ANNUAL REPORT

2025 - 2026

DAKSHIN FOUNDATION

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Meera Anna Oommen

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1.2 Director's Note

Over the past year, our work has continued to reaffirm a simple but urgent truth: healthy oceans and resilient coastal communities are deeply interconnected. We know that conservation succeeds when it is responsive to local realities, attentive to livelihoods, and grounded in dialogue. From strengthening small-scale fisheries and supporting women-led dried fish enterprises in Odisha, to advancing marine species conservation, tackling the challenges of waste management, and fostering climate resilience, our work has focused on creating long-term, locally embedded impact.

Recognising that the complexity of today's environmental challenges cannot be addressed through isolated interventions, significant effort has been directed towards building larger networks of support for the communities and ecosystems that we seek to strengthen. Whether through building coalitions for sustainable fisheries, engaging government agencies and research institutions, or strengthening partnerships with community organisations and building local capacities, we have continued to invest in processes that enable shared stewardship of marine and coastal commons. At the heart of our work are the communities who live closest to the coast and depend on marine ecosystems every day. Across our programmes, we have continued to support knowledge exchange, capacity building, public health and wellbeing initiatives, and livelihood strengthening efforts that place communities at the centre of decision-making. Their knowledge, resilience, and leadership remain essential to shaping equitable and sustainable futures.

Our work also increasingly reflects the need to move beyond conventional conservation silos. Initiatives that address crocodile conflict through improved waste management and outreach, or efforts that use climate conversations as a bridge for broader ocean stewardship, demonstrate the importance of integrated and interdisciplinary approaches. We remain committed to bridging research and practice, generating knowledge that informs grassroots actions, and contributing constructively to public conversations on oceans, biodiversity, and sustainable development.

None of this work would be possible without the dedication of our staff, researchers, partners, donors, community collaborators, and governing board members. Their commitment, creativity, and persistence continue to sustain and strengthen our collective efforts. As we look ahead, we do so with hope. The challenges facing our oceans are immense, but so too are the opportunities to build more inclusive, resilient, and ecologically grounded futures. We remain committed to working alongside communities and partners to protect marine ecosystems while advancing dignity, wellbeing, and sustainability for all those who depend on them.

– Marianne Manuel

1.3 Dakshin's Mission

Dakshin Foundation (DF)'s mission is to inform and catalyse conservation and natural resource management, while promoting and supporting sustainable livelihoods, social development and environmental justice.

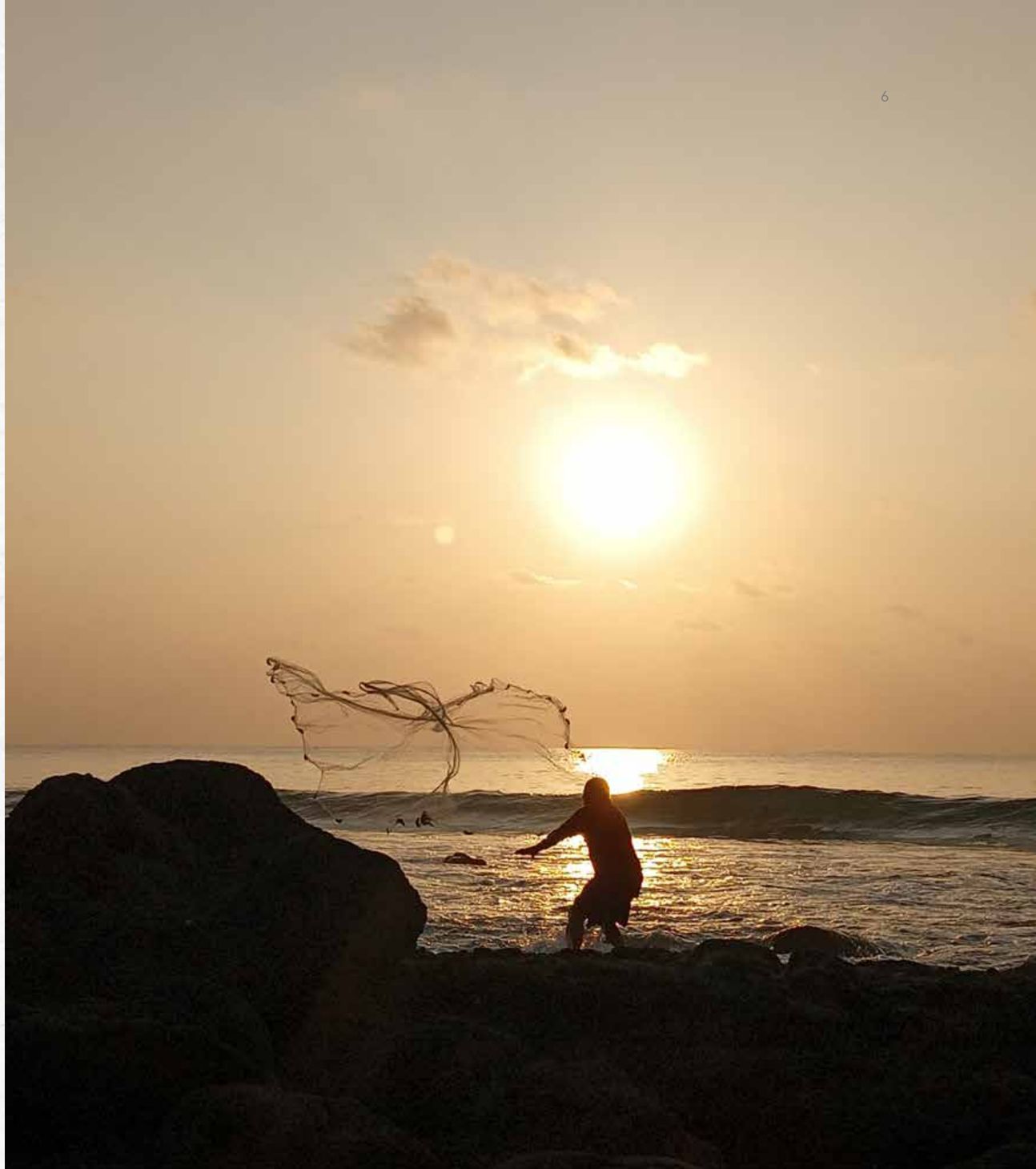
OUR APPROACH

Dakshin carries out applied environmental research and standalone, cross-sectoral interventions to achieve positive outcomes for both people and the ocean. Our approach to change is based on an integrated philosophy, combining subject expertise from multiple disciplines. This allows us to address environmental and livelihood challenges through adaptable models. These models, which are flexible across scales, are implemented in partnership with local communities, government departments, and other civil society organisations. By integrating traditional knowledge, researcher contributions, and appropriate technologies, these models generate impacts that are ecologically and economically sustainable, as well as culturally acceptable. Our ultimate goal is to achieve a new equilibrium for coastal India with healthy ecosystems and thriving coastal communities.

PROGRAMMATIC STRUCTURE

Dakshin works with coastal communities across several target locations in India, which are connected by a common thread of marine resource dependence. Among these groups, local communities dependent on fisheries form a primary target group, and many of the organisation's interventions are aimed at working with these communities to achieve holistic, sustainability-focused outcomes. Dakshin's research and interventions are organised to address several overlapping themes that form the pillars of support for its organisational goals. Dakshin builds grassroots capacities, skills, and practices to secure ecosystems and collective rights and engages in conservation and environmental decision-making through participatory action.

SeaChange (SC) is Dakshin's intersectoral approach to intervention for system-level change. It aims to address complex socio-ecological crises faced by small-scale fisher (SSF) communities, such as fish-catch declines, climate change, biocultural diversity loss, and conservation conflict. Based on systems thinking, SeaChange prioritises landscapes as units of intervention and is scalable yet culturally nuanced – key criteria for what constitutes a SeaChange action. SeaChange is emphatically intersectoral, addressing five critical interlinked themes: conservation, fisheries management, coastal livelihoods, resource governance, and community health and sports. It is innovative in using a range of approaches to engage in community wellbeing across gender and age classes. The SeaChange model involves collaborating with SSF communities across India, relevant government bodies, experts, and industry actors.



The key programmes at Dakshin include **Marine Flagships; Sustainable Fisheries; Communities and Resource Governance; Community Wellbeing and Environment and Conservation CrossRoads**. We also support two subprogrammes on Sports and Livelihoods, currently nested under the Community Wellbeing and Environment programme and Sustainable Fisheries programme, respectively.

CONSERVATION CROSSROADS (CCR)

addresses emerging challenges that are critical to conservation success and environmental sustainability in the new millennium. The rationale behind its initiation has been to provide an academic platform at Dakshin to address contemporary crises, such as conflict (especially in the context of marine and terrestrial flagship species that are involved in negative interactions with local communities), that can be classified under the label of 'wicked' or 'messy' problems.

COMMUNITIES AND RESOURCE GOVERNANCE (CRG)

works across scales to strengthen formal and informal legal frameworks, practices, and institutions governing marine and coastal areas. At the grassroots level, the programme emphasises empowering communities for effective engagement with formal decision-making over coastal and marine spaces. The programme promotes community participation in coastal planning and resource management at various scales.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND ENVIRONMENT (CWE)

aims to improve the wellbeing of coastal communities while empowering them to build resilient communities and ecosystems. This programme focuses on holistic approaches that enhance community health, including utilising novel tools such as sports to engage with both youth and adults in these communities.

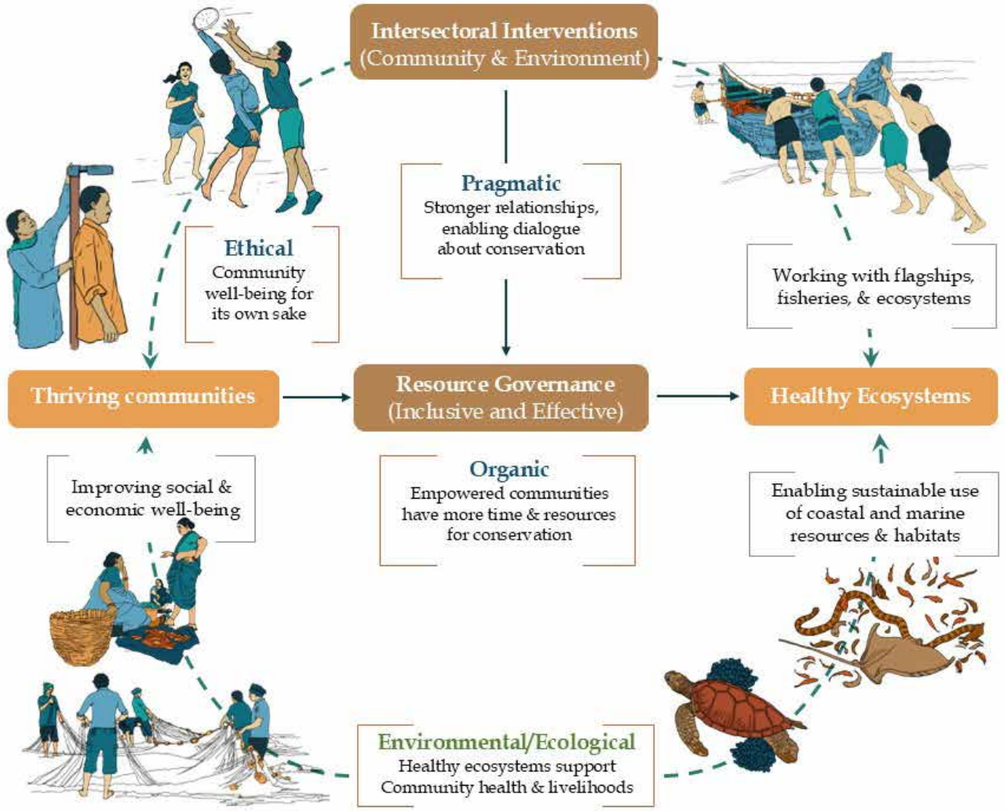
MARINE FLAGSHIPS (MF)

aims to fill critical gaps in our current knowledge of the oceans through long-term and collaborative monitoring of select ecosystems and marine species. It uses flagship species (e.g., sea turtles, sharks, rays and sea snakes) as central themes for garnering support in addressing issues related to fisheries, coastal development, and global change.

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES (SF)

focuses on improving the governance and management of fisheries by decentralising knowledge to empower stakeholder communities and ensure their direct involvement in decision-making. It leverages the untapped potential of local communities in the design and implementation of integrated monitoring programmes for the sustainability of marine fisheries along the Indian coastline. We have initiated a subprogramme on the theme of 'livelihoods' to specifically cater to the systems-level needs of improving economic returns from fisheries and blue economies.

1.4 Our Theory of Change



Our theory of change is centred on the idea that marine conservation is best achieved by working with communities that use or depend on ocean resources for their livelihoods.

1. First, we believe in contributing to the wellbeing of our stakeholders for **ethical** reasons, towards social justice, and not merely as instruments of change.

2. Second, resource-dependent coastal communities, such as fishers and fish workers, who are empowered to manage these ecosystems sustainably and incentivised appropriately, will be better equipped to address local food insecurity, health and livelihood concerns, and poverty in the long term.

4. Ultimately, this will **organically** lead to healthier ecosystems and greater resilience against external shocks, as healthy and empowered communities will have the time, resources, and opportunities to contribute to resource management and biodiversity conservation.

3. To this end, by building strong, **pragmatic** relationships with local communities, Dakshin is able to engage in dialogue and work with them to plan actions that have positive human and environmental outcomes.

5. Finally, healthy ecosystems provide better services and functions to communities through ecological and environmental pathways.

2.KEY HIGHLIGHTS

2026

2025

2.1 Beyond monitoring: Connecting ecosystems and people

2.2 Addressing human-crocodile conflict: From symptom focus to systems change

2.3 From consultation to coalition: Building a sustainable fisheries future

2.4 Ocean Solutions: Leveraging climate as a connector for SeaChange

2.1
BEYOND MONITORING

Connecting ecosystems & people

Conservation efforts for sea turtles in India once relied on fragmented, short-term studies, limiting the ability to understand long-term population trends. In response, we committed to building a continuous monitoring programme that has now spanned nearly two decades across India's coasts and island ecosystems. This sustained effort has allowed us to move beyond counting nests to understanding the full life cycles of sea turtles; their nesting patterns, migrations and foraging behaviours. Working across diverse yet interconnected geographies from the mass nesting beaches of Odisha to the remote islands of Andaman and Nicobar, and the seagrass-rich lagoons of Lakshadweep, we have been able to uncover patterns that were previously invisible, distinguishing natural fluctuations from emerging ecological threats.

As this body of knowledge has expanded, our perspective has correspondingly evolved, moving beyond a narrowly species-centric lens to recognise sea turtles as vital indicators of the overall health of marine ecosystems. This trajectory is reflected in the launch of the *Monitoring Sea Turtles in India (2008–2024)* report, which was formally released and widely disseminated through coverage in leading publications. Building on this foundation, we have placed strong emphasis on democratising access to this science, translating complex datasets into compelling and accessible narratives through film and digital storytelling.

These endeavours have been further strengthened by initiatives that bring conservation into shared public spaces, most notably through the Reef Festival, where local communities, fishers and a diverse range of stakeholders come together to collectively experience and celebrate marine ecosystems. At the same time, our sustained investment in environmental education within island schools is nurturing a generation that is both ecologically literate and deeply attuned to the systems they inhabit. This vision is further embodied in the launch of *Treasured Islands: A Handbook for Teachers of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands* with the Directorate of Education, emerging from a recognised need for updated, locally grounded environmental education resources tailored to the unique context of the islands.

Together, these efforts reflect a larger shift from isolated research to an interconnected approach where science, community engagement and education reinforce one another. This integrated approach enables us not only to deepen our understanding of ecological change, but also to contribute meaningfully to shaping conservation policy and practice. Recently, our Programme Head and Trustee, Kartik Shanker, has been included in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep's Sea Turtle Conservation Coordination Committee. In general, there is a growing recognition and engagement with our work by government institutions, strengthening the bridge between knowledge, action and policy.

2.2
ADDRESSING HUMAN-CROCODILE CONFLICT

From symptom focus to systems change

Human-wildlife conflict is often treated symptomatically. Our work in the Andaman Islands suggests better options. What appears as a conflict between people and saltwater crocodiles alone revealed itself as a deeper systems challenge, rooted in gaps in waste management, limited outreach and the exclusion of communities from conservation planning.

Over the last few years, Dakshin's work on solid waste management has demonstrated how strengthening local systems can deliver visible environmental and social outcomes. Through partnerships with communities, youth leaders and local institutions, waste practices are steadily improving. It has been supported by enhanced technical capacity, stronger governance and cross-departmental collaboration. As these systems evolved, a critical insight emerged: unmanaged organic waste was not just a sanitation concern, but a key ecological driver. The disposal of offal and other organic waste into creeks was actively altering crocodile behaviour, drawing them closer to human-use areas and increasing the likelihood of conflict. In addition, poor safety information, and exclusion of local communities in crocodile management rendered them vulnerable to increasing attacks.

