems, musculoskeletal disorders, mental stress, and limited healthcare access, (Kumar, D., Singh, S., K, A., & Ansari, M. A., 2023), (Mondal, M. 2020). Governance issues, including resource conflicts and complex management structures further exacerbate fisher vulnerabilities (Kiruba-Sankar et.al., 2021).

The impact of climate change continues to be a major ubiquitous threat, undermining the ecological integrity of these ecosystems and disrupting the lives and livelihoods of fishers. Climate change induced shifting of fish populations and mass coral mortalities, and the threat to marine ecosystems from increased extreme weather events make fishing more difficult and less predictable in the ANI (Department of Fisheries, Andaman and Nicobar Administration, 2018).

While the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Fisheries Policy, 2018 (ANIFP), note concerns around sustainability and the uncertain potential of marine resources in the ANI, it also describes them as 'underutilised' (Department of Fisheries, Andaman and Nicobar Administration, 2018), (Advani, S., 2020). Amidst the ever-evolving challenges and contradictory narratives, Dakshin Foundation carried out a series of consultations with fisher communities in South Andaman Island to understand their challenges and identify potential opportunities to strengthen the fisheries sector in the ANI. We believe such consultations are critical for understanding the gaps between policy and implementation and the aspirations of the fisher communities, and develop locally relevant intervention strategies that ensure the growth of the fisheries sector and the fisher communities.





## Fisheries Consultation Meetings

### Objectives of the fisheries consultation meetings

Since 2013, Dakshin Foundation has been involved in research related to fishing communities in ANI, with a focus on understanding various socio-ecological aspects of fisheries. In 2020, we began actively engaging with these communities to support their well-being and promote the long-term sustainability of their livelihoods. We conducted a needs assessment study to evaluate the health and environmental conditions of fishing villages in Wandoor and Junglighat. This was followed by Covid-19 relief efforts in Junglighat, along with a study to assess the pandemic's impact on these communities. In 2023, we undertook a comprehensive study to explore fishing practices, community institutions, and trade dynamics. We also implemented targeted interventions to improve health and sanitation in the fishing villages of Junglighat and Wandoor.

While the fisheries in the ANI have immense potential to expand and develop, they still face multiple issues and challenges. We need to understand existing challenges, logistical limitations, and the fragility of these islands, and base development plans on robust scientific frameworks and local knowledge to ensure effective fisheries development policies for the ANI. It is equally important to garner the support and participation of local fishing communities and civil society organisations (CSOs) to develop inclusive intervention strategies that are based on local needs and contexts, and ensure long-term sustainable development of these islands. Such frameworks help India address its Sustainable Development Goals targets and ensure its various global commitments are met without compromising growth. Therefore, to understand the ground-level challenges faced by coastal communities in the Andaman Islands, we carried out a rapid system-level issue-mapping exercise across South Andaman from November 2023 to February 2024.

This initiative helped us identify a range of pressing concerns – including fisheries-related issues such as declining fish catches, limited access to government schemes and entitlements, and reduced income and profits from fishing, among others. These findings underscore the need for a structured approach to identify core issues and understand their underlying causes. They also highlighted the importance of creating a platform for dialogue, where fishers could openly share their concerns and collectively envision solutions. In response, we organised a series of consultation meetings with SSFs across South Andaman, bringing together participants from various fishing villages in different *panchayats*. These meetings aimed to foster a shared understanding of the challenges at hand and collaboratively chart a way forward. This report provides an overview of this process, outlining the key issues identified by fishers and offering a set of recommendations developed through consultative dialogues.



## Methodology and approach

We divided the fishing villages across the 26 *panchayats* of South Andaman Island into seven clusters (Annexure-1). These clusters were formed based on shared characteristics in fishing practices, socio-cultural identities and dynamics, connectivity, and proximity to markets and other support systems. By approaching each cluster separately, we were able to focus on specific contexts and issues of SSFs which are often overlooked.

