

The Ocean Stewards (OS) program, at Dakshin Foundation, provides youth from fishing communities with the tools and inclusive environments they need to lead marine conservation efforts and implement co-created grassroots solutions.

The initiative envisions youth as **stewards of coastal ecosystems**. Over time, the OS are also encouraged to become mentors and catalysts at the grassroots, building capacity at the village level, thereby creating a multiplier effect.

The strengthened capacities of the Ocean Stewards, along with their growing engagement with local resource governance, stand as precursors to their **emerging role as community leaders**. This will not only help address the systemic exclusion of coastal communities but also build resilience in the face of transitions that threaten livelihoods and foster **a sense of confidence, responsibility, and hope among youth**.

To find out more about our Ocean Stewards projects in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, visit our website (dakshin.org) or get in touch with us at sustainablefisheries@dakshin.org

Ocean Stewards

நெய்தல் நண்பர்கள்

Coastal youth leading the future of sustainable fisheries



India's small-scale fishing communities face compounded marginalisation from industrial expansion, coastal development, and climate change. Despite their deep ecological knowledge, exclusion limits agency.

Empowering coastal youth with skills and information enables grassroots conservation through evidence-building, and collaborative governance for sustainability.

The **Ocean Stewards curriculum** combines:

- skill-building for leadership and entrepreneurship
- participatory research and resource management
- youth-led documentation of local knowledge and community issues

Informed by their lived experience and knowledge of local contexts, the stewards combine scientific methods with local ecological knowledge (LEK) for effective marine resource management.

The pilot cohort included Ocean Stewards in:

Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu

Research on coral reef and seagrass ecosystems, involvement in catch monitoring and species identification. Stewards also documented diminishing traditional fishing practices, unique shell crafts, and trends linking ecological shifts to livelihood changes.

Sindhudurg, Maharashtra

Research on commercial fish species, where stewards monitored bycatch, recorded shark and ray landings, and documented local ecological knowledge related to threatened species. They are also documenting local issues related to tourism and waste management.