This understanding marks a shift from reactive responses to preventive, systems-based solutions. Building on years of groundwork, Dakshin is now advancing a dedicated programme that addresses one of the root causes of human-crocodile conflict rather than its symptoms. Supported by a multi-year grant from SBI Foundation, along with contributions from Sundaram Finance Limited, PwC Foundation, LGT-VP and Rainmatter Foundation, this integrated initiative is grounded in strong institutional collaboration, including a formal partnership with the Forest Department.

Crucially, communities are at the centre of conflict mitigation efforts, not only as stakeholders at risk, but as active agents in identifying risks, shaping locally appropriate solutions and driving their adoption. These assessments map waste generation patterns, offal disposal practices and livelihood activities in proximity to water bodies, providing a robust evidence base for action, while community knowledge and participation ensure that interventions are context-specific, trusted and sustained over time.

At its core, the initiative combines research, technology, and community engagement to co-design solutions that are locally relevant and ecologically sound. It also seeks to reduce conservation antagonism by strengthening conservation literacy, supporting behaviour change, and enabling dialogue around compensation and livelihood strategies that align with long-term species survival. This work represents a transition from managing conflict to redesigning the systems that generate it. By aligning waste management, community safety and conservation goals, the initiative aims to demonstrate a scalable and replicable model for reducing human-crocodile conflict; one that holds relevance not only for the Andaman Islands, but for high-conflict landscapes across India.

2.3
FROM CONSULTATION TO COALITION

Building a sustainable fisheries future

A defining shift this year has been the transition from facilitating dialogue to actively building coalitions that can drive systemic change across India's fisheries sector. Recognising that sustainable fisheries are not shaped by isolated interventions, but by the alignment of communities, markets and governance systems, this approach places collective action at the centre of long-term transformation.

At the global level, this was reflected in Dakshin's engagement at the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3), where field-based insights from India's coasts informed international discussions on ocean governance. As part of a Global South civil society alliance, a joint commitment was co-authored calling for secure tenure rights for small-scale fishers, fair and accountable marine markets, and governance frameworks that recognise traditional ecological knowledge and youth leadership. These contributions positioned on-ground experience as critical to shaping global priorities, reinforcing the need for shared responsibility across the value chain.

This momentum extended to the co-convening of a multi-stakeholder platform on marine ingredients at the World Seafood Congress 2026, creating new alignment across government, industry, research and civil society. At the regional scale, engagements such as the Odisha Vikash Conclave further embedded fisheries within broader development discourse, strengthening their recognition as central to climate resilience and inclusive growth.

Crucially, this coalition-building approach is equally critical at the community level, where change is negotiated, sustained and scaled. In Odisha, women-led dried fish producer groups are emerging as powerful collectives that are strengthening value chains, improving processing practices, and enhancing both livelihoods and nutrition security through shared action and co-designed climate-resilient infrastructure. In the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, stakeholder consultations are evolving into sustained platforms for collaboration, enabling diverse fishing groups to collectively navigate challenges, build consensus and strengthen their role in governance processes.

In Lakshadweep, co-management efforts are reinforcing partnerships between fishers, cooperatives and institutions through community-based monitoring, participatory resource mapping and the documentation of traditional ecological knowledge, contributing to more adaptive and locally anchored governance systems. In Tamil Nadu, the Ocean Stewards initiative is catalysing a new generation of knowledge coalitions led by coastal youth. By bridging scientific approaches with lived experience, Ocean Stewards are generating locally grounded evidence while strengthening community participation in decision-making, conservation and long-term stewardship.

Together, these efforts mark a significant step forward in reconfiguring how change is enabled across the fisheries sector, from fragmented engagement to interconnected coalitions across scales. As these alliances continue to deepen, they are laying the foundation for more inclusive, resilient and sustainable fisheries systems.

2.4
OCEAN SOLUTIONS

Leveraging climate as a connector for SeaChange

Climate change is not a standalone challenge but a cross-cutting force that shapes ecosystems, livelihoods and vulnerabilities in deeply interconnected ways. Recognising this, our work has evolved to position climate as a connector, linking ecological systems with human wellbeing through an integrated approach that brings together climate, health, livelihoods, governance and equity.

Ocean Solutions embodies this approach as Dakshin's solutions-oriented platform that identifies local socio-ecological challenges and co-designs nature-based responses with communities and government partners. Situated within the broader domains of blue growth, blue carbon and climate change, the initiative responds to increasing pressures on marine resources and the urgent need for equitable, sustainable development pathways. Through efforts such as dynamic mapping and monitoring of blue carbon habitats, the development of ocean-based enterprise models, and the promotion of responsible carbon-neutral trajectories, Ocean Solutions contributes to rethinking blue economy pathways in the Indian Ocean.

This systems approach is grounded in a growing body of knowledge and practice. The forthcoming Blue Carbon Report and the Blue Carbon Atlas of India are expected to strengthen the evidence base on the role of coastal ecosystems in climate mitigation. At the same time, the development of a climate communications module, along with storytelling initiatives such as Heat Stories, will broaden the ways in which climate narratives are understood, communicated, and shared.

These initiatives translate complex science into accessible, grounded insights, ensuring that climate discourse remains both locally relevant and action-oriented. Our Current Conservation special issue on how climate change is impacting the Indian Ocean Region, brings together diverse strands of research and practice on the subject matter that Ocean Solutions aims to address.

At the community level, our integrated SeaChange interventions in Odisha highlight how climate intersects with wellbeing and what we can do about it. Through a collaboration with Project Solace, we explored the emotional and social dimensions of environmental change, through the lens of *solastalgia* - the psychological distress experienced due to ecological loss. By training community members to document lived experiences through photography and storytelling, the project has generated powerful visual narratives, including themes of coastal erosion, loss of cultural spaces and changing relationships with the sea. Complementing this, our programmatic collaborations focus on the climate-health nexus among women in fishing communities. Through documentation of detailed stories, this work captures both the health impacts of climate stressors and the adaptive strategies adopted by women and children, from shifts in food practices to everyday resilience measures.

This marks a transition from engagement to designing scalable approaches that address the interconnected challenges faced by coastal communities. It positions Ocean Solutions within a larger climate and development framework. The growing momentum around this work highlights its strong potential for scale and deeper impact across multiple coastal systems and policies. As we move forward, Ocean Solutions offers a significant opportunity to expand integrated, equitable responses at the intersection of climate, health and livelihoods, strengthening both on-ground outcomes and long-term policy pathways for resilient coastal futures.

3. DAKSHIN'S PROJECTS

3.1

ODISHA

SeaChange in Odisha

The coast of Odisha is a treasure trove of cultural and biological diversity, home to rich fisheries traditions practised by multiple fishing communities. Yet, it faces sustained social and environmental challenges, not limited to the vulnerability against natural disasters, but more recently, climate intersecting problems. Today, the distress migration from districts like Ganjam points to declining fisheries and degrading landscapes, losses in small scale fisher (SSF) and coastal livelihoods, limited access to social entitlements, coastal erosion, poor access to healthcare, and extreme heat stress. Dakshin's SeaChange approach addresses these interconnected problems at a landscape scale.

In the last year, Dakshin Foundation has worked to address key system wide challenges in Odisha. These efforts target the building of community capacity and thematic interventions. To build sustainable livelihoods we support collective women's enterprises in dry fish. To improve community health and wellbeing we bring health screenings and targeted mental and physical awareness sessions to fishing communities. To support community engagement in governance we train community catalysts to access local governance spaces, access rights and entitlements and initiate actions to safeguard coastal commons. Our youth engagement involves sports sessions to harness sporting talent while building confidence and resilience. We continue our inclusive conservation approach by supporting ground staff of the Odisha Forest Department with conservation and sea turtle monitoring skills. The year also saw us design customised climate change training modules for field staff and community catalysts to in-turn empower and represent communities with knowledge and community-based solutions for environmental shifts. All these intersectoral interventions help us tackle the above mentioned systemic issues, ensuring long-term sustainability, inclusive development, and positioning SeaChange as a transformative model for marine conservation and coastal resilience.

Expanding strategic partnerships in Odisha

In Odisha, Dakshin Foundation has strengthened and scaled its work across interconnected themes through strategic collaborations with government bodies and civil society on environmental conservation and community wellbeing. Key partnerships include a formal collaboration with the United Artists Association (UAA), where Dakshin signed an MoU to lease a space to facilitate on-ground SeaChange activities. To strengthen fisher community engagements with local governance and to improve their access to social protection schemes, the Dakshin team collaborated with key Gram Panchayats to understand barriers for effective participation. Panchayats also adopted resolutions to map coastal commons towards their sustainable utilisation and conservation.

Through our Sustainable Livelihoods programme, we collaborated with Mahashakti Foundation to conduct a dried fish market study in Bargarh and Bolangir districts, generating insights into market channels and consumer preferences. A significant part of the study also examined the dependence of marginalised tribal communities in forested districts on dried fish, with a focus on their access to dried fish and broader food and nutrition security, thereby gathering evidence that highlights the gaps in this access. Building on this engagement, we aim to strengthen market linkages and build a more sustainable end-to-end value chain.

This year saw Dakshin participate as a partner of the Odisha Vikash Conclave, coordinated by the Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD). We joined hands with multiple civil society organisations active in Odisha to address the cross cutting climate theme. The event united community leaders, government officials, civil society organisations, academia, and corporates through discussions and dialogues on Odisha's pressing developmental opportunities and challenges. Dakshin organised the Mangrove and Marine session, under the ecosystem pillar. We engaged with multiple cross thematic sessions on wetland and river ecosystems, , improving market systems for livelihoods, and sessions on harnessing public spaces for a climate resilient Odisha.

This year, we also signed an MoU with the Forest Rangers College, Angul, Odisha (the training institute equips newly recruited Forest Rangers from Odisha and other states to equip with skills in forestry, wildlife, and conservation), to conduct outreach sessions and knowledge-sharing activities related to sea turtle monitoring, conservation practices, and coastal ecosystem management, targeted at forest ranger trainees and relevant staff.

Women's dried fish enterprises for sustainable livelihoods and nutrition

Drying fish is one of the oldest forms of preserving animal protein, and plays a critical role in supporting livelihood security and nutritional wellbeing. Packed with concentrated protein, micronutrients and Omega-3 and other essential fatty acids, dried fish is perhaps the only source of affordable nutrition that addresses the nutritional needs of millions of economically marginalised communities in India. Coastal Odisha is one of the largest producers of dried fish in the country, with about 6.32% of its total catch utilised for drying. Dried fish produced on the coast of Odisha can often travel to various remote, interior hinterlands of the country through informal, self-regulated supply chains. These supply chains make dried fish available to remote tribal belts such as Raygada, Koraput, Malkangiri, Balangir, Bargarh, etc., where access to other forms of animal protein is limited. While men harvest the fish from the sea, the remaining activities of processing, storing, cleaning and trading are primarily carried out by women fishers, thereby making it a sector that directly provides economic benefits to fisherwomen.

Despite their critical role in addressing coastal livelihoods, particularly those of fisherwomen, and addressing the nutritional security of millions from marginalised communities, the dried fish sector faces significant challenges. Women in Odisha's dried fish sector continue to face limited bargaining power and constrained market access due to the dominance of external traders. This is compounded by inadequate hygiene infrastructure, which increases the risk of contamination, weak market linkages, limited opportunities for collective action, and price volatility. Together, these conditions deepen the marginalisation of women engaged in dried fish processing and trade.

Our sea-to-plate approach aims to connect the consumers with the producers. It simultaneously aims to increase the incomes of women dried fish producers while making dried fish cheaper and accessible to marginalised tribal communities. Through collective action and co-created models, women Producer Groups (PGs) are encouraged to manage production, procurement, and marketing and shortening value chains for better prices and affordability.

Our initiatives also focus on building capacity through training and entrepreneurial development to improve dried fish processing techniques, enhance product quality, and reduce wastage, while we co-design climate-friendly, hygienic drying and storage infrastructure with communities. Through our initiative, we seek to co-create a scalable, community-driven model in the dried fish sector by empowering women, strengthening livelihoods, and ensuring nutritional security for marginalised groups dependent on it for protein and micronutrients.

This year, we completed a baseline study that mapped key actors, market dynamics, and sustainability gaps in the dried fish value chain. In Ganjam, our fieldwork focused on mobilising and organising women, laying the foundation for the formation of a producer group of women dried fish producers. These women are among the most marginalised within the dried fish sector itself: more than 20 are widowed, or single mothers, women-headed households, and more than half are above 50 years of age.

We also capacitated field staff on directory management, free, prior and informed consent, and the ethics of working with people, while providing hands-on support to the group. In the next phase, we will develop SOPs and training modules for dried fish operations and management, conduct skill-building sessions for the producer group, and strengthen market linkages through collaboration with Mahashakti Foundation.

Sea turtle conservation: Population monitoring and capacity building

Since 2008, Dakshin Foundation and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, in collaboration with the Odisha Forest Department, have been conducting long-term monitoring of olive ridley turtles in Rushikulya, Ganjam, Odisha. This effort, India's longest-running sea turtle monitoring programme, continues to track annual nesting numbers (both sporadic and mass nesting), offshore congregations, and hatchling sex ratios.

We continued to build on our long-term data, monitoring parameters to assess population trends and climate change impacts on hatchling success and sex ratios. Our research this year included beach mapping to track seasonal beach variations, offshore monitoring to observe movement and density of congregations during the nesting season, and measuring nest temperatures to understand how fine-scale temperature variation can determine the sex of the hatchlings. Boat surveys provided critical data on turtle densities in offshore waters, while monitoring of solitary and mass nesting provides critical insights into population trends. In 2026, a relatively small mass nesting event occurred in March for 4-5 days with an estimated 1.5 lakh nests. In addition to research, Dakshin continued its capacity- building initiatives by training Odisha Forest Department staff and fishing community members in scientific monitoring techniques. These workshops covered monitoring protocols, nest relocation methodologies, arribada census methods, hatchery management, and community-based conservation strategies. Through outreach and training, we aim to foster conservation models that integrate local communities, ensuring the long-term protection of olive ridley turtles along Odisha's coast.

Promoting health and wellbeing in Ganjam

The SeaChange initiative builds resilience in coastal communities through village-based preventive healthcare, now expanded to 22 villages spread across Ganjam and Puri.

We conducted awareness sessions on gender, nutrition, climate-induced health risks, environmental education, and climate impacts targeting youth and children in coordination with tuition teachers... There are also sessions with women to build their knowledge and influence practices towards a healthier lifestyle, managing heat stress, and timely health-seeking services. Towards this, we have organised health screening camps for men and women in partnership with Community Health Officers (CHOs), ANMs (Auxiliary Nurse Midwife) and ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activist) to identify at-risk individuals and link them to the closest PHC (Primary Health Center). We have also conducted the capacity-building session for Community Catalysts to work closely with local institutions to prioritise wellness projects and lead awareness sessions with youth on topics such as mental health, adolescent health, non-communicable diseases, and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene). These sessions helped strengthen their understanding and enabled them to share learnings with their peers and family members. Limited awareness and understanding of health rights and entitlements among the communities have often resulted in reduced access to essential schemes and public services. In response to these gaps, parallel efforts are underway to develop a booklet on health rights and entitlements tailored to the realities of coastal communities. Alongside this, field staff and community catalysts are being capacitated through structured modules and training processes to strengthen their ability to support communities in accessing their rights and entitlements. With the help of Community Catalysts, a community-centred approach is also being implemented across villages to build awareness, facilitate linkages with public systems, and enable communities to collectively navigate and claim available health and social protection entitlements.

This expansion is reflected in their strengthened leadership and representation across Odisha's health landscape, creating a community-led effort that enables coastal communities to access essential services with greater continuity.

Energising coastal youth through sports

Sports interventions play a key role in building community resilience and participation in ecosystem health by fostering leadership and social cohesion among children and youth. Over the past 3 years, Dakshin has been engaging with children and youth from Odisha's coastal communities using the sport of Ultimate Frisbee to promote holistic development. Ultimate Frisbee, being a mixed-gender and self-refereed sport, has been an effective medium for youth to challenge gender boundaries and learn life skills including communication, conflict resolution and leadership. Through training camps, mixed-gender play sessions, and regular village-level sports events, young participants have broken gender barriers and gained valuable experience of teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills.

Heading into our third year of Ultimate Frisbee-based youth engagement in Odisha, weekly sessions were conducted across select villages of Ganjam. These regular sessions were complemented by mixed-gender skill-building camps as well as coach development and leadership camps specifically for girl participants.