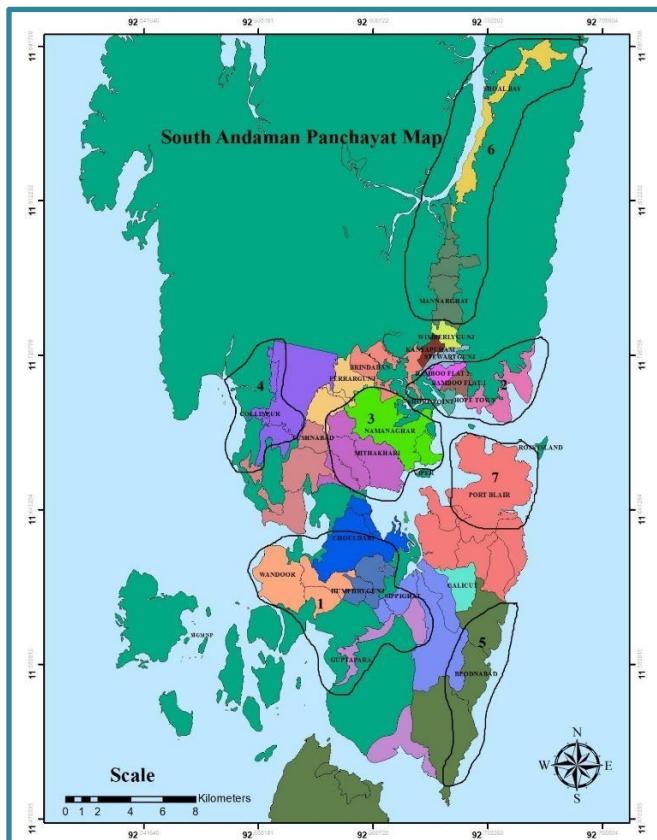


Figure 1: Fishing villages cluster map

As part of pre-consultation meetings, we made multiple visits to these fishing villages, engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including fishermen, women from fishing communities, fish vendors, village committee heads, *panchayat* members, traders, and other members from the fishing community. Initial meetings were held at fishing jetties, markets, and *panchayat* offices. These interactions provided critical insights into the challenges faced by the communities and helped identify key individuals who were actively invested in long-term efforts to address fisheries-related concerns and enhance community well-being. These discussions were instrumental in forming our foundational understanding and laid the groundwork for an in-depth cluster-level consultation.

## Structure of the fisheries consultation meetings

Between May and October 2024, seven consultation meetings were conducted – one for each cluster of fishing villages spread across 26 *panchayats* of South Andaman Island.

Following the completion of pre-consultation engagements in each cluster, we organised cluster-level consultation meetings, inviting fishers, fish vendors, and other relevant stakeholders. In total, seven such meetings were held, engaging 174 participants, with an average of 25 participants per session. Each consultation, facilitated by staff from Dakshin Foundation, lasted approximately 2.5 hours and was structured into the following three key stages:



**Stage 1. Identifying a common vision for the fishing community:** In each group, stakeholders collectively discussed their vision for the fishing communities and fisheries in the ANI and developed a shared vision for the future.

**Stage 2: Identifying top-priority issues:** Participants were divided into groups, where they explored a wide range of fisheries-related issues relevant to their respective villages. Each group worked to uncover root causes, draw connections between problems, and identify the top 3-5 priority issues. These findings were then presented and discussed in the larger group, resulting in a consolidated summary of the key concerns for each cluster.

**Stage 3: Formulating solutions:** Building on the summarised issues, stakeholders collaboratively developed potential solutions, while also identifying the relevant actors, strategies, and actions needed to address each concern. These solutions were then finalised through group consensus.

Each meeting began with a brief introduction to the objectives and overall purpose of the consultation process. Participants were then divided into smaller groups based on factors such as fishing practices, village representation, and local power dynamics. This grouping strategy helped us better understand patterns of collective engagement and identify individuals who could play a key role in future collaborations.

After each consultation meeting, we handed over the meeting minutes to the fishers. Additionally, we provided them with information they requested during the consultation, such as details on ANIMFR, insurance schemes, and the process for registering welfare societies. We continue to engage with fishers across these clusters through the point of contact identified during the consultation meetings.





Fisheries consultation meetings at Sri Vijaya Puram cluster, Bambooflat cluster and Shoal Bay cluster





## Results of the Consultation

### Common issues raised by fishers

<p><b>Fish catch decline</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of enforcement of ANIMFR</li> <li>• Unsustainable fishing practices</li> <li>• Lack of information on ANIMFR</li> <li>• Lack of unity among fishers</li> </ul> <p><b>Limited support from the Fisheries Department (FD)/ administration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of infrastructural support</li> <li>• Ineffective meetings/ support from FD/ Sagar Mitras</li> <li>• Lack of lean period compensatory support</li> <li>• Lack of relevant schemes</li> <li>• Delay in the FD procedures</li> <li>• Poor ANIMFR enforcement</li> </ul> <p><b>Lack of active fisher collectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack collective action</li> </ul> <p><b>Diminishing profits for small-scale fishers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of fish price transparency</li> <li>• Increased fishing input cost</li> <li>• Competition with mainland boats</li> <li>• Middlemen</li> <li>• Fish catch decline</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges faced by women fish-vendors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish catch decline</li> <li>• Competition amongst vendors</li> <li>• Poor income</li> <li>• Lack of infrastructural support from FD</li> <li>• Low quality fish from trawler boats</li> <li>• No concessions on vendor IDs</li> <li>• Health issues</li> <li>• Harassment</li> <li>• Illegal supply of alcohol</li> </ul>	<p><b>Crocodile conflict</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent crocodile attacks</li> <li>• Inadequate action on wildlife management</li> <li>• Lack of proper safety facilities</li> <li>• Lack of a proper jetty</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges due to proximity to protected areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No protection by police during Jarawa raids</li> <li>• Checkpost timings clashing with peak fishing hours</li> </ul> <p><b>Limited access to schemes and entitlements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biometric card consideration on concessions</li> <li>• Fisher families falling in APL instead of BPL categorisation</li> <li>• Fisher families falling in General instead of OBC categorisation</li> </ul> <p><b>Limited access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of infrastructural support from the Fisheries Dept. for markets, toilets &amp; drinking water</li> <li>• Improper waste management</li> <li>• Inadequate community awareness</li> <li>• Physical and mental distress</li> <li>• No insurance or concessions</li> </ul>
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Figure 2: Summary of issues raised by the fishers



Following the fisheries consultation meetings conducted across all seven clusters, nine major issues were identified as critical concerns by the fishing communities. The severity of the issues was assessed based on the number of clusters in which each issue was mentioned.