Our youth teams participated in two milestone Ultimate Frisbee tournaments this year - the first being 'Chilly O', a mixed gender development sector tournament hosted by Project Khel with the participation of 24 teams across 11 states in India, and the

second being 'Beach Nationals', the annual national-level beach tournament hosted by India Ultimate in Mangalore. Across events, our teams secured top finishes, including a gold medal, the Spirit of the Game trophy, and a fourth-place finish in the women's category. Participating in tournaments offer truly meaningful exposure where the young participants not only play together, but also learn to live together on college campuses and interact with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Alongside sports sessions and tournaments, awareness sessions on gender stereotypes and health were conducted with children and youth. These initiatives broadened their horizons, strengthened their confidence to pursue diverse opportunities, and nurtured leadership and community-building skills for personal and professional growth. They not only promoted gender inclusivity in sports but also served as a platform to address broader issues such as health, wellbeing, and youth empowerment. As sports continue to bridge social gaps and strengthen community ties, they play a vital role in shaping a resilient, motivated, and empowered younger generation.

Building leadership among coastal women

The Coastal Grassroots Fellowship (CGF), steered by our Communities and Resource Governance programme, empowers women from SSF communities by building their knowledge, skills and experience of leadership and representation with a focus on governance. It creates safe spaces and structured opportunities for fellows to deepen their understanding of local governance, coastal commons, and SSF livelihoods. Two cohorts have completed fellowships in Odisha and Tamil Nadu, with the third batch underway in Odisha. Fellows receive training in leadership, communication, documentation, and storytelling, enabling them to lead initiatives like facilitating access to government schemes, coastal commons conservation, and awareness campaigns on livelihoods and waste management. This year, CGFs focused on developing community stories about climate change impacts on women's health and local adaptation practices as preventive care. Through awareness sessions on climate change, community health rights, video journalism, and storytelling, combined with field visits to document women's health challenges and coping mechanisms, they gained critical insights and information. CGFs also participated in health screening camps, adolescent awareness sessions, and children's mental health/nutrition programmes. These experiences equipped them to craft impactful stories highlighting community issues and locally developed preventive measures.

As part of the learning process, fellows undertook field visits to document women's health challenges stemming from climate change, seasonal vulnerabilities, and household-level coping mechanisms. They also participated in health screening camps and adolescent awareness programmes, gaining deeper insights into the links between climate, health, and livelihoods. Drawing from these engagements, fellows produced community stories and documentation pieces that highlighted both the challenges faced by women and the locally developed adaptation measures and preventive practices emerging within communities. Through this process, the fellowship not only strengthened women's voices and leadership but also contributed to building locally grounded narratives on climate resilience and community wellbeing.

Strengthening governance of coastal and marine commons

Coastal commons in India are contested spaces, with multiple users and claimants jostling for their interests to be legitimised. They are ecologically fragile ecosystems deserving of environmental stewardship. However, most often they are simply considered to be vast areas of wastelands. This renders them vulnerable to land degradation which in turn impacts coastal communities who depend on them for a range of vital economic and social functions. In many parts of India, coastal SSF communities actively utilise such spaces and even exercised certain governance responsibilities for such spaces across multiple generations.

Dakshin Foundation has prioritised strengthening governance over coastal and marine commons through community mapping initiatives, to strengthen community stewardship in such sites. We collaborated with Gram Panchayats in Ganjam district to pass resolutions in six villages for mapping coastal commons using spatial techniques. This initiative raises community awareness about the importance of coastal and marine commons, builds capacity on mapping of commons and engages local self-governments on aspects of commoning.

We draw on our prior experiences and tools of mapping but also our learnings from diverse citizen mapping initiatives to build out more robust maps that capture a far more nuanced idea of coastal commons than that captured by two-dimensional maps used for various planning purposes.

These practices of commons mapping revises unidirectional approaches to land governance and conservation, and represents pragmatic actions towards transparency such that citizens actively engage, improve and shape formal spaces of environmental governance practice.

Climate work in Odisha

One of Dakshin's overarching long-term goals is to reverse the neglect of marine and coastal issues in the wider discourse and practice of development, conservation and climate change. The associated long-term aim is to build community capacities and social resilience against climate change impacts and promote the wellbeing and livelihoods of the most vulnerable of coastal communities and ecosystems against climate-related disasters. Odisha and the Andaman Islands are sites where Dakshin has engaged in supporting in-house skills and knowledge base and designing for building on-ground capacities on climate change communications and climate policy.

In Odisha, we conducted intensive pilot workshops with community members towards testing a customised capacity building module on climate for use by community facilitators of civil society organisations, including Dakshin. While these modules target the wider Indian Ocean region, we piloted this with community catalysts through intensive workshops at this site.

Dakshin also partnered with Project Solace with filmmakers Samreen Farooqi and Shabani Hassanwalia to work on a filming project based on the concept of 'Solastalgia' a term developed by Glenn Albrecht in 2007 to give greater meaning and clarity to environmentally induced mental distress. The team worked with community catalysts to document using the medium of film-making, the nature of grief induced by the negative impacts of the Anthropocene. The project centres grassroots voices in stories of mental distress, grief and Solastalgia as expressed in local vocabularies.

3.2

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

SeaChange in Andamans

Dakshin Foundation continues to focus on the intersections of social, ecological, and economic challenges facing the islands by strengthening community-led governance, supporting sustainable resource management, building environmental stewardship for conservation, policy engagement and improving livelihoods and social wellbeing through targeted interventions in South Andaman.

In 2025-26, we deepened our engagement with communities while expanding partnerships with government departments and local institutions. We continued to build on our work addressing key challenges such as weak local governance, unsustainable fisheries practices, and poor waste management. This year also marked the beginning of focused efforts on exploring livelihoods and entrepreneurship challenges, and on mitigating human-crocodile conflict—both responding to long-standing concerns in the islands.

Several ongoing engagements with government departments and local institutions evolved into formal collaborations during the year to collectively address key challenges identified in the landscape. This included an MoU with the Rural Development Department and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Institute of Technology (DBRAIT) to strengthen local capacities for the operation, maintenance, and repair of baling machines—a critical bottleneck in the island's waste management system. We also signed an MoU with the Forest Department to work towards reducing negative human-crocodile interactions and are in the process of finalising an MoU with the Fisheries Department to strengthen participatory fisheries management and the sustainable use of fisheries resources. Our engagement with island youth continued to evolve, with a growing emphasis on local leadership and environmental stewardship. The Youth Ambassador programme in Wandoor entered its second year, with the community women taking the lead in campaigns on source segregation, composting

and waste management at beaches and community events.

Eight new Community Catalysts, mostly young women, were also onboarded under the human-crocodile conflict mitigation initiative from villages across South Andaman, further strengthening a growing network of local community members leading dialogue and action on issues affecting their landscapes.

Over the last year, we worked collaboratively with the Panchayati Raj members, fisher representatives and Block Development Officers to improve local governance. We actively engaged with several emerging social and environmental policy drafts in the islands. Drawing on our long-term engagement and deep understanding of the local context, we provided recommendations to strengthen policies related to fisheries, tourism and solid waste management, contributing to more inclusive, sustainable, and context-responsive development outcomes for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Addressing human-crocodile conflicts

In continuation with addressing the landscape-wide conservation challenge of human-crocodile conflict in the Andaman Islands, Dakshin embarked on a project supported by the SBI Foundation, aimed at reducing conflict, tackling waste management and promoting safety and livelihood support practices in these landscapes. This project is undertaken in collaboration with the Andaman and Nicobar Forest Department as well as support from the Directorate of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj and the ANI Administration.

Towards resolving the conflict between people and saltwater crocodiles for the ecological and social well-being of the islands, we conducted detailed baseline surveys across South Andaman to document poultry, livestock, chicken shops, pig farms, fish farms and fishery-related activities; waste generation/ disposal practices; and proximity to water bodies, gathering insights on offal waste trends and mapping shops and disposal sites. The aim is to reduce human-saltwater crocodile conflicts through better waste management, improved safety measures and knowledge of crocodile behaviour. The project also seeks to reduce conservation antagonism through innovative conservation outreach modules targeting stakeholder groups that are most affected by crocodile attacks. In the current year, our interventions targeted villages in and around the Lohabarrack Crocodile Sanctuary in South Andaman. By integrating research, technology, and community engagement, this project aims to establish a scalable conflict mitigation model through co-creating solutions that safeguard the species, support communities, and align conservation goals with sustainable livelihoods and the rights of local communities.

Solid waste management through youth-led actions and institutional partnerships

Solid Waste Management (SWM) continues to be a key intervention area for Dakshin, aimed at improving the waste management system in the islands through empowered youth leadership and participatory governance to address systemic issues. During FY 2025–26, efforts focused on enhancing equipment and infrastructure maintenance, addressing waste management challenges on beaches, reducing menstrual waste generation, and building collaborations to address key challenges within the waste management system.

The Youth Ambassador programme in Wandoor entered its second year, with six young women taking leading different themes such as promoting source segregation, composting, sustainable menstruation, beach waste management and waste reduction within their communities. Two Community Catalysts in Junglighat continued to mobilise residents, fisher groups, youth groups, and local authorities, helping build greater community ownership and accountability towards local waste management efforts. A notable milestone during the year was our collaboration with Wandoor Durga Puja Committee to fully replace plastic single-use plates with locally produced biodegradable alternatives during the feast, which saw a footfall of nearly 2,000 people from across the district. Our community engagement was further strengthened by the development of an illustrated wall-calendar on waste segregation, which the Youth Ambassadors used to engage more than 750 households in Wandoor in conversations on the importance of source segregation.

This year we extended our outreach on sustainable menstruation beyond Wandoor and Junglighat. With support from the Block Development Officers of Ferrargunj and Prothrapur, 165 community workers including CRPs, ASHA workers, and Anganwadi workers were trained to strengthen grassroots awareness and engagement on sustainable menstrual practices. In parallel, 200 female students at JNRM College were engaged on issues of menstrual waste management and the importance of shifting toward sustainable alternatives.

Efforts to improve waste management at Wandoor beaches focused on strengthening inter-institutional coordination through a Dakshin-facilitated platform bringing together the Forest Department, Wandoor Gram Panchayat, and the Police Department, resulting in a working group for Waste-Free Beaches.

At the landscape level, efforts during the year focused on understanding and addressing operational challenges within the broader waste management ecosystem. A rapid assessment was conducted across SWM centres in rural South Andaman to highlight key infrastructural and operational constraints. A critical challenge identified was the prolonged downtime of baling machines due to inadequate maintenance and limited access to repair support, significantly constraining operations. In response, Dakshin entered into a MoU with the Rural Development Department and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Institute of Technology (DBRAIT) to strengthen local technical capacity and improve system functionality. Following this, we onboarded a technical team from a mainland baling machine manufacturer and facilitated their field visit to SWM centres across South Andaman for diagnostic assessments. The report, outlining key findings and recommendations, has been shared with stakeholders and will guide collaborative efforts to improve equipment functionality and strengthen supporting infrastructure.

Monitoring leatherback turtles and conservation efforts in the ANI

The leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), the largest sea turtle species, nests in India exclusively on the beaches of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Since 2008, Dakshin Foundation, partnering with the Andaman & Nicobar Forest Department, the Andaman Nicobar Environment Team (ANET), and the Centre for Ecological Sciences at IISc, has participated in a long-term monitoring programme on Little Andaman Island. Combining conventional tagging, satellite telemetry, and genetic studies, this initiative also contributes data to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's Long Term Ecological Observatories (LTEO) programme.

From February to March 2026, day and night surveys were conducted at South Bay and West Bay. At South Bay, a total of 35 nests were recorded, comprising 28 leatherback and 7 olive ridley nests. At West Bay, a total of 384 nests were documented, including 300 leatherback, 79 olive ridley, and 5 green sea turtle nests.

A total of 20 leatherback turtles were tagged using Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags and external metal flipper tags. Tissue samples were collected from all tagged individuals for genetic analysis. Additionally, two female leatherback turtles were fitted with SPLASH10-295L satellite transmitters manufactured by Wildlife Computers. Tracking data indicate that both turtles are moving in a similar westward direction towards the east coast of Africa.

As the longest-running leatherback monitoring effort in the northern Indian Ocean, the programme's integrated approach, including field research, capacity building, and education, continues to bolster conservation of these endangered turtles and the island ecosystems they rely on.

Long-term monitoring of elasmobranchs in ANI

Dakshin Foundation has been documenting fisheries-dependent data, including elasmobranch species bycatch, abundance, catch per unit effort (CPUE), fishing grounds, and morphometric measurements through long-term monitoring of elasmobranchs in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This data provides important insights into species composition, seasonal landings, fishing practices, and the spatial distribution of elasmobranch catches across the archipelago.

To address the recurring conflicts between fishers at Junglighat and other landing sites across the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Forest Department regarding protected species catches, we are developing a concise 'Wildlife Protection Booklet'. Designed as a practical onboard identification guide, the booklet can be carried by fishers during fishing trips to enable quick and easy species identification at sea and during landings. The booklet consolidates information currently scattered across multiple publications developed by other agencies into a single user-friendly resource tailored for fishing communities. It includes illustrated information on all protected marine species recorded from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, with a focus on commonly encountered elasmobranchs and other accidentally caught species. In addition, the booklet provides simplified explanations of relevant regulations under the ANIMFR (Andaman and Nicobar Islands Marine Fishing Regulation, 2003/2025) and the WLPA (Wild Life Protection Act, 1972), including guidance on protected species handling, reporting, and legal provisions.

This initiative will reduce enforcement conflicts while providing critical insights essential for the effective management of elasmobranch populations, contributing to sustainable fisheries practices in the region.

Monitoring marine ecosystems and species through LTEO

The Long Term Ecological Observatories (LTEO) is a nationwide, multi-institutional initiative led by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to strengthen scientific understanding of India's ecosystems and their responses to climate change. As part of this collaborative effort, Dakshin Foundation works alongside the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) to study key marine habitats in the Andaman Islands, including coral reefs, reef fish, seagrass meadows and sea turtle populations.

Within this framework, Dakshin focuses on coastal and island ecosystems that are particularly sensitive to environmental change. Although these systems are naturally resilient, increasing climatic and local pressures are altering their structure and function, with consequences for both biodiversity and the communities that depend on them. The organisation's work emphasises long-term monitoring and research on species that act as ecosystem engineers and play a vital role in maintaining ecological stability.

Annual monitoring surveys were conducted across established sites in South Andaman, including the Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park (MGMNP). To improve our understanding of emerging stressors, we deployed specially designed TurfPods (Latrille et al. 2019) - proxies that mimic turf algae growing on reefs - to measure sediment accumulation rates across reefs.

Dakshin also carried out underwater visual census surveys across established sites to record the abundance, diversity, and size-class distribution of different functional groups of reef fish. Additionally, underwater video surveys were used to observe herbivorous fish feeding behaviour, a key process that supports reef resilience. These observations will be analysed in relation to sediment levels and algae cover to better understand ecosystem dynamics. Underwater temperature data loggers were deployed at all sites to record sea surface temperatures. Lastly, we conducted pilot surveys to examine carbonate budgets (i.e. carbonate production rate minus carbonate erosion rate) across the sites. Collectively, this work contributes to building a robust evidence base for conservation planning and adaptive management in the face of ongoing environmental change.

Blue Carbon Atlas for the Andaman Islands

Dakshin is advancing a national blue carbon initiative to strengthen the scientific and spatial evidence base for conserving and managing India's coastal ecosystems. As a first step, we completed a comprehensive blue carbon ecosystem review that synthesised scientific literature, spatial datasets and policy frameworks related to mangroves, seagrasses and salt marshes in India. The review compiled a database of over 150+ publications and evaluated remote-sensing and GIS approaches for mapping, monitoring and accounting of blue carbon ecosystems. Using available global and national datasets, we conducted a preliminary national-scale assessment of blue carbon stocks and developed a geospatial carbon-stock database.

Dakshin has designed a scientifically robust Blue Carbon Atlas for the Andaman Islands as a pilot, which draws on the findings of our scientific review and builds on improving accuracy to support carbon sequestration decisions. We collated and analysed multi-year satellite imagery, developed mangrove-specific mapping workflows, and generated spatial products including mangrove extent, carbon estimates and decadal trend analyses to detect degradation and changes in extent. Once validated, these methods will be expanded to other coastal regions to support a national-scale Blue Carbon Atlas and inform evidence-based conservation and climate policy.

Dakshin has actively shared progress and built partnerships for planned blue carbon interventions at national and international forums. These engagements have helped validate approaches, gather expert feedback, and open collaboration pathways to scale the Atlas and support long-term blue carbon ecosystem management in India.