## Issue 1: Fish catch decline

Fishers across all the clusters have highlighted declining fish catches as a major concern for SSFs in the ANI. Some of the main reasons for the catch decline that emerged are:

- **Unsustainable fishing practices:** SSFs have emphasised that they are facing reduced catches due to the presence of trawlers and other mechanised fishing vessels illegally operating within 6 nautical miles of the coast, sometimes even inside creeks. This occurs despite the ANIMFR clearly banning mechanised fishing vessels from operating within 6 nautical miles from the coast. Fishers mentioned that all (approximately 16) trawlers operating in this area continue to practice illegal bottom-trawling within the 6 nautical mile boundary, which leads to large-scale destruction of marine habitats and deprives SSFs of their catch. Such illegal practices persist despite a ban on bottom trawling in ANI. It appears that, since pelagic trawling is permitted, operators obtain licenses for pelagic trawling and illegally operate bottom-trawling gear in remote areas where monitoring is difficult.

Fishers noted that **ring nets** often harvest juveniles of high-value fishes such as trevallies, groupers, snappers, etc., as bycatch, which are later discarded back into the water. This practice is reducing the availability of fish stocks and the success rates of hook-and-line and long-line fishing, thereby affecting the livelihoods of small-scale fishers.

As per current rules under the ANIMFR, ring seines can only operate in Zone B of the South Andaman Islands, which is beyond 6 nautical miles, with a legal mesh-size not below 25mm. (ANIMFR, Rule 18(a)(v) (Amended 2025). Most ring seines are currently operating illegally in near-shore areas (the 6 nautical mile zone allocated exclusively for small-scale fishers), thereby directly competing with small-scale fishers. Furthermore, ~19 ring-net boats are operating from South Andaman Island, mostly from Junglighat, and many of them are known to use nets with mesh sizes below 25 mm.

Fishers from these clusters unanimously demanded the enforcement of the ban on **plastic nets** (monofilament nets), which, according to them, are highly unsustainable and cause significant damage to fish stocks. Fishers explained that these nets are nearly invisible underwater, trapping everything indiscriminately. As these nets are deployed overnight, a significant quantity of marine life with no commercial value dies, thereby deterring other fish from coming to the area. It was also noted that, when damaged, these cheap plastic



nets are often left in the sea, turning into ghost nets that continue to trap turtles and other marine life, while also damaging fragile coral reefs. Known locally as 'plastic nets' or 'current jaal', these monofilament gillnets are banned in the islands under ANIMFR, but are still available in the market and continue to be used by many fishers in both nearshore areas and the open sea.

Fisher participants from the meetings also stated that the **shankar-machchi jaal** (bottom-set gillnet, used mostly by mechanised fishers) are deployed in the water for long durations, preventing fish from coming to the nearshore areas and hampering the catch of other motorised fishers. There are 59 mechanised boats that use the bottom-set gill nets for fishing in the region as per the information provided by fishers in the consultation meeting.

- Lack of enforcement of ANIMFR: During the consultations, the fishers noted that the decline in fish catches is caused by non-compliance with the ANIMFR by mechanised boats and trawlers, and poor monitoring of illegal and banned activities occurring in the waters. They demanded enforcement of the ANIMFR and strict action by the authorities against such illegal fishing practices.

Many fishers also expressed a lack of clear understanding of the ANIMFR, which prevented them from identifying and acting on illegal activities themselves. Fishers from most clusters felt that, with a little capacity-building and devolution of powers to local communities, they could play a strong and proactive role in implementing the ANIMFR.

## **Issue 2: Limited support from the Fisheries Dept. and administration**

Most fishers highlighted that they get inadequate support from the Fisheries Department and the administration. A major concern raised by the fisher communities was that the current schemes are not benefiting small-scale fishers. Fishers informed that the department previously provided fishing gear to fishers (hooks, ropes, lines, etc.), but currently, most schemes were focused on mariculture, deep-sea fishing, and large capital subsidies for infrastructure which are unaffordable for SSFs.

The participants also pointed out that there is insufficient monetary support during lean periods, with assistance limited to only Below Poverty Line (BPL) cardholders, though most fishers in the ANI region do not fall in that category.

The fishers of South Andaman villages shared that significant infrastructural improvements were urgently needed to support their livelihoods, for example:



- Construction and maintenance of jetties to facilitate smooth fishing operations and transportation.
- Basic amenities such as drinking water and toilet facilities, which are essential for hygiene and sanitation in fish landing centres.
- Cold storage units and ice plants to preserve fish and reduce post-harvest losses in remote fishing villages.
- In some of the fish landing centres, like Guptapara, diesel pumps had been constructed but were not operational and in others, like Chidiyatapu and Shoal Bay, there is a need for new pumps.
- Construction of facilities like boat repair yards, net-mending sheds, and fisheries office depots in fish landing centres is necessary to ensure the efficient functioning of fishers' activities.
- Presence of *Sagar Mitras* in all fishing villages, providing support for fishers and the circulation of information on schemes and subsidies.
- Safety measures, such as the installation of warning lights to avoid collisions with submerged boulders and corals (like in the Line Pathar Area in Shoal Bay) for the safety of fishers and fishing assets.
- More timely transactions with the administration, particularly the FD, especially regarding reimbursements, such as for Distress Alert Transmitters.
- Service support, like the repair or maintenance for marine equipment — like Global Positioning Systems (GPS), Distress Alert Transmitters etc. — in the islands.