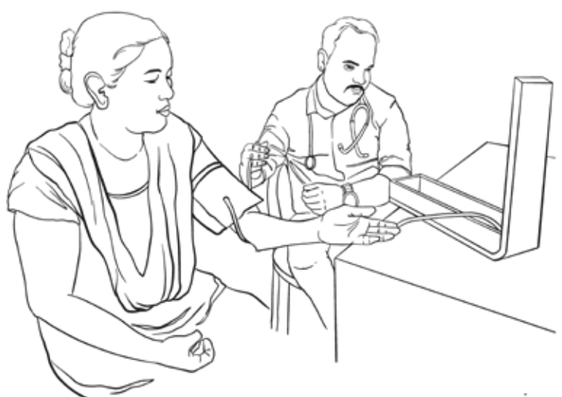
Enhancing the health and wellbeing of coastal communities

The islands' geographical isolation limits access to mainland resources, increasing coastal communities' vulnerability to health risks and poor wellbeing. In 2025-26, community health and wellbeing efforts expanded to capacitate frontline workers and enhance knowledge among youth, women, and children on gender, nutrition, and menstruation.

Dakshin organised health awareness sessions on adolescent wellbeing, creating safe spaces for youth and children to discuss concerns, promote emotional health, and address key issues like puberty, mental health and emotional wellbeing, self-esteem, peer pressure, gender, and healthy relationships. Additionally, we have conducted mental health sessions specific to handling stress in island communities. These sessions helped the participants learn practical stress-relief techniques, how to recognise early signs, and steps to build resilience for better mental wellness.

The community library, initiated last year, continued to serve as an important platform for engaging children and youth in Wandoor. Through regular interactions held three times a week, a variety of activities were conducted throughout the year, including book reading sessions, storytelling, movie screenings followed by facilitated discussions, art and craft activities, and board games. The community library provided a platform for promoting adolescent health, wellbeing, youth leadership, and life skills through regular educational and recreational activities.

The hindi and english versions of *Riya's Little Island*, a children's book on mental health and managing worries, was launched in the islands.. The event provided a platform to raise awareness and encourage conversations on children's mental health and emotional wellbeing within the community.



Promoting sports for coastal communities in ANI

Over the past year, Dakshin Foundation continued to engage children and youth in Wandoor and Junglighat through structured football programmes and tournaments, creating safe and inclusive spaces for participation, learning, and personal development.

Regular mixed-gender football sessions were conducted three times a week in both Wandoor and Junglighat, focusing on physical fitness, teamwork, discipline, communication skills, and confidence-building. The mixed-gender nature of the sessions encouraged equal participation and interaction between boys and girls, helping challenge gender stereotypes and promote greater inclusion in sports. The year also saw a significant increase in girls' participation across both sites. Through spirit circle discussions, children and youth engaged in conversations around inclusivity, healthy lifestyles, and life skills.

A key highlight of the year was the IslandActive Football Tournament held in Junglighat in May 2025, which brought together children from Wandoor and Junglighat and provided an important platform for competition, confidence-building, and community participation.

The programme also participated in several local tournaments during the year. Forming combined teams from Wandoor and Junglighat helped strengthen relationships, collaboration, and team spirit among participants.

A significant milestone for the programme this year was the representation of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by participants at multiple national-level football tournaments, including the U-13 ASMITA Zonal Football League in Bangalore, the Junior Girls' National Football Championship in Nagaland, and the Sub-Junior Girls' National Football Championship in Chhattisgarh. These opportunities provided children with valuable exposure, broadened their aspirations, and helped build confidence, resilience, and self-belief.

Another major milestone was the selection of two girls from Wandoor in the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Full Residential Football Programme at Netaji Stadium, Sri Vijaya Puram, reflecting the impact of sustained grassroots sports engagement in creating pathways for higher-level training and opportunities for young athletes from the community.

Fisheries management in ANI

In 2025-2026, Dakshin Foundation's SeaChange initiative strengthened its engagement with fishing communities across South Andaman, focusing on participatory fisheries governance. We prepared an insight report titled '*Beyond the Nets: Building participatory pathways for Andaman's fisheries'* outlining key findings and challenges identified through stakeholder consultations held across seven fishing clusters. The report was also submitted to the administration and government officials to highlight problems related to small-scale fisheries in the islands.

Dakshin and the Fisheries Department are entering into an MoU to strengthen fisheries management and sustainable use of fisheries in May 2026. This collaboration aims to make fisheries management in the ANI sustainable, participatory, and beneficial to fishing communities by combining the knowledge and resources vested within both the Department of Fisheries and Dakshin Foundation. More specifically, this collaboration will aim towards improved implementation of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Marine Fishing Regulation (ANMFR) with active involvement and support of the fishing community, get fishing communities better access to schemes and subsidies and strengthen the capacities of the various frontline staff from the Marine Police, Coast Guard, and the Fisheries Department for improved fisheries management in the islands.

Following last year's stakeholder consultations, we revisited the clusters to share the insight report with fishers.. These meetings also helped us to present and get feedback on our upcoming interventions, including a study on grouper breeding season and our plan to expand catch and effort data collection to multiple sites in the islands. We also presented emerging Union Territory and national-level fisheries developments and discussed forming cluster-level fisher committees to strengthen dialogue and representation. Meetings were held across the South Andaman Islands, yielding insights into current challenges and strategies for collective engagement with cluster-level fishers and fisheries departments.

We are developing an illustrated manual to enhance community engagement on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Marine Fishing Regulations and to secure the rights of small-scale fishers. Moreover, a workshop was hosted at the ANET field station for fisher representatives to build their knowledge of the regulations and prevent disputes. In the coming months, our aim is to create additional illustrated guidebooks for broader outreach.

Policy engagement in the Andaman Islands

Dakshin Foundation has a longstanding track record of engaging with policy processes and multi-departmental committees shaping the socio-environmental landscape of the Andaman Islands. This year, it continued to contribute to key policy domains including fisheries, tourism, and coastal zone management, while serving as a member of the Andaman and Nicobar Coastal Zone Management Authority (ANCZMA) and the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA). Through these engagements, Dakshin has worked to advance more integrated, context-responsive approaches to the holistic and sustainable development of the islands.

Through our engagement in ANCZMA committee, we have worked closely with government stakeholders to provide inputs on environmental impacts of new projects, implications on coastal community livelihoods, and the effect of development on marine ecosystems and local communities. We also contributed to discussions on Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) compliance, strengthening District Level Committees (DLCs), and shaping tourism based economic strategies. In our role within CAMPA, we participated in the 6th and 7th CAMPA meetings, to understand potential areas for intervention and provided recommendations on the effective utilization of CAMPA funds.

Dakshin was also invited to be a part of a District Level Physical Evaluation Committee for the Swachh Evam Harit Vidyalaya rating, an initiative by the Ministry of Education, aimed at recognising WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) and eco-friendly practices in schools of South Andaman District. Dakshin actively participated in surveying and evaluating schools.

Following our long-standing engagement on coastal issues, we were inducted as a member of the District Beach Management Committee (DBMC) and played a role in developing the Beach Management Plan (BMP) for New Wandoor Beach.

During the year, the Rural Development Department invited the organisation to participate in the State Core Committee meeting to review the implementation of Food, Nutrition, Health and WASH (FNHW) and gender interventions under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).

Beyond our role in statutory committees, we have actively contributed in shaping policy discourse in the islands through evidence based and context specific inputs on emerging policies and regulatory frameworks. During the year, we have provided detailed comments and recommendations on key policy initiatives, including Beach Tourism Policy and guidelines

on night sea kayaking. Dakshin's inputs focused on balancing economic opportunities for local communities with the need to safeguard the ecological integrity of the islands and ensure that development pathways remain socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

Dakshin has also provided comments on the Draft Report *"Roadmap for Blue Economy Transformation Leveraging Frontier Technology"* prepared by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for Niti Aayog. Recognising the importance of fisheries and marine resources to island livelihoods, the organisation highlighted the need to account for ecological impacts, local livelihood dependencies, and governance realities in the design and implementation of blue economy interventions. Recommendations also underscored the importance of context-specific assessments for island ecosystems, particularly in relation to offshore energy development, infrastructure planning, and technology-driven growth strategies. Collectively, these engagements have strengthened Dakshin's role as a trusted knowledge and policy partner in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Supporting sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurship

Despite relatively strong human development indicators and high literacy levels, the islands face significant employment challenges. Overall, unemployment remains high, with youth unemployment exceeding one-third of the working-age youth population and female youth unemployment approaching half of the working population. Graduate unemployment is also substantial, pointing to a structural mismatch between educational attainment and locally available opportunities. This employment gap has broader socio-economic implications, including rising frustration among young people and increasing psychosocial vulnerability. Addressing youth unemployment, particularly for educated young women and men, is therefore treated by Dakshin as an urgent development priority rather than a peripheral labour-market concern. Dakshin has partnered with GAME (Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship) to address this gap and the challenges in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (ANI). In the first two quarters of last year, we conducted a study to understand the diverse livelihood landscape of ANI through a comprehensive lens to integrate socio-economic realities, geographical specificities, and people's perceptions. Our analysis captures the interconnected realities of communities, institutions, and markets that shape local enterprise and employment opportunities.

In addition to secondary research, our report was based on field interactions with SHG women, panchayat representatives, and government officials of the Andaman and Nicobar Administration to review the unemployment issues and policy constraints. Our analysis maps key industries and emerging micro-enterprise activities to identify both challenges and potential for inclusive growth. It further examines the entrepreneurial ecosystem, analysing the enabling and limiting factors that determine how islanders engage in enterprise development. Our study also reviews existing institutional frameworks, government schemes, and stakeholder networks that impact livelihood and enterprise initiatives.

By bringing together policy analysis with the voices of island residents, the report highlights gaps in implementation and areas of opportunity for future intervention. Ultimately, this work contributes to building a grounded understanding and plan for a sustainable and equitable livelihood strategy for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Beyond the report, we engaged with SHG women in ANI to understand the challenges they face in developing and marketing their products. We also initiated a mapping exercise of SHG women involved in product-based enterprises to enable targeted and effective strategies for improving their entrepreneurship journey. For youth, particularly those transitioning from school to higher education, we designed and piloted a career guidance programme for students in Classes 9 and 10. Similar modules have been developed for Classes 11 and 12, as well as for undergraduate students, and are being piloted.

Centre for Island Sustainability: Research and community engagement

The Centre for Island Sustainability (CIS) continues to strengthen its role as a platform for advancing research, conservation, and outreach initiatives from the Andaman Nicobar Environment Team (ANET) field station. Recognising the increasing ecological pressures on the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, including climate-related disturbances and growing human impacts, CIS focuses on building knowledge systems and community engagement to support long-term ecosystem resilience.

A key component of this effort is the Ocean Sentinels Project, which aims to enhance grassroots capacities for monitoring and conserving interconnected ecosystems, from coral reefs to coastal forests. Long-term monitoring of *Acropora* and *Porites* corals across windward and leeward reef sites in the Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park continued for the fifth consecutive year, contributing to a growing understanding of reef recovery and ecosystem transformation.

Differences in temperature and habitat structure can influence the basal behaviour of reef fishes such as damselfishes. Monitoring key behaviours, including territoriality, cooperative interactions, and defence strategies, in relation to temperature and habitat complexity over the long term can help predict ecological responses to climate change. We analyse in-water recordings of territorial damselfish species to understand patterns of behavioural interactions and response to changing reef conditions.

As part of its expanding outreach efforts, CIS conducted training programmes in association with the Tourism Department, A&N Administration, for young islanders interested in leading intertidal walks as a sustainable tourism initiative. Through classroom and field-based sessions, participants were trained to identify major intertidal taxa and communicate the ecological significance of these habitats to visitors.

CIS additionally conducted training programmes for Forest Department staff in coral reef benthic and reef fish monitoring methods, with continued support planned for data transcription and analysis. Career guidance sessions for young women were also organised by women officers from the Andaman and Nicobar Police encouraging greater participation in public service careers.

3.3

TAMIL NADU

SeaChange in Tamil Nadu

The Palk Bay is located along the southeastern coast of India between the southeastern tip of Tamil Nadu and the northern coast of Sri Lanka. It is recognised as a crucial biodiversity hotspot and is home to a diverse range of marine species. The Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, is also located adjacent to Palk Bay. The region's economy heavily relies on fisheries, with numerous coastal communities engaged in traditional and modern fishing practices.

Currently, Palk Bay faces several environmental challenges, social and livelihood challenges, such as overfishing, habitat degradation, stock depletion from destructive practices like bottom trawling, damage to seagrass and coral habitats, and conflicts arising from cross-border fishing that threaten livelihoods and regional relations. Local communities remain heavily dependent on nearshore fisheries for income, which, combined with limited alternative livelihoods, weak access to entitlements, and inadequate healthcare, drives risky fishing into disputed waters and distress migration. Addressing these linked challenges requires intersectoral intervention in fisheries livelihood, governance reforms, habitat restoration, and stronger community-led conservation.

Dakshin's work in the Palk Bay region focuses on responding to these challenges through collaboration with the district administration, local governance strengthening, youth leadership development, participatory resource mapping and strengthening local livelihoods. We monitor marine species protected under wildlife legislation, map commons and fishing grounds to help secure community rights, build systems for data-driven governance, and collect detailed data on marine resources to inform planning. Through our integrated SeaChange initiative our interventions aim at multiple objectives for Palk Bay. These include fisheries based sustainable livelihood initiatives, building capacity for marine co-management through community ocean stewardship initiatives, strengthening community representation within local governance systems to build resilience of Palk Bay's social-ecological systems.

Ocean Stewards in Tamil Nadu: Knowledge, documentation and field research

The Ocean Stewards Initiative is grounded in the recognition that traditional fishing communities hold rich intergenerational knowledge of coastal and marine ecosystems, though this knowledge is often undervalued in formal fisheries science and management.

Through the programme, coastal youth are supported to build skills in research, documentation, mapping, monitoring, and communication. In doing so, community youth are empowered to integrate scientific methods and lived community knowledge, strengthen their role as community-based researchers, documenters, and facilitators of community-grounded evidence. Through such integrated approaches, we would like to place coastal youth at the forefront of coastal and marine conservation.

The approach is participatory and adaptive, with tools and processes shaped through ongoing engagement with communities and rooted in accessibility, ethical practice, and local relevance. The methodology combines participatory co-production with adaptive learning, allowing training and implementation to respond to local contexts, emerging needs, and the interests of the Ocean Stewards themselves. Training covers biological and socio-economic data collection, species identification, qualitative research methods, participatory mapping, data management, communication, and documentation. Grounded in principles of ethical engagement, accessibility, inclusion, and accountability, so that the process is both rigorous and responsive to the social realities of coastal settings.

In Tamil Nadu, Ocean Stewards have played an active role in generating evidence on fisheries transitions and socio-ecological change through village surveys, participatory mapping, local ecological documentation, stakeholder interviews, and fisheries monitoring. They have also contributed significantly to research on marine ingredients supply chains and their implications for livelihoods and food systems. Beyond research, they have also been involved in producing a documentary film on the trawling sector and have worked independently on their projects, contributing to locally generated knowledge and community perspectives.

Through this work, the initiative continues to build practical skills, confidence, and long-term pathways for coastal youth to engage in conservation, co-management, and local resource governance.

Women-centred livelihood models for coastal resilience

Dakshin is developing women-centred livelihood models to strengthen incomes, food security, and climate resilience for small-scale fishers and coastal communities. Building on locally available marine resources and community knowledge, we have identified seaweed value addition, along with fish and crab processing residues, as feedstocks for value-added products. A market and value chain assessment, along with an enterprise development plan, has been completed for seaweed, chitin chitosan, and fish amino acid-based livelihoods.

The assessment identified fish amino acid as a frugal, near-term circular economy opportunity, particularly for women's self-help groups, by converting fish waste into an organic fertiliser using simple, locally available materials. This model addresses solid waste management challenges in coastal areas while creating supplementary income opportunities and improving access to sustainable agricultural inputs for local farmers. Dakshin has also completed laboratory testing of fish amino acid samples and is currently processing the results to better understand product quality and guide future enterprise strategy. In parallel, we are exploring fish hydrolysate as a related pathway, with the potential to support women-led production of raw materials and liquid hydrolysate for further processing into aquaculture feed additives. This will reduce dependence on wild-caught marine fish for fish meal and fish oil.

Dakshin's seaweed work focuses on promoting the wild harvest of indigenous species in the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay regions, where seaweed has both ecological and economic importance, and women play a major role in harvesting. This work responds to the realities faced by harvesters, including climate vulnerability, poor pricing, low bargaining power, limited support, and inequitable benefit sharing. The approach, therefore, centres community priorities by improving pricing, co-designing drying and processing solutions, supporting community-level value addition such as biofertilizers, and strengthening entrepreneurial capacity and market linkages, so women retain better margins.

Chitin chitosan is recognised as a naturally occurring structural biopolymer found in the exoskeletons of crustaceans such as shrimp and crabs, and is therefore a higher value pathway with industrial applications. However, it currently requires industrial processing, stronger regulatory compliance, and greater technical capacity, so Dakshin is approaching it as a longer- term opportunity through aggregation and partnership models rather than community-level production.

Now that feasibility has been assessed, the next step is to pilot fish amino acid, fish hydrolysate, and seaweed value addition models. Simultaneously, we will continue to build market linkages and product quality systems that support community-owned enterprises and more equitable coastal livelihoods.

Participatory mapping of blue swimmer crab fisheries

One of Dakshin's key objectives is to conduct research that addresses knowledge gaps in fisheries value chains and the factors shaping them. The blue swimmer crab (*Portunus pelagicus*) is a fast-growing and commercially important, shallow-water species found along India's coastline, with a strong presence in the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay region.

This fishery supports small-scale livelihoods and provides a significant source of cash income for fishers and local crab processing units, both of which are highly dependent on the availability of blue swimmer crab due to its high commercial value. The ecological foundations of this fishery are closely linked to seagrass ecosystems, which serve as essential habitats for the species.

Seagrass ecosystems offer a viable pathway for both conservation and livelihoods. They are essential blue carbon ecosystems and provide critical habitat for high-value marine species. They also support multiple ecosystem services, including shoreline stabilisation, storm protection, nursery functions, and nutrient retention.

To better understand the blue swimmer crab value chain and identify opportunities to strengthen livelihoods, Dakshin is undertaking participatory mapping in 26 villages across three coastal districts: Ramanathapuram, Pudukottai, and Thanjavur.. The selection of villages is based on the prominence of blue swimmer crab and other key resources, and on the need to represent both small-scale and trawl fisheries. Our work documents current and historical fishing grounds for blue swimmer crab and other key fisheries resources, and captures the distribution and use of associated seagrass ecosystems. The mapping records habitats, fishing crafts and gears, areas of high fishing effort, seasonality and weather patterns, migratory routes, nursery areas, and community fishing commons. This approach strengthens understanding of blue swimmer crab fisheries, other invertebrate fisheries, and resource use patterns. By placing fishing communities at the centre of data collection, it generates locally grounded datasets that can inform fisheries management in data-poor and resource-dependent contexts such as coastal India, thereby supporting community stewardship, co-management, and collective decision-making. Following completion of mapping, a coastal map will be developed to outline major crab landing centres and fishing areas, key stakeholders, fishing practices, and the crab processing value chain.

Understanding SSF youth aspirations and leadership pathways

Young people in small-scale fishing (SSF) communities are navigating a rapidly changing social, economic and ecological landscape. Their aspirations are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural identity, environmental uncertainty and shifting livelihood opportunities. While many youth hold deep connections to their coastal ecosystems and traditional knowledge systems, they also face growing pressures that limit access to education and culturally relevant employment opportunities. This often leads to ambivalence toward traditional livelihoods and fulfilling their own aspirations in this culturally niche landscape.

We have kick-started a pilot initiative in the Palk Bay region to understand the aspirations of young people and the challenges that come in their way to fulfil them. These participatory mapping approaches capture youth narratives on livelihood and educational aspirations, cultural and gendered identity, and connections to the changing environment.

Leadership pathways for SSF youth are similarly non-linear and influenced by structural barriers such as caste, gender norms, and limited participation in governance spaces. Young women, in particular, face additional constraints due to patriarchal norms that restrict their mobility and visibility in leadership roles. At the same time, there is a strong latent potential among youth to act as change-makers within their communities.

By mapping their hopes, challenges and existing capacities, this initiative aims to co-create tools to build leadership pathways that are rooted in community realities and shape their future.

Supporting fisher participation in local governance processes in the Palk Bay

While mapping and systems work in Palk Bay are underway (commons mapping, participatory mapping, system mapping), we identified a key gap - limited linkages and participation of fishers in local governance. This has led to weak awareness of community needs and entitlements among decision-makers and residents.

To address this, we organised a two-day local governance workshop in Ramanathapuram in partnership with Thannatchi, a volunteer network that works to strengthen local capacity for governance and Prathabaramapuram Village Panchayat Office. The workshop brought together elected representatives, community leaders and fisher communities from 11 panchayats and 32 villages to build understanding of gram panchayat functions, rights, entitlements, and the fishing community's priorities. Sessions focused on practical ways to access local resources and schemes, strengthen governance processes, and identify collaborative solutions. We collected participants' perspectives and needs related to local governance and used these inputs to inform follow-up actions.

The workshop helped in expanding our local network and generating strong interest from elected representatives and community leaders in partnering with Dakshin on future initiatives to strengthen fisher participation in governance.

Strengthening fisheries governance through data systems

The Neithal Convergence Unit (NCU) initiative, collaborating with the district administration of Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu, addresses the need for integrated, data-driven governance to support coastal communities in Palk Bay. Given the fragmented nature of available information and the absence of accessible, village-level insights, the initiative focuses on consolidating and analysing socioeconomic and fisheries-related data to inform more effective decision-making and targeted interventions.

As part of this effort, a comprehensive dashboard is being developed using publicly available CMFRI's Fisheries census datasets from 2010 and 2016. The platform is designed to present a set of key development and demographic indicators in an interactive format, enabling the district administration to better understand the gaps and design interventions for the socio-economic development of small-scale fisher communities.

Over time, the dashboard will be expanded, with inputs from the district administration, into a dedicated web-based platform that integrates additional datasets, such as the Fisheries Census 2025, information on the uptake of government schemes and subsidies, disaggregated fish landing data, and real-time fish market prices.

In parallel, the initiative seeks to improve grievance redressal mechanisms for fisher communities by introducing a more structured system for recording and tracking complaints. Existing grievance data is being organised and analysed to identify recurring issues, while the inclusion of data from previous years will help reveal broader spatial and temporal trends. These insights are expected to support more responsive and prioritised action in addressing community concerns. Together, these efforts aim to create a more transparent, evidence-based framework that strengthens governance and enhances the delivery of support to coastal communities.

Building effective governance of coastal and marine commons

Coastal commons such as beach spaces, intertidal zones, mangroves, mudflats, etc., provide fishing communities with a number of services. These shared-use spaces are used for several livelihood-related uses and provide sustenance, in addition to supporting various social and cultural practices of local communities. In order to strengthen governance over coastal and marine commons, Daksshin has undertaken initiatives for community mapping exercises. In collaboration with the fisher leaders and youth of the fishing villages of Oliakuda, Thannerootru, Karankadu and Morepannai, wehave collected GIS coordinates that mark key resources. Concurrently, we attended village committee meetings in Olaikuda, Thaneer Ootru, and Morepannai to present the mapping work, explain its benefits, and request the formation of local committees; as a result, Morepannai has formed a six-member committee, including women, to support ongoing mapping activities.

A paper titled *'Between utterance and action: The shaping of social accountability in India's coastal commons'* was presented at the Marine Social Science Conference in Sri Lanka in March 2026. The paper critically analyses the conditions whereby formal discourse (legislative, judicial and executive) and practice have shaped social accountability over coastal commons and traces collective and individual actions for accountability taken in Tamil Nadu.

Long-term monitoring of elasmobranchs in Palk Bay

Elasmobranchs, including sharks, rays and guitarfishes, have significant ecological, economic and cultural value for coastal communities, particularly in Palk Bay where they contribute to fisheries and livelihoods. Monitoring of elasmobranchs helps to understand exploitation patterns, population decline, ecosystem health, and the impact of climate change on populations. Elasmobranchs have a significant place in the Palk Bay fisheries. In particular, rays hold economic and cultural importance for the people in Palk Bay. Even though elasmobranchs significantly contribute to fisheries and livelihood, knowledge on elasmobranch resources and fisheries is limited in Palk Bay.

Monitoring of elasmobranch resources through fishery-dependent landing surveys in Palk Bay continues to address these critical gaps, which are required for informed management and conservation action plans. Given the ecological, economic and cultural importance of sharks and rays, the initiative focuses on generating reliable, long-term data on species composition, diversity, abundance, and fishing practices in the region.

Ongoing field efforts involve systematic documentation of landings, including species diversity, catch volumes, biological parameters, and associated fishing effort. This approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of elasmobranch diversity, population status and their exploitation patterns in Palk Bay.

Capacity building remains a key component of the initiative, with field teams receiving training in species identification, standardised data collection protocols, and measurement techniques. Parallel efforts are underway to develop material for identification of elasmobranch species protected under the Wild Life Protection Amendment Act, 2022, and resources to improve accuracy in data recording and support wider awareness and outreach.

Through sustained monitoring and strengthened field capacity, the initiative is contributing to a growing evidence base that can inform management measures and support the long-term sustainability of elasmobranch fisheries in Palk Bay.

Palk Bay fisheries and the marine ingredients transition

Reduction fisheries refer to the use of fish catch to produce marine ingredients, primarily fishmeal and fish oil (FMFO), which serve as high-protein raw material in feeds for aquaculture, pet food, poultry and other livestock sectors. While these products support growing global food systems, the fisheries supplying them raise important ecological, socio-economic, and nutritional concerns.

Palk Bay remains a critical site for understanding the growing pressures associated with reduction fisheries and the expansion of marine ingredients value chains. A shallow and biodiverse seascape with extensive seagrass meadows, Palk Bay has long supported traditional small-scale fisheries, but decades of mechanised trawling have contributed to habitat degradation, intensified competition, and deepened conflicts over marine resources. Interestingly, despite being part of a capital-intensive, large-scale fishing sector, many trawl fishers express declining motivation to continue fishing, reflecting the complex economic, ecological, and social realities shaping the fishery today. These pressures are increasingly intersecting with concerns around the diversion of fish from local food systems into fish meal and fish oil production.

Dakshin's work in Tamil Nadu has focused on sustained field research, evidence building, and public dialogue to better understand these transitions and their implications. We have been documenting the species entering marine ingredients supply chains, including the extent to which juvenile fish are being used, while also examining whether food-grade fish are being diverted away from human consumption. This work is helping generate a clearer picture of how changing market demand is affecting livelihoods, resource use, and food systems in the region.

A significant share of this effort has been led by Ocean Stewards, whose role has included bycatch monitoring, data collection, multi-stakeholder interviews, village-level documentation, and documentary filming on the trawling sector. Their field presence has strengthened both the scale and depth of the research, while grounding the work in local knowledge and lived realities. Across this work, Dakshin continues to centre the concerns of small-scale fishers and marginalised coastal communities, while also recognising the need for just and context-sensitive transitions across the wider fisheries sector.

Building partnerships for marine plastics and coastal solid waste action

Tackling the complex problem of marine plastics and coastal solid waste management requires diverse collaborations and partnerships. Towards this, we engaged in several initiatives across civil society groups and governmental bodies. As part of ongoing efforts to deepen engagement on marine pollution and coastal waste management, we participated in the India-Norway Marine Pollution and Plastic Waste Forum 2025, where we presented our ongoing work and discussed field experiences across regions. The forum created opportunities to engage with organisations, researchers, and practitioners working across the marine pollution sector, enabling exchanges on emerging challenges, community-based responses, and potential areas for collaboration. These interactions helped situate local coastal initiatives within broader regional and international conversations on plastic waste governance and marine conservation.

Dakshin also attended the launch of a trash barrier initiative in Chennai, organised by Kabadiwalla Connect, to better understand technological approaches to waste interception and urban waterway management. The visit provided insights into the functioning, operational challenges, and scalability of such systems, while also opening discussions on collaborative possibilities and adaptation of similar interventions in other coastal contexts.

As part of understanding circular waste management systems linked to fisheries, we visited the Fishnet Collection Centre in Kasimedu, Chennai, established by the government to address discarded fishing net waste. The visit helped assess the operational model, institutional mechanisms, and possibilities for replication in Ramanathapuram, particularly in strengthening systems for responsible disposal and recycling of fisheries-related plastic waste.

We also engaged with the growing concern around nurdle spill impacts along the Tamil Nadu coast, examining its ecological and livelihood implications for coastal communities. Building on these learnings and field observations, a paper on the social and environmental impacts of nurdle pollution was prepared for the upcoming South Asia Marine Social Science Conference 2026. Together these activities all contribute to wider regional discussions and partnerships on solutions to marine plastics and coastal solid waste for the Palk Bay.

Kickstarting sports initiative in Palk Bay

Dakshin has expanded its youth empowerment initiative in Palk Bay by launching an inclusive, community-driven sports programme in Olaikuda village, creating safe and supportive spaces for young people to engage, connect, and thrive. After engaging with community members, village leaders and children, we carried out a scoping exercise to assess children's and youth's interest in sports.The programme was formally inaugurated with the participation of local stakeholders, followed by the commencement of sessions encouraging children's participation. Regular sports sessions are now underway while we monitor uptake and community response; the pilot will run through the monsoon period, and if successful, the programme will be scaled to other parts of Palk Bay.

3.4

LAKSHADWEEP

Lakshadweep - moving towards SeaChange

Lakshadweep is an archipelago of 36 islands (10 inhabited) with about 70,000 people living on just 32 sq. km, yet an EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) of 400,000 sq. km. Fishing is central to island life and identity, and the pole-and-line tuna fishery and baitfish harvest underpin local livelihoods and food systems. The islands depend heavily on the mainland for most goods and services, making fisheries critical for both economy and culture.

The fishery now faces multiple, interacting challenges. Rising operational costs, weak post-harvest processing and storage, and limited access to quality markets reduce fishers' returns. A production-centred development model has increased fishing capacity and encouraged longer, more intensive trips, contributing to stock pressure and habitat impacts. Unsustainable baitfish practices have emerged, threatening the tuna fishery, while long-term ecological data on coral reefs, seagrass beds and baitfish distributions remain scarce, hindering evidence-based and equitable management.

Dakshin's interventions combine long-term ecological monitoring with community engagement and governance support. The team developed the *"Sharks and Rays of Lakshadweep"* field guide and ran awareness workshops to reduce hunting of protected species; advanced long-term monitoring of seagrass habitats and green turtle populations to generate insights for conservation and management; generated the first in-water, fishery-independent baitfish data through collaborations with local fishers and divers, translated findings into participatory resource maps displayed at jetties and markets, produced outreach materials on life cycle of baitfishes and sustainable octopus fishery to broaden community access to information; and used monitoring results to support co-management processes and local decision-making.

These efforts aim to strengthen locally led, resilient fisheries to improve ecological data and build participatory maps to help target conservation and management actions, such as awareness and capacity building, encourage sustainable fishing practices, co-management for equitable governance, better post-harvest and market linkages to secure livelihoods and conserve marine ecosystems.

Developing a zero-waste tuna processing unit for livelihood diversification

The pole-and-line tuna fishery in Lakshadweep is a highly sustainable, community-driven fishery that delivers outsized social and economic benefits at a small scale. Much of the catch is traditionally processed into *masmin* through manual boiling, smoking and sun-drying. Masmin is culturally important and in demand across the Indian Ocean, but its production remains weather-dependent, labour-intensive and reliant on ageing infrastructure. This creates variability in quality, limits access to higher-value domestic and export markets, and reduces income stability for fishers.

Transitioning away from *masmin* is neither feasible nor desirable in the short term; it provides daily income and a safety net when fresh fish markets are volatile. Therefore, Dakshin's approach focuses on improving *masmin's* profitability while enabling diversification into more value-added products. Dakshin has designed an integrated intervention to standardise and upgrade masmin production through hygienic, low-energy, small-footprint processing facilities that reduce dependence on weather and firewood, improve food safety, and help the product meet higher quality standards.

Central to this effort is "The Whole Fish", a community-based, zero-waste processing model tailored for a single-island pilot in Lakshadweep which we developed this year. The facility places *masmin* at the core while adding three complementary product streams: small-scale canned tuna (produced from fillets), fish amino acid (from offal/bones), and poultry feed (from remaining waste). This four-pronged design maximises resource use, reduces post-harvest losses, generates local employment (including opportunities for SHGs to run canning units), and creates multiple revenue streams for fishers. Dakshin prepared and submitted to the Lakshadweep Fisheries Department, proposing the setting up of a processing unit on the islands, with requisite technical and operation details and plans to meet community training, capacity needs. Overall, the Whole Fish intervention, when operational, will help integrate traditional *masmin* practices with appropriate technology to increase value addition, stabilise incomes, and strengthen the resilience of Lakshadweep's tuna fishery.

Matsya Mela 2026

The Matsya Mela, held in January 2026 at Kavaratti Island, Lakshadweep, served as a dynamic platform for advancing dialogue on sustainable small-scale fisheries (SSF), bringing together fishers, island communities, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. Organised by Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Lakshadweep, under ICAR-CMFRI, in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries and ICAR-ATARI, the mela fostered knowledge exchange, innovation and community engagement centred on the future of island fisheries and livelihoods.

Dakshin Foundation's participation highlighted its sustained engagement in Lakshadweep, with a focus on community-based fisheries management and co-management approaches. Its exhibition stall, recognised as one of the best at the *mela*, showcased over 12 years of work in the islands, including efforts to strengthen fisher institutions, support participatory governance processes, and integrate ecological knowledge into fisheries management. Interactive games and displays drew significant visitor interest, enabling wider dissemination of Dakshin's work across coastal regions of India.