### **Issue 3: Lack of active fisher collectives**

Fisheries welfare associations/committees, which used to be present in many fishing villages in the past, were a critical institution in providing a safety net for fishers in times of need, and for conflict resolution. Fishers from many villages identified the need for strong community collectives, such as a welfare society or association, to be set up to help streamline their engagements with the local administration. They believe such collectives will be critical in voicing their needs to higher authorities and taking collective action for their welfare. The absence of leadership and accountability was cited as the main reason for not establishing such committees.

### **Issue 4: Diminishing profits for small-scale fishers**

The main reasons for low profits, as informed by the fishers, were:





- Decline in fish stocks, leading to longer fishing trips in search of fish, which in turn increases the input cost for each fishing trip.
- Lack of transparency in fish prices as fishers are unable to negotiate with exporters due to the absence of competition in the market.
- Reliance on middlemen for fuel, bait, and ice, which fishers receive as credit. Due to this existing credit, their negotiating ability is reduced and they are forced to sell their catch to these middlemen at the low prices they offer.
- Large landings from bigger boats significantly reduce fish prices, affecting the profitability of small-boat operators. SSFs are particularly vulnerable to price fluctuations triggered by large harvests in the mechanised sector.

### **Issue 5: Challenges faced by women fish-vendors**

Women engaged in fish vending encounter numerous difficulties in sustaining their livelihood. Some of the issues raised by the women fish vendor participants are as follows:

- Women fish-vendors face significant health challenges due to the absence of proper marketplaces, public toilets, and drinking water facilities. Many walk long distances while carrying heavy loads on their heads, leading to chronic back-and-head pain over time. The absence of adequate sanitation facilities discourages them from drinking enough water during the day, often resulting in dehydration and urinary tract infections (UTIs). Since there are no drinking water facilities in the markets, they also carry their own water, which adds to the heavy weights they already carry.
- There is increased competition among fish vendors when some can sell fish at lower prices. Vendors whose husbands or relatives have their own boats buy fish at cheaper rates, giving them an advantage over those who have to purchase fish at market price. As a result, overall prices are also driven down, reducing the earnings of some of the vendors.
- Shops selling alcohol illegally place a financial burden on them, as their husbands spend a lot of their earnings on alcohol.
- Women fish vendors are also vulnerable to harassment from the police if they sit for vending in marketplaces.

### **Issue 6: Crocodile conflict**

The issue of conflict with crocodiles was highlighted by fishers from Shoal Bay, Collinpur, and Wandoor. The main concerns raised by the participants have been listed below:





- Most subsistence fishers who fish in the creeks, backwaters, and shallow coastlines are concerned about frequent crocodile attacks, which have significantly affected their lives and livelihoods.
- There is a lack of adequate safety measures and infrastructure support from the Fisheries and Forest Departments. For instance, the lack of jetties in crocodile-prone areas forces the fishers to risk their lives while boarding their boats and returning from fishing. Fishers shared that the inadequate response by the concerned departments on crocodile management has left fishers in trouble. Even after multiple check-ins with the panchayats and relevant departments, no actions have been taken.

## **Issue 7: Challenges due to proximity to Jarawa reserve & other protected areas**

Fishing villages in *gram panchayats* like Shoal Bay and Collinpur are close to the Jarawa Reserve Area and other Protected areas under the Forest Department. This results in restrictions and conflicts. Fishers have raised concerns that the Jarawa have stolen fishing equipment and belongings from the fishing boats. Fishers mentioned that they are not even allowed to access water sources for refilling between their fishing trip if it falls under a reserve forest or protected areas. Fishers are mandated to enter their details at the Collinpur protected area check post whenever they cross the Collinpur *nallah*. Fishers go for fishing based on tides and delays at the check post affect their ability to fish on time. They have to provide details each time they enter or exit, delaying them by almost half an hour. These check posts operate from 5 AM to 5 PM only, making it difficult for fishers to go fishing at other times, impacting their livelihoods.

## **Issue 8: Limited access to schemes and entitlements**

Most fishers expressed different issues with accessing schemes and entitlements from the administration due to different reasons, for example:

- Fishers from South Andaman said that they were unable to access the financial support provided by the government during lean periods of fishing because they were categorised as Above Poverty Line (APL), therefore did not qualify for the entitlements.
- In government schools, the BPL and non-general category students avail different concessions for education. However, most of the children from the fishing community come under APL and general categories, and are unable to access these benefits.





- Telugu fishers informed that they had been demanding to be recognised under the OBC category, like they are in the mainland. This exclusion causes them to miss out on various concessions related to health schemes, education, and more.

### Issue 9: Poor water sanitation and hygiene

This issue was highlighted by fishers who live in and around urban municipal areas like Junglighat. Improper waste management, insufficient waste management infrastructure, and a lack of awareness about waste handling have negatively impacted the area's hygiene, leading to various health issues.

### Distribution of issues across clusters

While multiple issues have been highlighted in the earlier section, these issues do not affect all the clusters equally. Some clusters have issues specific to their locality, fishing practices, access to markets, and infrastructural support.

Fish catch decline and poor support from the FD and administration were issues commonly raised across all seven clusters. The lack of active community collectives acting as a bridge between communities and the administration was flagged in all clusters except Sri Vijaya Puram where collectives are present. Challenges faced by women fish vendors were raised in all but Collinpur and Bambooflat. Crocodile conflicts were reported only in Collinpur, Shoal Bay, and Wandoor. Challenges due to proximity to Jarawa Reserve and other protected areas emerged exclusively in Collinpur and Shoal Bay. The severity of issues was assessed based on the number of clusters that mentioned each issue.