The *mela* featured 72 exhibitors presenting diverse fisheries-related initiatives and technologies, alongside technical sessions organised as farmer-scientist interfaces. Dakshin contributed to these discussions on community perspectives in fisheries co-management. The screening of *Misrav* further enriched dialogue by highlighting emerging challenges and opportunities in Lakshadweep's pole-and-line fisheries.

Community engagement formed a key component of the *mela*. A collaborative skit by Dakshin and island participants emerged as a highlight, emphasising sustainable resource use and everyday fishing practices. Building on this engagement, Dakshin was also invited to conduct a similar performance at the next *Rang Mahotsav*, which will be organised by the Department of Art and Culture, Lakshadweep, and will be held in Kavaratti in February 2026, further strengthening awareness of ocean conservation and responsible practices among island communities.

Interventions for co-management of Lakshadweep fisheries

Fisheries in the Lakshadweep Islands are at a critical juncture, shaped by evolving socio-economic conditions and ecological pressures. A key need is the revitalisation of community participation in fisheries monitoring, as declining engagement has resulted in limited availability of reliable, fine-scale data to inform management decisions. Without consistent, locally generated data, it becomes challenging to respond effectively to changes in fish stocks and fishing practices.

Another pressing need is the strengthening of knowledge and management of baitfish resources, which form the backbone of the pole-and-line (P&L) tuna fishery. Despite their ecological and economic importance, systematic, long-term monitoring of baitfish populations remains limited. Additionally, high operational costs and other challenges lead them to adopt unsustainable baitfish-fishing practices, such as light-assisted catching, and to erode Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), particularly in Minicoy, highlighting the loss of time-tested practices that have historically supported sustainable fisheries. Strengthening stakeholder collaboration across communities, cooperatives and government agencies is also essential to enable more inclusive and adaptive governance.

In response, Dakshin continues to build on over a decade of engagement in Lakshadweep by reinforcing participatory approaches to fisheries management. Efforts this year have focused on reinitiating Community-Based Fisheries Monitoring (CBFM) through renewed engagement with P&L fishers, aiming to restore consistent data collection and strengthen community stewardship. Work on baitfish has progressed through collaboration with local divers and fishers, expanding participatory resource mapping of the baitfish grounds in the lagoon to highlight the importance of these resource areas, and supporting knowledge sharing and awareness. Simultaneously, TEK documentation is being expanded to inform policy dialogues and integrate traditional practices into contemporary governance frameworks. These efforts lay the foundation for more sustained, community-led fisheries management in the coming years.

Establishing a baseline for elasmobranch species occurrence and abundance in the islands

Elasmobranchs (sharks and rays) are key indicators of marine ecosystem health, yet there is limited baseline data on their spatial distribution and species abundance in the Lakshadweep Islands. Increasing fishing pressure, habitat degradation, and climate change necessitate a systematic understanding of their past abundance and present occurrence. A preliminary scoping study is essential to identify knowledge gaps, guide conservation priorities, and support sustainable management strategies in the islands.

The study focuses on mapping the spatial and temporal distribution of elasmobranchs across Lakshadweep. Past occurrence data is being reconstructed by engaging local fishers, using participatory mapping to document historical sightings and fishing grounds. Additionally, scuba divers are being interviewed to determine current elasmobranch species assemblages, distributions, and aggregations by gathering observational data on locations where elasmobranchs were previously and are currently encountered. These two knowledge sources will be integrated to create a comparative spatial blueprint of past and present distribution patterns.

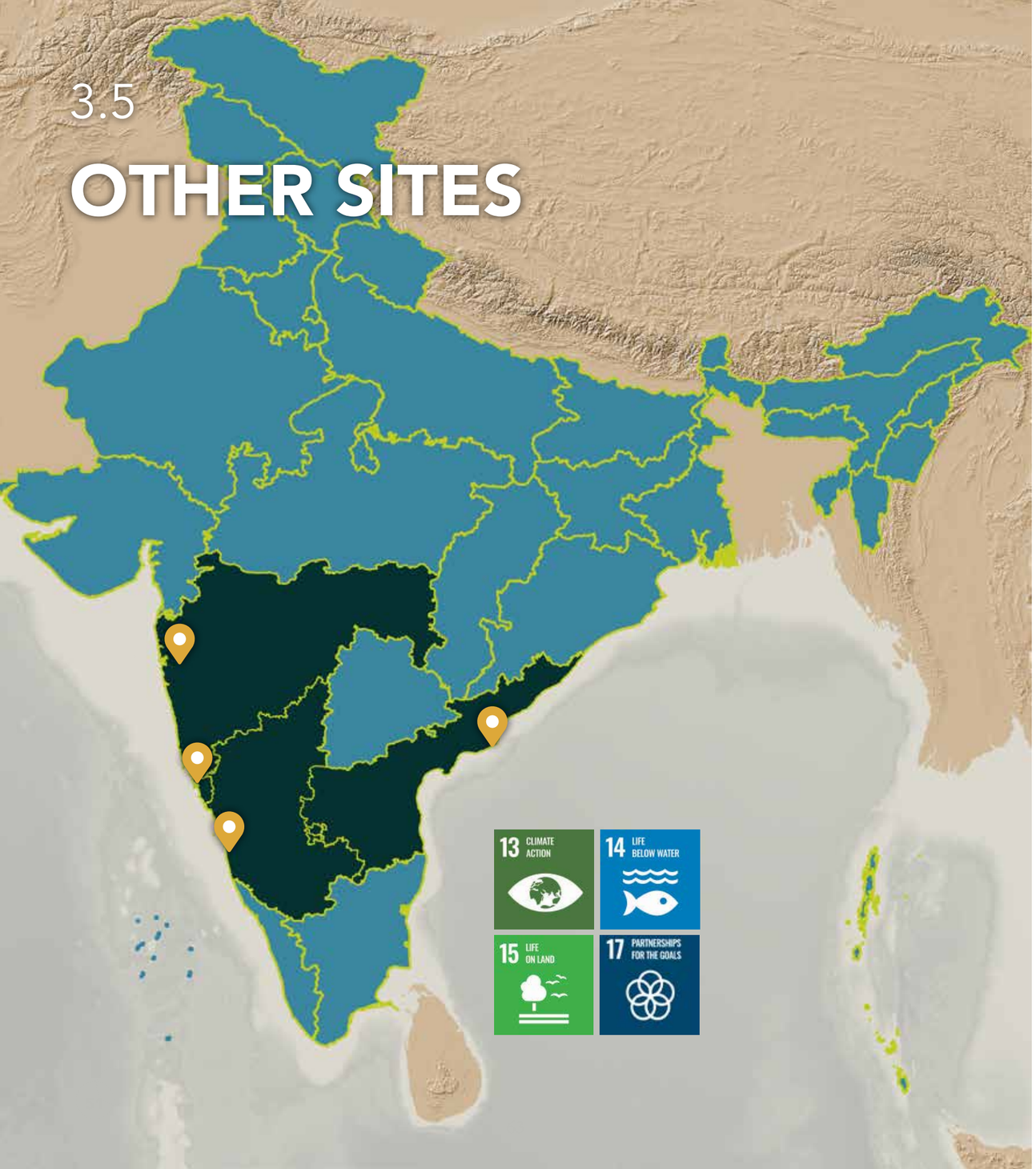
By combining historical and present data using local ecological knowledge (LEK), the study will analyse trends in species distribution and abundance, helping to identify areas of decline, persistence or potential recovery. This approach provides a foundation for targeted ecological studies and conservation planning for elasmobranchs in the Lakshadweep Islands.

Monitoring green turtles and seagrass

Dakshin has operated a long-term monitoring programme in collaboration with the Lakshadweep Department of Environment and Forests to track green turtle abundances and seagrass population dynamics. In addition to our annual monitoring of green turtles and sea grass, Dakshin launched a photo-identification study with local dive professionals to map green turtle foraging movements. The long-term monitoring has revealed that turtles often deplete seagrass in one lagoon before moving to the next, creating fragmented meadows dominated by fast-growing species. To better track these movements, Dakshin partnered with Bengaluru-based Arcturus Inc. to develop low-cost GPS-LoRa tags and built an in-house tag for deployment across the islands. Combining the photo-ID dataset with GPS-LoRa tracking will produce high-quality, spatially explicit insights to inform evidence-based conservation of turtles and seagrass habitats. The team is currently testing the LoRa tags for range, accuracy and data reliability; once validated, these affordable tags will be made available for wider use by government and research agencies.

3.5

OTHER SITES



ANDHRA PRADESH

Advancing a just, inclusive, and sustainable aquaculture landscape

India's aquaculture sector has grown rapidly over the past two decades and now plays an important role in global seafood production. Shrimp aquaculture in particular has become a major contributor to export earnings, rural employment, and national food systems. While this growth has generated significant economic opportunities, it has also introduced environmental, social, and governance challenges that require careful examination through a global value-chain perspective.

There are also close linkages between marine capture fisheries and aquaculture, as feed for many aquaculture species is produced using fish meal and fish oil extracted from low-quality bycatch from commercial fisheries such as trawlers and purse seiners. As demand for aquaculture products increases, pressure on capture fisheries grows, challenging equity within the seafood sector. Hence, there is a growing need for a comprehensive, landscape-based approach that addresses interconnected issues across the entire ecosystem.

We are currently assessing the aquaculture sector through a landscape approach in Andhra Pradesh, India's leading shrimp-producing state. We examine the sector not only from a production perspective but also through the wider social-ecological systems that support it. This includes coastal ecosystems, water resources, farming communities, labour networks, supply chains, and global markets that shape demand. Our work aims to strengthen transparency and accountability across seafood value chains, improve governance of aquaculture and fisheries resources, and support production systems that are environmentally responsible, socially equitable, and economically resilient.

Our engagement with the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) and the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) highlighted critical gaps, including fragmented efforts across the shrimp supply chain, impacts on habitats and biodiversity, and limited integration of community perspectives. The project is therefore essential to build strong local partnerships among industry stakeholders, environmental experts, and communities; map and align ongoing initiatives; and empower key change-makers who can drive sustainable transformation. By adopting a long-term, collaborative landscape approach, we aim to create a resilient foundation for responsible aquaculture development in Andhra Pradesh, ensuring environmental sustainability, economic viability, and social wellbeing.

Monitoring elasmobranchs in Visakhapatnam and Kakinada

As part of its ongoing work, Dakshin has extended its long-term elasmobranch monitoring to Visakhapatnam and Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh through landing centre surveys focused on documenting elasmobranch diversity, catch composition, and catch effort. Surveys are conducted during morning landings, with monitoring in Visakhapatnam carried out directly at boat landing sites through interactions with fishers. In Kakinada, monitoring is centred at the Khumbhabhishekam Landing Centre, where shark catches from much of the Andhra Pradesh coast are brought for sale. The project also supports the development of a handbook for fishers on identifying protected species and distinguishing them from species that can be legally fished. In addition, the project is examining pollutant concentrations in various elasmobranch species, using microplastics as an indicator of environmental contamination and bioaccumulation.

GOA

Dakshin Foundation's work in Goa focuses on building robust and meaningful networks between the three key stakeholders of its coastal waters - small-scale fisheries, tourism, and the Forest Department - to conserve endangered species. The organisation works to strengthen fisheries governance and tourism management by involving local communities in decision-making, promoting community-based management, and safeguarding their rights over coastal resources.

Within this broader context, Goa is recognised as a key hotspot for the endangered Indian Ocean humpback dolphin and the Indo-Pacific finless porpoise, found close to the coastline yet largely unknown to many. While these waters support rich fisheries and a thriving dolphin-watching industry, dolphins face increasing pressures from tourism, fishing activities, and pollution, resulting in high mortality. Our research uncovered how these activities may impact the survival of both species and what could be done to conserve them. In order to reach out to a larger community, we also developed a film that brings audiences closer to these elusive animals and their habitat, while highlighting simple, collective actions that can help safeguard their future. Complementing this, we released guidance on responsible tourism, encouraging visitors and locals to observe dolphins respectfully without disturbing their natural behaviour.

Altogether, through research, policy engagement, and outreach, Dakshin addresses key challenges in conserving coastal species that directly impact marine ecosystems and fishing and tourism-related livelihoods. This work brings together various perspectives to help inform management plans that can minimise human impacts on the coast and help build a sustainable future.

Dakshin also participated in select local small scale fisheries organisations' meetings to understand issues shaping the conservation of marine and coastal resources and capacity needs for fishing community engagement in wider fisheries and ocean management opportunities in Goa.

KARNATAKA

In Karnataka, Dakshin's work on reduction fisheries builds on the 2022 scoping study and earlier engagement in Mangalore. The current phase is focused on taking this work further by examining the sector in greater depth and exploring opportunities to scale engagement across additional coastal sites in Karnataka. This initial phase has centred on preliminary stakeholder interactions and value chain mapping to better understand the structure of the sector, the actors involved, and the routes through which fish move into reduction fisheries supply chains.

This early-stage work is helping identify key evidence gaps, emerging concerns, and potential entry points for more detailed research and monitoring. It is also shaping an approach that is attentive to local dynamics and aligned with Dakshin's broader commitment to sustainable marine resource governance. While still at a preliminary stage, the work in Karnataka is establishing the foundation for deeper field engagement and more systematic evidence building in the next phase.

We also participated in select meetings for coastal and estuarine conservation across Karnataka's coastal districts.

MAHARASHTRA

Understanding reduction fisheries in Malvan

Malvan is one of Dakshin's primary sites for work on the marine ingredients sector, and an important location for building evidence on reduction fisheries and their implications for coastal livelihoods and food systems. It also examines the nutritional importance of small fish and their role in local food systems in the context of ecological change and climate stress.

During the year, the team expanded its evidence-building efforts through bycatch monitoring, fisheries catch sampling, and stakeholder engagement. A key part of the work has been to document what species are entering marine ingredients supply chains and to better understand the implications for access to animal protein, micronutrient availability, and local livelihoods. At the same time, the team has been scoping the broader landscape, such as documenting fisheries transformations in the region, to strengthen and scale its evidence-building efforts in the coming phase.

Ocean Stewards have played an indispensable role in this process. Their involvement in catch documentation, species identification, interviews, and data management has helped deepen the evidence base while ensuring that the work remains closely connected to local realities. In this way, the effort in Maharashtra is strengthening both scientific understanding of the sector and community participation in conversations on marine resource use and governance.

Ocean Stewards in Malvan: Youth, knowledge, and marine governance

In Malvan, Dakshin continued to strengthen the capacities of Ocean Stewards through training tailored to the social and ecological realities of the landscape. This included workshops on qualitative data collection, field interviewing, species identification, data entry, post-hoc analysis, data curation, and the use of the KoboToolbox for research and monitoring. Alongside these technical components, there were in-depth discussions on practical concepts and philosophies related to the conservation and sustainable governance of coastal and marine resources, creating an ongoing knowledge exchange that informed both field practice and project development.

Ocean Stewards also developed independent projects based on their interests and understanding of pressing local issues, with Dakshin providing regular support in conceptualisation and field implementation. They are now contributing to catch sampling, stakeholder interviews, and broader evidence generation in Malvan, while helping build a stronger foundation for community-based monitoring and long-term engagement in marine resource governance.

Monitoring elasmobranchs in Malvan

Dakshin continued its long-term monitoring of elasmobranchs in Malvan, Maharashtra, through regular landing centre surveys and beach transect assessments. Monthly monitoring of sharks and rays at the Malvan landing centre was carried out to document species composition, catch effort, and fisheries diversity, including morning and evening market surveys. For the first time, sampling was also conducted during the monsoon fishing ban period, enabling the collection of fisheries data from previously unmonitored months. In parallel, the team carried out beach activity mapping and transect surveys for widenose guitarfishes across selected stretches from Achara to Devbag, including 42 to 48 one-kilometre transects, to assess abundance and habitat use in the sandflat areas around the Malvan Marine Sanctuary. In addition, the team interviewed 20 fishermen to understand their perceptions of guitarfish conservation and to document local ecological knowledge based on fishing experience. Our Ocean Stewards supported this effort by conducting long-term sampling, including 10 consecutive days of monitoring at the landing centre and regular field surveys. These efforts are contributing to the

first systematic dataset on elasmobranch abundance and fisheries interactions in Maharashtra.

An outreach workshop on the conservation of sharks and rays was also organised to introduce Dakshin's work, strengthen rapport with the local community, and raise awareness among fisher communities in the Malvan region. The session covered Dakshin Foundation's work across the Indian coastline and island systems and ongoing engagements with communities at various field sites. It also included an introduction to the Ocean Stewards Initiative and the Marine Flagships programme, and a presentation on shark and ray conservation, including their ecological importance, species identification, species protected under the Wild Life Protection Act, relevant government regulations, and "Dos and Don'ts' for handling protected elasmobranch species. The broader aim is to conduct a series of awareness sessions with local communities to reduce conflict between departments and fishers, while also promoting an effective system for managing incidental catch of protected species.