Issues	Clusters	Severity (No. of clusters)
Fish catch decline	All clusters	7
Limited support from Fisheries Department/administration	All clusters	7
Lack of active fisher collectives	All except Sri Vijaya Puram	6



Diminishing profits for small-scale fishers	All except Collinpur	6
Challenges faced by women fish-vendors	All except Collinpur and Bambooflat	5
Crocodile conflict	Collinpur, Shoal Bay, Wandoor	3
Challenges due to proximity to protected areas	Collinpur, Shoal Bay	2
Limited access to schemes and entitlements	Bambooflat, Sri Vijaya Puram	2
Limited access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)	Sri Vijaya Puram	1

Table 1. Severity of issues



## Solutions proposed by the fishers

In each cluster, after discussing the key issues, the fishers participated in a collaborative brainstorming session to identify practical solutions. They outlined specific action points and identified the relevant stakeholders responsible for addressing each concern. The table below presents the solutions proposed by the fishing communities in response to the challenges raised during the meeting. These issues reflect the wide range of challenges faced by fishing communities today and extend beyond the scope of the Fisheries Department alone.





Issues	Proposed Solutions	Responsible Stakeholders
Fish catch decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enforce ANIMFR effectively.</li> <li>● Strengthen departmental monitoring and regulation.</li> <li>● Bring a breeding season ban mainly for grouper fisheries (June–August) for motorised fishers, with compensation.</li> <li>● Restrict the use of trawlers, ring nets, and plastic nets.</li> <li>● Increase penalties for illegal fishing.</li> <li>● Prevent illegal net sales, punish offenders.</li> <li>● Boost ANIMFR awareness among regulatory authorities and fishers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FD</li> <li>● Marine Police</li> <li>● Coast guard</li> <li>● NGOs</li> <li>● PRI</li> <li>● Fishers</li> <li>● Navy</li> <li>● Village committees</li> <li>● Fishermen Welfare Association</li> </ul>
Limited support from Fisheries Department & administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Build key infrastructure support (Annex. 2).</li> <li>● Revise schemes to align with local contexts and benefit marginalised small-scale fishers.</li> <li>● Ensure regular field visits by <i>Sagar Mitras</i>.</li> <li>● Ensure transparency and accountability in the reimbursement of funds under schemes.</li> <li>● Use social media platforms to disseminate information on government schemes.</li> <li>● Inspect markets selling illegal nets, such as plastic nets.</li> <li>● Extend fishing license validity to 2–3 years.</li> <li>● Provide financial support during lean fishing periods and ensure it reaches the targeted beneficiaries.</li> <li>● Extend fisheries officials' tenure and appoint regional officials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FD</li> <li>● PRI</li> <li>● NGOs</li> <li>● Marine Police</li> <li>● Fishers Welfare Society</li> <li>● Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry &amp; Dairying</li> <li>● ANI Fishermen Welfare Association</li> </ul>





Issues	Proposed Solutions	Responsible Stakeholders
Lack of active fisher collectives	Promote the formation of fisher welfare societies or cooperatives to collectively negotiate their needs with the concerned authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NGOs</li> <li>● Banks</li> <li>● Tehsildars</li> <li>● Fishers</li> <li>● District Collectors</li> <li>● Registrar of Cooperative Societies</li> </ul>
Diminishing profits for small-scale fishers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create a platform for real-time price information to ensure better transparency in prices.</li> <li>● Regulate or ban trawlers to minimise overfishing.</li> <li>● Provide subsidised inputs such as ice and diesel to reduce operational costs and ease the financial burden on fishers.</li> <li>● Implement Minimum Support Price (MSP) for fish to ensure fair prices.</li> <li>● The Fisheries Department should ensure fair and transparent pricing for fish exports.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fisheries Department</li> <li>● PRI</li> <li>● Fisher leaders</li> <li>● NGOs</li> <li>● Central Government</li> <li>● Fishers</li> <li>● IT Department</li> <li>● Exporters</li> </ul>
Challenges faced by women fish-vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Upgrade infrastructure in fish markets, including toilets and drinking water facilities.</li> <li>● Revise schemes to specifically benefit women vendors.</li> <li>● Provide concessions on vending licenses, education, and health schemes.</li> <li>● Facilitate and simplify the licensing process for women fishers.</li> <li>● Curb the illegal sale of alcohol in South Andaman.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fisheries Department</li> <li>● PRI</li> <li>● Fishers</li> <li>● Fisher leaders</li> <li>● NGOs</li> </ul>





Issues	Proposed Solutions	Responsible Stakeholders
Crocodile conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construct jetties in crocodile-prone areas to ensure the safety of fishers.</li> <li>Install cages to capture and relocate problematic crocodiles.</li> <li>Conduct multi-stakeholder meetings to discuss solutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FD</li> <li>Forest Department</li> <li>NGOs</li> <li>PRI</li> <li>Fishers</li> </ul>
Challenges due to proximity to protected areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure 24/7 operation of forest check posts.</li> <li>Implement safety measures to protect fishers passing near Jarawa areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FD</li> <li>Tribal Department</li> <li>Forest Department</li> <li>NGOs</li> <li>Police</li> <li>Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti</li> <li>PRI</li> <li>Jarawa Police</li> <li>Zilla Parishad</li> </ul>
Limited access to schemes and entitlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure fair economic status classification of fishers.</li> <li>Improve access to better education for children from the fishing community.</li> <li>Expand and revise health insurance schemes for fishers to include any type of death at sea.</li> <li>Introduce a pension scheme for fishers aged 50 and above.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FD</li> <li>Social Welfare Department</li> <li>Lieutenant Governor</li> <li>Chief Secretary</li> <li>Village committees</li> <li>Boat committees</li> <li>Councillors</li> <li>Marine Police</li> </ul>
Limited access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address waste management issues by clearing waste hotspots.</li> <li>Improve drainage systems, especially in Junglighat.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sri Vijaya Puram Municipal Corporation</li> <li>Village committees</li> <li>NGOs</li> <li>Boat committees</li> <li>Health Department</li> <li>Youth Club</li> </ul>

Table 2. Solutions proposed by the fishers



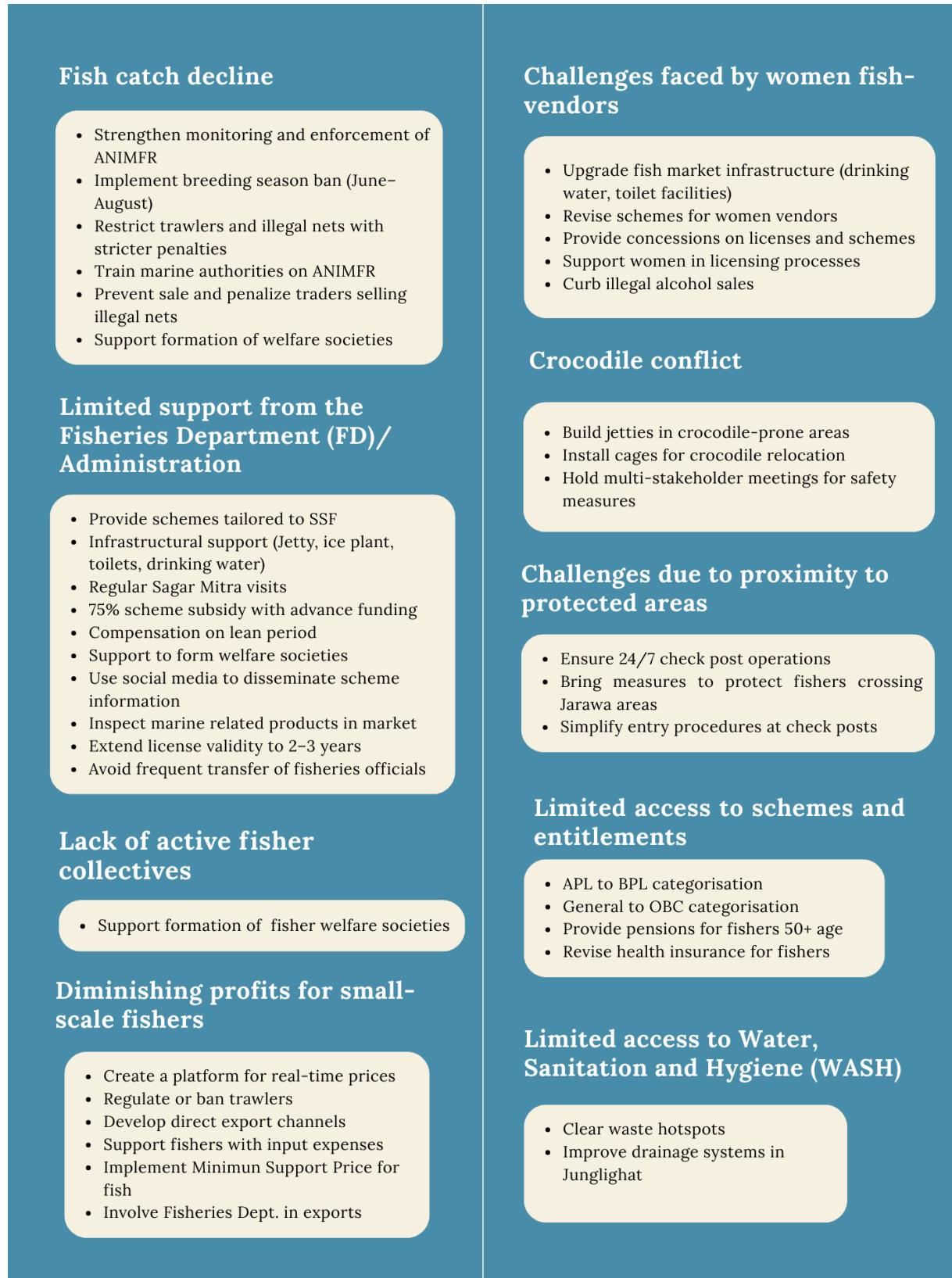


Figure 3: Summary of solutions suggested by Small-scale fishers



## Way forward: Specific recommendations towards co-management of ANI fisheries

In the above sections of this report, we have captured and shared the major concerns that fishing communities across the different clusters of South Andaman have shared with us. Based on these issues, the solutions proposed by fishers during the consultation meetings, and our own experience of working in the fisheries sector of the ANI for more than a decade, we have compiled a set of recommendations and tangible action points aimed at sustainably developing the fisheries sector and improving the lives and livelihoods of the fishing communities in the ANI.

The recommendations and action points provide a prioritised pathway for the Union Territory (UT) administration and the Directorate of Fisheries in designing a collaborative road map for the development of the sector – one that can help achieve India's sustainability targets, while ensuring the lives and livelihoods of fisher communities are secured.