BLUE FOOD FUTURES

Dakshin has taken part in multiple national and international dialogues, panels, and stakeholder conversations that bring together governmental and intergovernmental organisations, certification agencies, civil society, researchers, and industry actors in the marine ingredients sector. These forums have opened up space for collective discussion on the sustainability of the sector, the future of marine ingredients, and the need for solutions that are equitable, practical, and inclusive of different fishing constituencies. Discussions have also highlighted the importance of community-led monitoring, habitat restoration, youth engagement, and stronger governance of fisheries transitions, especially where shared resources are under increasing strain.

Across these engagements, Dakshin has consistently emphasised co-management, shared responsibility, and policy approaches that protect small-scale fishers' ability to access food, rights, and representation in fisheries governance. The broader goal is to support just and sustainable pathways that recognise the complexity of the sector while strengthening long-term stewardship of marine resources.

COMMON GROUND

Established in 2022, the Common Ground Initiative is a multi-organisational platform strengthening environmental governance and resilient rural livelihoods across India. It focuses on leveraging the commons to address interconnected crises of livelihoods, climate and equity through a collaborative action framework. Dakshin Foundation is one of 22 partner organisations, facilitating engagement among community organisations, civil society groups, government agencies and private sector stakeholders.

Over the last year, Dakshin Foundation and Common Ground convened and curated several strategic gatherings to strengthen local governance rules, explore data-driven landscape planning in order to strengthen natural resource management and conservation.

REEFLOG

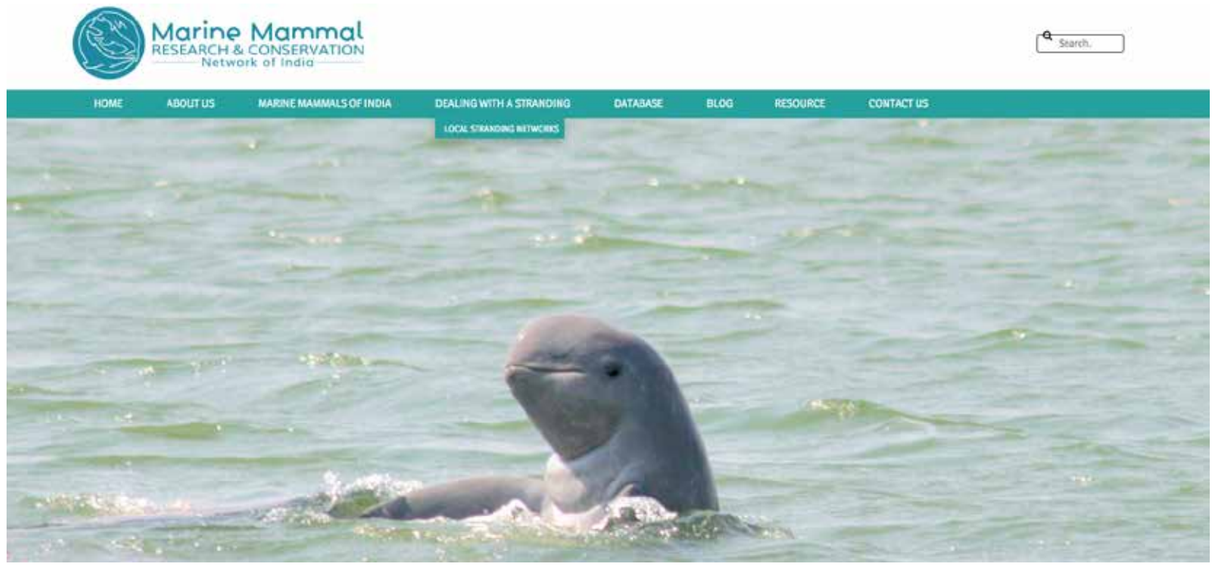
ReefLog, a marine citizen science initiative, continues to promote ocean literacy and support marine biodiversity monitoring by engaging the diving community. By partnering with dive centres and professionals, the programme encourages divers to document marine species and deepen collective knowledge of India's coral reef ecosystems.

The initiative has also received wider recognition for its approach. Last year, ReefLog was featured in the April edition of *Samuhik Pahal*, highlighting how citizen science initiatives can support marine conservation efforts in India. Drawing on conversations with dive centres in the Andaman Islands, the article highlighted the insights divers gain through their repeated interactions with reef ecosystems. These firsthand observations, often based on decades of diving experience, provide perspectives on changes in coral cover, reef health and fish populations.

ReefLog was recently featured in Connect, a quarterly magazine published by the Office of Communications at the Indian Institute of Science, in an article on crowdsourcing conservation. The piece highlights how collaborative efforts between scientists and the wider ocean community can strengthen conservation outcomes, underscoring the value of participatory approaches like ReefLog in bringing diverse knowledge systems together to better understand and care for marine ecosystems.

ReefLog recognises the importance of creating spaces where such experiential knowledge can be shared, valued and built upon. Stories shared by divers about shifting reef conditions help contextualise scientific understanding while preserving local ecological knowledge that might otherwise remain undocumented.

The programme also continued its outreach with dive shops and the wider water-sports community, encouraging the use of ReefLog training materials and survey tools as a way to engage more deeply with marine life. Looking ahead, ReefLog plans to develop video content and short films to share experiences from the diving community and broaden conversations around marine conservation.



INCLUSIVE CETACEAN RESEARCH IN THE ARABIAN SEA

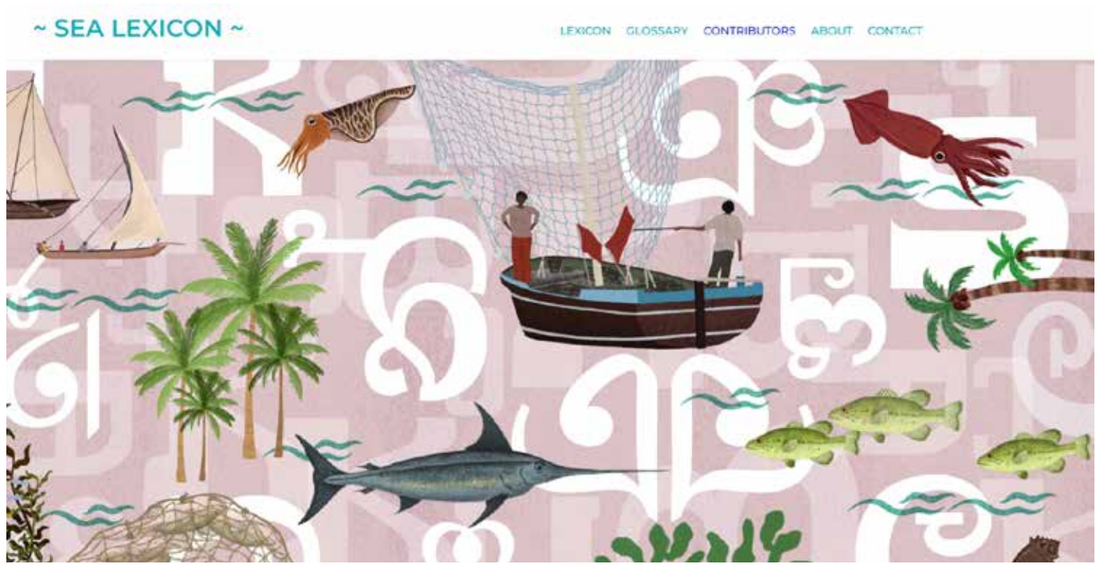
Marine megafauna, such as whales, dolphins, sharks, and sea turtles, play an important role in maintaining the balance and productivity of ocean ecosystems. Because these species occupy high positions in the food web, their presence and wellbeing often reflect the overall condition of marine habitats. They also share a close relationship with coastal fishing communities, whose livelihoods and traditional knowledge are deeply connected to the sea.

With support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, Dakshin Foundation continues to advance research and conservation efforts in the Southeastern Arabian Sea (SEAS). A key component of this work involves strengthening collaborations with local fisher communities, who play an important role in observing and reporting the presence of marine megafauna. Through these partnerships, fisher communities contribute valuable information on cetacean sightings and strandings, helping to improve understanding of species distribution in a region where long-term data remain limited.

During the past year, the programme focused on maintaining these collaborative networks and supporting ongoing documentation of marine megafauna observations. Community-based monitoring continues to provide important insights into the occurrence of cetaceans and other large marine species, particularly in dynamic ocean environments where species movements and habitat use may change with shifting oceanographic conditions. The team continued to review and consolidate available information on cetacean presence in the region.

This year, the program initiated a collaboration with the University of Kerala and Oregon State University with a more focused nearshore study on humpback dolphin interactions with four different fishing methods (drift, bottom set and sub-surface gill nets, and purse seines) using both visual and acoustic methods.

In 2026, we have also initiated a discussion on ghost gear/ ALDFG (Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear) in relation to threats to marine mega fauna, economic loss to fishers and ALDFG's role in the overall marine litter problem. This work has been started via Pew Trust support for the Bay of Bengal countries, where participants from Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India met in Colombo in May 2026. This meeting will pave the way ahead to larger collaborative work on mitigating ALDFG in the region.

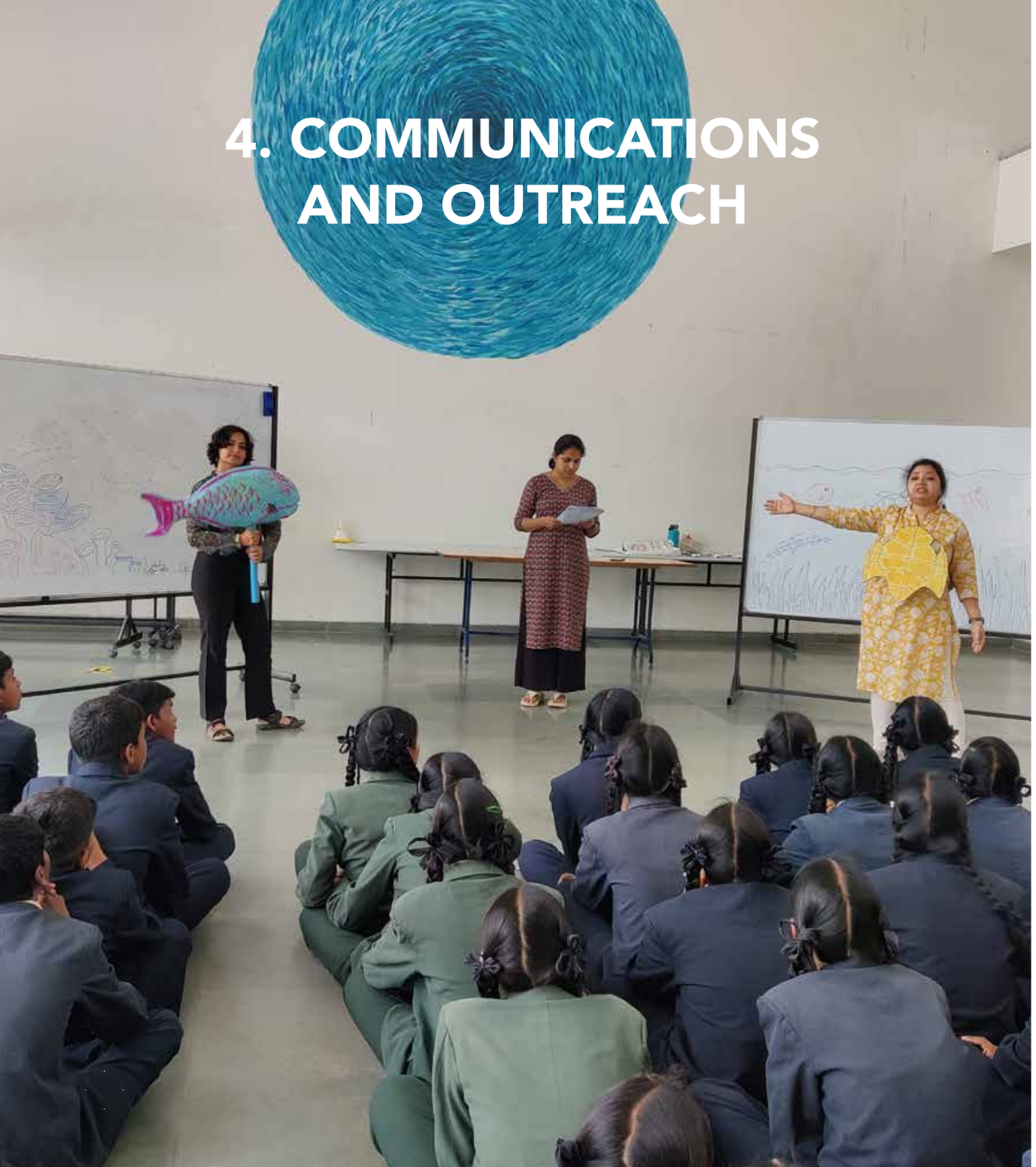


A SOUTHERN COLLECTIVE FOR THE NORTHERN INDIAN OCEAN

Launched in 2020, the *Southern Collective* is a collaborative platform that brings together researchers, practitioners, artists, journalists, educators and coastal community leaders who are engaged with marine and coastal issues across the Indian Ocean region. The Collective was created to encourage South-South collaboration and to build partnerships that support more inclusive and participatory forms of knowledge production about oceanic environments and coastal societies.

This year saw the maintenance and upgrades to the digital initiatives of the Collective. These include the following: *Migration Diaries* documents the experiences of coastal migrants, presenting narratives that move beyond simplified portrayals of crisis or resilience and situating migration within broader social, economic, and environmental contexts. The *Asian Bestiary* explores relationships between humans and nonhuman species in marine and coastal environments through an educational and participatory framework. This year saw more focused effort on collecting information and expanding the contributors of the Lakshadweep languages of *Sea Lexicon*. This is a collaborative effort to develop a transregional vocabulary of ocean-related terms that reflect the lived experiences, cultural practices and knowledge systems of coastal communities.

Dakshin Foundation has coordinated the activities of the Southern Collective since 2021, facilitating communication among partners and supporting the development of its projects. The Collective continues to serve as a space for interdisciplinary engagement and dialogue, bringing together diverse perspectives to reflect on the social, cultural and ecological dimensions of ocean worlds in the Northern Indian Ocean.



4. COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

4.1

Our communications strategy

During 2025-26, Dakshin's communications evolved from primarily supporting programme outreach to becoming an increasingly strategic function that connects research, field realities, public engagement, and policy conversations. Throughout the year, the team expanded the organisation's reach through stronger visual storytelling, increased media engagement, targeted campaigns, public events, and investments in long-term communications capacity. Together, these efforts strengthened the visibility of Dakshin's work while laying the foundation for a more systems-oriented approach to communications.

Storytelling remained central to our work. Films such as '*Misrav: Stories from Lakshadweep's Fishing Community*' and *'Olaikal Ulagam: Securing Palk Bay's Blue Crab Fishery'* foregrounded the lived experiences of small-scale fishing communities navigating ecological and socio-economic transitions. *'Turning the Tide'* and *'What the Tide Left Behind Part 1* and *Part 2'* highlighted the often overlooked knowledge, leadership, and agency of women from small-scale fishing families. These films capture their efforts to restore ecosystems and strengthen community resilience. The team also expanded its storytelling into shorter video formats for platforms such as Instagram and YouTube Shorts. The six-part series, *Lessons from 20 Years of Monitoring India's Sea Turtles*, introduced audiences to the sea turtle species found along India's coasts while communicating key insights from Dakshin's long-term monitoring to the wider public, in an accessible format.

This stronger emphasis on visual storytelling led to Dakshin's digital growth. Instagram followers increased by approximately 19%, while LinkedIn recorded growth of around 43%. YouTube doubled in size over the year, reflecting growing engagement with long-form video content.

The communications team also strengthened Dakshin's digital outreach through targeted campaigns and newsletters that brought together field insights, research outputs and public engagement opportunities. One of the most recent email campaigns, to promote the launch of Misrav, titled *"A Film from the Islands I Call Home,"* recorded an open rate of 50.2% and a 7.4% click rate, representing increases of 29.1 and 1.8 percentage points, respectively, over the previous campaign. In parallel, an email developed around Dakshin's participation at the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) in Nice extended engagement beyond the event itself by translating on-ground participation into broader public visibility. Campaigns to launch our films were instrumental in extending the reach of our films, creating multiple touchpoints for engagement, and enabling more meaningful and diverse connections with our audiences.

Alongside this growth in digital engagement, Dakshin's research and programme outputs reached wider public audiences through targeted media engagement. For instance, the Marine Flagships programme launched the report *Monitoring Sea Turtles in India (2008–2024),* which was amplified through media coverage in *The Hindu, Mongabay, Down to Earth, and Hindustan Times.* This coverage increased the visibility of Dakshin's research while demonstrating the role communications can play in translating scientific evidence into broader public discourse.

Communications also played an important role in making Dakshin's research and programme work more accessible across formats. The team produced a wide range of communication materials, including reports, brochures, posters, illustrations, book layouts, and outreach collaterals, ensuring that complex ideas remained clear, visually engaging, and accessible to diverse audiences.