### 1. Building a participatory fisheries management system for ANI

The ANIMFR regulates marine fishing activities in the waters surrounding the UT. This regulation, along with its associated rules, was enacted to promote responsible fishing practices and ensure the sustainable management of marine resources in the region. Multiple challenges limit the implementation of these regulations in the islands – the dispersed nature of the fishery and the fishing grounds, the diversity of fishing practices, and the remoteness of fishing villages – making it extremely challenging for a single agency to monitor, enforce, and govern fishing around-the-clock across all fishing villages and fish landing centres. Moreover, the top-down nature of fisheries management and the lack of involvement of fisher communities in decision-making lead to poor compliance with regulations. The lack of capacity amongst the local enforcement agencies (including the ground staff of the FD, Forest Department, Coast Guard and Marine Police) as well as among the fishers also leads to poor and haphazard implementation of regulations.

In ANI, dedicated formal boards, such as the Wildlife Advisory Board and the Andaman Nicobar Coastal Zone Management Authority (ANCZMA), exist to oversee the implementation of the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA), 1972, and the Island Protection Zone notification (IPZ), respectively. However, despite being the only legal instrument governing the management of fisheries, there is no such formal board or authority constituted to oversee the implementation of the ANIMFR.

Globally, participatory approaches such as fisheries co-management frameworks have been successful, with many countries now formally implementing these frameworks. The National Marine Fisheries Policy (2020) identifies fisheries co-management approaches as a potential

strategy to manage India's fisheries. The states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu have adopted these frameworks and mandated the development of co-management committees in every village. These village committees federate at the district and state levels and act as a bridge between the fishing communities and the government, and have the mandate of ensuring that the MFRA is implemented.

Below are a few suggested action points for the administration to consider in order to ensure that a strong, well-regulated, participatory fisheries management system is in place for the ANI.

- 1.1 **Constitute a fisheries management board/council** for ANI led by the fisheries department and composed of representatives of key departments, key fisher leaders, CSOs and NGOs with sectoral experience, key marine/fisheries research institutions of the islands, Marine Police, and the Coast Guard.
- 1.2 We also strongly recommend the **formation of multiple cluster-level committees**, which include members such as the Area Fisheries Guards (Fisheries Department), Sagar Mitras, elected/nominated fisher representatives, Panchayat members, CSO/NGO representatives, Marine Police and the Coast Guard. The role of such committees will be to serve as a bridge between the administration and the fisher communities. Such committees will also be able to ensure the successful implementation of the ANIMFR.
- 1.3 Provide **training to fishers and the concerned officials**, like marine police, Sagar Mitras, Area fisheries guards, Panchayat members, to explain the ANIMFR for better understanding and implementation of the regulations.

## 2. Capacity-building of Sagar Mitras

The *Sagar Mitra* Initiative under the *Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana* (PMMSY) was developed specifically to bridge the gap between communities and departments. Despite being a well-thought-through scheme, the *Sagar Mitra* Initiative has struggled to provide the kind of impact it was supposed to deliver due to various on-ground challenges and capacity gaps. Based on the consultations and our observations, these are the challenges they are facing – difficulties in supporting fishers due to limited training and unclear understanding of their role, lack understanding of fisheries policies and acts, difficulties in resolving fisher issues such as licensing and schemes disbursement, inadequate data collection skills, and insufficient orientation on ecological issues, conflict resolution, and community engagement.

We recommend designing and implementing targeted training modules aligned with the Terms of Reference (ToR) of *Sagar Mitras*. The modules should cover essential topics such as marine ecosystems, national and international coastal and fisheries acts and policies, sustainable fisheries



management frameworks and approaches, marine pollution, and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The training should also include modules on communication, facilitation, grievance redressal, data handling, and digital tools. Practical guidance needs to be provided on promoting welfare schemes such as PMMSY, insurance, and alternative livelihoods.

### **3. Fisheries resource mapping and spatial planning**

Lack of sufficient spatial data on fishing zones, intensive fishing-effort areas, and unclear demarcation of protected zones leads to unintentional violations and conflict. Fishers are often unaware of the boundaries of MPAs or seasonal no-fishing zones. Inadequate understanding of the ecological sensitivity and dynamics of reef fisheries and biodiversity hotspots hinders adaptive spatial planning for sustainable fish catch in the marine fisheries.

#### **Our recommendations:**

- 3.1 Initiate participatory resource surveys and mapping exercises using traditional knowledge and GIS tools.
- 3.2 Document seasonal patterns, gear use, species distribution, and fishing pressure zones.
- 3.3 Overlay fishing activity with protected areas to identify zones of conflict and guide spatial planning.
- 3.4 Use data to inform adaptive regulation, conservation strategies, and support sustainable livelihoods.

### **4. Infrastructure development and improving access to schemes**

Existing schemes under PMMSY are not very relevant to the small-scale marine fishers of the ANI, a majority of whom belong to the Telugu community, who are traditional seafarers and do not own land in the Andamans. Most of the schemes under PMMSY are also geared towards enhancing culture fisheries, and SSFs often find it difficult to access relevant schemes and subsidies. In addition to that, basic infrastructure and amenities in fish landing centres are missing or falling apart.

#### **Our recommendations:**

- 4.1 It is necessary to improve the post-harvest infrastructure in ANI for reducing post-harvest losses in the marine capture fisheries. Developing and maintaining basic infrastructure, such as ice plants, cold storage, net-mending sheds, boat repair yards, and providing amenities such as toilets, drinking water, storage rooms, floodlights in fish landing centres, and signal lights at sea are important for the SSF community. It is important not only to build this infrastructure but to have a provision for regular maintenance of it, as many





existing facilities do not work properly in the islands, therefore an assessment of critical infrastructure construction and maintenance also needs to be carried out periodically.

- 4.2 Human and financial resources need to be dedicated to managing fish waste and its disposal either as compost, fertiliser or as fish feed for culture fisheries.
- 4.3 There needs to be more support for fishers engaged in small-scale marine capture fisheries. There is a need to update economic classifications—most fishers cannot utilise schemes like the lean period-savings cum relief scheme, as it is only for BPL families. However, in ANI, most of the fisher families have not been classified as BPL.
- 4.4 Expand health insurance to cover occupation-related illnesses of fish sellers and fish vending women. The safety of fishers from repetitive cyclones and increasing crocodile encounters also has to be ensured.
- 4.5 Provide adequate compensation to enhance the efficiency of breeding season bans.
- 4.6 Process timely reimbursements and deliver subsidies through simplified and efficient mechanisms. To improve access to schemes, services and support for fishers, Matsya Seva Kendras (MSKs) can be set up. *Sagar Mitras* or field functionaries can help fishers through MSKs in accessing their entitlements.

## 5. Mariculture and deep-sea tuna fishing

There is a push to increase mariculture in the islands and to promote deep-sea tuna fishing; however, the uptake by fishers is very low. Local communities, including fishers in the islands, are apprehensive about making high investments without the guarantee of returns, and the policy does not provide evidence of demonstrable examples that can be scaled up to be economically viable.

### Our recommendations:

- 5.1 Mariculture development in ANI should aim to promote small-scale, low-cost, easily accessible technologies as opposed to capital-intensive models that rely on external investments. This will ensure more local participation and benefits for the people of the ANI. There should also be a focus on high-value yet easy-to-culture species such as bivalves, oysters, and crabs etc.
- 5.2 While the large wetland areas of the islands can provide a suitable environment for brackish water aquaculture and mariculture, care must be taken to ensure that it does not result in the clearing of ecologically rich and protected mangrove forests or lead to the destruction of sensitive habitats such as backwaters, creeks, and bays, which act as critical habitats for maintaining the health of coastal and marine ecosystems and capture fisheries.





Consultations with local *Panchayati Raj Institutions* members and local fishers need to be a part of identifying areas and practices for mariculture.

- 5.3 Local fish species should be preferred for culture to avoid the risks of introduction and establishment of invasive species in the wild.
- 5.4 Proper market linkages need to be created to make mariculture or tuna fishing a profitable enterprise in the islands. Supply chains need to be created with buyers identified and price transparency maintained to make these practices economically sustainable.
- 5.5 Incorporating market-based solutions for value-addition, such as ecolabelling and seafood sustainability certifications, along with steps to improve transparency and traceability along the seafood value chain, while strengthening linkages to such niche markets.





## Annexure 1

Details on cluster-wise fishing villages across 26 panchayats of South Andaman

Clusters	Panchayat Name	Fishing Villages
Cluster 1	Wandoor	Wandoor
	Chouldari	Chouldari, Port Mout
	Guptapara	Guptapara, Manjeri
Cluster 2	Mithakhadi	Mithakhadi, Dundas Point
	Namunaghar	Namunaghar, Hathitapu
Cluster 3	Shorepoint	Shorepoint
	Bambooflat 1	Bambooflat
	Hopetown	Hopetown, Chunabatta
Cluster 4	Collinpur	Manpur, Tirur, Herbertabad, Collinpur
Cluster 5	Beodnabad	Chidiyatapu, Burmanallah, Chota-balu
Cluster 6	Shoal Bay	Shoal Bay 19, Shoal Bay 15
	Wright myo	Wright Myo, Mannarghat
Cluster 7	Sri Vijaya Puram Municipal area	Junglighat, Premnagar, Mohanpura, Dignabad, Haddo



## Annexure 2

Details of infrastructural support needed across the South Andaman islands

Infrastructural Issue	Fishing Villages
Poor maintenance & facilities at the jetty	Guptapara, Junglighat
Construction of new jetties	Shoal Bay, Burmanallah, Dignabad, Collinpur, Mithakhadi
Lack of a fish market	Dignabad, Haddo, Chidiyatapu
Lack of drinking water	Wandoor, Dignabad, Haddo, Guptapara, Namunaghar, Shoal Bay
Lack of toilet facility	Haddo, Dignabad, Bambooflat, Namunaghar,
Lack of ice plant	Shoal Bay, Chidiyatapu, Wandoor
Need for crocodile cages	Shoal Bay, Wright myo, Collinpur, Manpur,
Need for cold storage facilities	Wandoor, Guptapara, Hopetown, Shoal Bay, Chidiyatapu
Need for a diesel plant	Guptapara, Shoalbay, Chidiyatapu
Need for a boat repair yard	Hathitapu, Chidiyatapu, Burmanallah, Shoal Bay, Haddo, Dignabad
Need for a net mending shed	Hathitapu, Chidiyatapu, Burmanallah, Shoal Bay, Haddo, Dignabad
Maintenance of toilets and markets	Hopetown
Need for a fisheries Office Depot	Collinpur, Guptapara
Need for warning signals at Line Pathar	Shoal Bay
Need for a cyclone shelter	Doratang





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