Building on this momentum, the communications team also supported and amplified a wide range of programmatic events across scales. These included international platforms such as the United Nations Ocean Conference (Nice), the MARE People and the Sea Conference (Amsterdam), and the World Seafood Congress (Chennai), as well as regional engagements including Matsyamela in Lakshadweep, the Odisha Vikash Conclave in Bhubaneswar, the Reef Festival, and ANET Open Day in the Andaman Islands. The team also contributed to key observances such as International Women's Day and International Menstrual Hygiene Day, further connecting programme work with broader social and environmental conversations.

In parallel, the team led a wide range of outreach efforts through discussions, exhibitions, film screenings, and panel sessions across multiple platforms. These included forums such as the Festival of Ideas (Delhi, Goa, Chennai and Pondicherry), the All Living Things Environmental Film Festival (ALT-EFF, Bengaluru and Mumbai), and the Coasts & Oceans of Life festival (Bengaluru), among many others. Together, these engagements brought

diverse audiences - researchers, practitioners, students, fishing community members, and the general public into conversation, creating spaces for dialogue and exchange. They also contributed to strengthening and expanding collaborations with partners such as Bangalore International Centre, Science Gallery, ALT EFF, Azim Premji University, the French Institute of India, Firki, the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, VIEWS, Lightroom Bookstore, The Locavore, and the Student Conference on Conservation Science.

Building communications capacity remained another important focus area during the year. The team conducted workshops on visual storytelling and social media engagement to equip Dakshin's Youth Ambassadors in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with practical tools to communicate their own narratives for better waste management, menstrual hygiene, and health in the islands. These efforts enabled ambassadors to independently create and share stories rooted in their lived experiences, strengthen community voices in public discourse, while increasing the visibility of local perspectives.

The year also marked an important step in strengthening Dakshin's communications capacity through dedicated funding support. A capacity-building grant from Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies enabled the team to expand its storytelling practice across films, exhibitions, publications, and other creative formats, contributing to the organisation's long-term goal of building a robust storytelling ecosystem.

During the year, the communications team also strengthened internal collaboration through workshops, the annual retreat, and closer engagement with programme teams across the organisation. In the coming year, Dakshin will continue this shift towards strategic communications, moving beyond outreach to shape narratives, inform policy discussions, and connect evidence across programmes. As part of this shift, the team has initiated work on *Conservation Integrated*, an online platform that brings together inclusive conservation philosophies and systems approaches from around the world. At the same time, the team will continue to position Dakshin's work within wider national and global conversations on conservation and coastal development. It will also deepen collaboration across programmes and strengthen its role as a connector between research, practice, and public discourse.

4.2

Current Conservation

Current Conservation (CC) is an open-access quarterly magazine available in both print and online formats that communicates the latest research and perspectives from the social and natural sciences of conservation to a broad audience. Over the past year, CC reached close to 74,000 readers across 203 countries, with India, the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Germany, Indonesia, Brazil, and the Philippines among the top readership countries.

During 2025-26, CC continued to expand its role as an accessible and creative platform for science communication, combining writing, illustration, and design to make conservation research engaging for diverse audiences. This year, CC successfully produced *four issues* of Volume 19, along with a dedicated CC Kids issue. Notably, this volume featured two special issues: one on fungi, guest edited by Elizabeth Barron (Issue 19.3), and a marine special issue focusing on the Indian Ocean and climate (Issue 19.2), guest edited by Meera Anna Oomen and Aarthi Sridhar.

In July 2025, CC art editor Labonie Roy conducted a workshop titled *"Collaborating with Illustrators and Designers."* The session introduced participants to practical aspects of working with visual professionals while developing communication materials such as reports, educational resources, and social media content. It also covered topics such as budgeting for visual elements, deciding when to work with an illustrator versus a graphic designer, and understanding common terminology used in design and publishing.

In November 2025, CC hosted an online nature journaling workshop with artist and zoologist Bella Charlton in collaboration with *Society for Conservation Biology (SCB).* The session introduced participants to nature journaling as a creative practice that blends observation, science, and personal reflection. Participants explored different ways of documenting nature - from sketchbooks filled with detailed illustrations to field notes accompanied by quick sketches and reflections, highlighting how art can deepen engagement with the natural world.

CC also launched *Common Lines: Illustrators' Circle,* a new series of community events created for freelance illustrators and artists. The series aims to provide a welcoming space for artists to connect, learn from one another and share experiences through workshops, informal gatherings, and creative exchanges. The first edition of *Common Lines* featured an interactive workshop titled *"Making Sense of Creative Contracts,"* hosted by arts lawyer Manojna Yeluri, followed by informal conversations over tea and snacks. The event was held at Atta Galatta, Indiranagar, Bengaluru in February 20267.

With over 29,000 followers on Instagram, CC extends its spirit of accessible, visually rich communication to its social media presence. Regular features spotlighting newly published articles sit alongside creative collaborations, such as the ongoing *India in Bloom* series with SeasonWatch, that have drawn strong engagement and helped bring conservation science to a wider audience.

CC also continues its partnership with SCB as an associate publication of the society. CC is supported by Dakshin Foundation, Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Foundation, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, Wipro Foundation, Foundation for Ecological Security and Wildlife Conservation Trust. Together, these activities highlight how *Current Conservation* continues to create spaces where science, art and storytelling come together.

4.3

Outreach for Flagships

Sea Turtles of India

Sea Turtles of India (SToI)(seaturtlesofindia.org) is an online repository that compiles research, outreach materials, blogs and articles related to sea turtles in India. The platform highlights ongoing research and conservation efforts across the country and features accounts from individuals working with different species. It also includes a data portal that supports the storage and management of long-term sea turtle monitoring data by researchers and organisations.

Following the massive *arribada* in 2025 and the launch of a comprehensive report documenting Dakshin Foundation's sea turtle research and conservation work from 2008 to 2024, outreach efforts in 2025-26 focused on communicating these findings to wider audiences. A six-part video series was produced highlighting nearly two decades of sea turtle monitoring across India's mainland coast and island ecosystems. The series presents key insights from long-term research on olive ridley, leatherback, and green turtles, covering nesting behaviour, movement, and foraging ecology. It also highlights the importance of working with local communities and ensuring their wellbeing as part of conservation efforts.

An *arribada campaign* was also launched to document the 2025 olive ridley arribada at Rushikulya. Through a series of short videos and reels, the campaign showcased nesting activity, monitoring and tagging efforts. One of the videos comprised a series of FAQs about sea turtle conservation, dispelling the notion that they are highly endangered, and providing a more evidence-based account of the status of olive ridley turtles in India. The content also addressed other common questions about volunteering, the role of citizen support in conservation, Dakshin's work on sea turtles, and common myths surrounding arribadas. Collaborations and interactive quiz polls were used to engage audiences and encourage wider participation.

In addition, new outreach and monitoring materials were developed for researchers and frontline staff. These included resources on seagrass and sea turtle distribution in Agatti, Kadmat, and Kalpeni in Lakshadweep, as well as a guide titled *"Did you see a turtle? Here is what to do (and not to do)"* and *"Handling sea turtles entangled in fishing nets or found at sea"*. These materials provide information on sea turtle ecology, such as their habitats and distribution, and include guidelines for responding to turtle sightings or nesting events during field monitoring. These outreach materials have been distributed to our key stakeholders, including government officials, researchers, field staff and local NGO partners.

Sharks and Rays of India

Sharks and Rays of India is an outreach platform focused on the biology and conservation of elasmobranchs in Indian waters. The website provides information on species distribution along the Indian coast using data from landing centre surveys, literature reviews, and scientific publications. It serves as a resource for researchers, conservation practitioners, policymakers, and the public.

Over the past year, the platform has continued to support outreach initiatives aimed at raising awareness about shark and ray diversity and conservation. A set of outreach materials focusing on guitarfish species was developed for coastal fishing communities in Maharashtra. These included posters for display at local fisheries markets and common gathering areas for fisherfolk, simple line-design T-shirts and boat flags featuring the three guitarfish species, and sticker sets highlighting the widenose, sharpnose, and bowmouth guitarfish. These materials were designed to strengthen species identification and encourage conservation awareness.

Additionally, in collaboration with ALT EFF, we produced a 10-minute video on sharks and rays aimed at general audiences. The video introduces the diversity of sharks and rays found in Indian waters, their ecological importance and cultural significance, and the major threats these species face, helping to build broader public awareness about elasmobranch conservation. Our outreach efforts equally acknowledge the importance of elasmobranch fisheries for local communities and the need to work with them to make the fishery sustainable.

General Outreach

In 2025-26, the Marine Flagships team continued its outreach efforts across India, engaging diverse audiences in marine conservation through educational programmes, community events and capacity-building initiatives, with a strong focus on ocean literacy in island contexts.

A key milestone during the year was the launch of a revised edition of *Treasured Islands*, an environmental education handbook for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, on World Literacy Day by the Chief Secretary of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Originally produced by Kalpavriksh, this edition was developed by Dakshin Foundation and Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology in collaboration with the Directorate of Education, to support place-based learning by linking the islands' ecology, culture and geography with the school curriculum.

Since the launch, the team has conducted multiple sessions across government schools in South Andaman as part of a long-term Ocean Literacy Programme designed for island students. Using *Treasured Islands,* these sessions combined presentations with interactive activities including ecological games, storytelling and creative exercises to introduce students to marine ecosystems and biodiversity. The programme reached over 200 students and was subsequently extended to schools in Havelock, where ~100 students from Classes 1-8 participated in presentations, drawing activities and discussions on marine life.

The team also participated in public outreach events to engage wider audiences. At the Andaman & Nicobar Book Fair in Sri Vijaya Puram, interactive sessions and a storytelling skit introduced school students to marine biodiversity through theatre and discussion. The Reef Festival/Sagarmela 2025, held across Swaraj Dweep, Wandoor and Sri Vijaya Puram, brought together island communities, students, educators, fishers and researchers through intertidal walks, beach clean-ups, creative competitions and interactive exhibits celebrating marine ecosystems. In Lakshadweep, the team participated in Matsyamela 2026 in Kavaratti Island, setting up a Dakshin Foundation stall that showcased publications and conservation work in the islands. Activities included a book reading session from *'Moonlight in the Sea'* for students and a community drama highlighting the importance of sustainable use of island resources. A film screening of *Bipro – A Conservation Legacy* in the Making was also organised for children from Nuagaon, Podampeta, and Purnabandha at the cyclone shelter in Purnabandha, Odisha followed by an interactive discussion on sea turtle conservation.

Additional outreach took place through smaller community events and institutional collaborations, including interactive stalls at ANET Open Day and local initiatives such as the Island Active football tournament and a community library event in Wandoor. These activities used games, puzzles and visual

materials to communicate ideas on ecosystems, food webs and conservation, engaging participants across age groups.

Beyond community engagement, the team conducted capacity-building and training programmes for researchers, students and frontline staff. A three-day capacity-building workshop on GIS, data management and visualisation for ecological research was conducted at the Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc, Bengaluru. Outreach and training sessions were also conducted for students, forest department staff and conservation practitioners across Karnataka and Odisha. These included sessions on sea turtles and marine ecosystems during National Reptile Awareness Day at Kargal, an outreach talk for Mysore Zoo Youth Club students, and training programmes at the Satavauni Interpretation Centre and for Odisha Forest Department staff in the Kujang and Rajnagar ranges, focusing on sea turtle monitoring, hatchery management and marine wildlife rescue. The team also contributed to a capacity-building programme at the Turtle Interpretation Centre, Purnabandha, organised by the Odisha Forest Department for university students and forest officials.

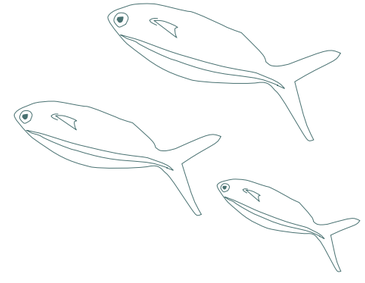
Not Just Soup

'Not Just Soup: Shark stories, turtle tales, and more', the newsletter of the Marine Flagships programme, continues to develop as an engaging space for marine storytelling that brings together ecological research, cultural perspectives and creative expression. The newsletter recognises the importance of both the consumptive use of marine life and the ecological, social, and cultural connections with these species.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, two new issues were released, each exploring the hidden worlds and survival strategies of marine life. From camouflage and mimicry to the behavioural adaptations that shape life underwater, the issues encouraged readers to look beyond first impressions and engage with the ocean through science, curiosity, and storytelling. Written for a diverse audience that includes marine professionals, students, enthusiasts, and nature lovers, *Not Just Soup* features interviews with early-career marine researchers, visual storytelling, trivia and updates on outreach and field activities. Through these varied formats, the newsletter aims to make marine science accessible while celebrating curiosity and creativity in understanding the ocean.

Indian Ocean Turtle Newsletter (IOTN)

The Indian Ocean Turtle Newsletter (IOTN) is a long-standing platform for sharing knowledge on sea turtle research, conservation efforts, policy developments and related topics across the Indian subcontinent, the wider Indian Ocean region, and South and Southeast Asia. Published biannually, the newsletter has historically brought together field updates, research notes and perspectives from researchers and practitioners working across these regions, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange within the marine conservation community.



4.4

Publications

Popular articles

1. **Ahmad, S.** (2025, April). ReefLog: Bridging depths - Citizen science for marine life conservation in India. *Samuhik Pahal.*
2. **Eswaran, H.** (2026, February). The Slow Disappearance of Karal Meen from Rameshwaram's Fish Markets. *The Locavore.*
3. **Satiamma, K., Mamata, S., Jyoti, K., Pooja, B., Chandrama, & Purnal, P.** (2026, January). The daily struggles of women fisherfolk (ମହିଳା ମତ୍ସ୍ୟଜୀବୀଙ୍କ ଜିତିଦିନିଆ ସଂଘର୍ଷର କାହାଣୀ). *Stories Odisha Bureau.*
4. **Lunia, N.** (2025, December). Fisherwomen, fisheries and changing seascapes. *Dakshin Foundation Blog.*
5. **Lunia, N.** (2025, August). Field Notes from UNOC3. *Dakshin Foundation Blog.*
6. **Lunia, N., & Ray, D.** (2025, June). Sea turtles are doing well, but threats still loom! *Dakshin Foundation Blog.*
7. **Sahayaraju, K.** (2025, July). സംരക്ഷണത്തിനും സഹകരണത്തിനും പുതുവഴി തുറന്ന സമുദ്ര സമ്മേളനം. *Keraleeyam.*
8. **Sanjana.** (2025, August). Changing the Cycle: One cup, one conversation at a time. *Dakshin Foundation Blog.*
9. **Shanker, K., Swaminathan, A., & George, R**. (2026, February). Of Turtles, Tides and Love Notes in Bottles. *Roundglass Sustain.*
10. **Sridhar, A., & Oommen, M. A.** (2025, June). Introduction: Dissonant Futures. *Current Conservation, 19(2).*
11. **Vasudevan, P., Nagamma, K., Pratima, C., & Bhawna, K.** (2025, June). On the vanishing shore. *Current Conservation, 19(2).*

Scientific papers

1. Brown, B.E., Dunne, R.P., Arthur, R., Baird, A.H., D'Souza, E., Khokiattiwong, S., Lunn, Z., **Namboothri, N.**, Patankar, V., Phongsuwan, N., Putchim, L., Tanzil, J.T.I., Thongtham, N. and T. Wagh. (2025). Revisiting the coral reefs of the Andaman Sea – Factors affecting resilience, recovery and reef refugia. *Oceanography and Marine Biology: An Annual Review. 63, 1–41.*
2. Dsouza, S., **Shanker, K.**, & Thaker, M. (2025). Are Human Super-Predators Always Super-Scary?A Meta-Analysis of Wild Animal Behavioural Responses to Human Interactions. *Ecology Letters.*
3. Joshi, J., Dey, P., Mohan, A. V., Barve, V., Prasad, G. V. R., Goswami, A., Pulla, S., Page, N., Agarwal, I., **Shanker, K.**, Karanth, P., Ramakrishnan, U., & Chattopadhyay, D. (2025). Linking eras and data: Natural history collections as the foundation of India's biodiversity science. *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society.*
4. Kottillil, S., Rao, C., & **Shanker, K.** (2025). Genetic diversity of commonly caught commercial shark species along the Indian coast. *Regional Studies in Marine Science. 91.*
5. Mbizah, M. M., Allen, T., Allred, S., Biggs, D., Bright Ross, J. G., Davalos, A., Dickman, A., Dunaway, M., Ghosh, R., Gomera, M., Hammond, N., Hare, D., Kepe, T., Nkomo, M. N., **Oommen, M. A.**, Paudel, K., Rihoy, L., Roe, D., Rudd, L., **Shanker, K.**, & Thekaekara, T. (2026). A framework for addressing racial and related inequities in conservation. *Nature. 649(8096), 301-309.*
6. Patil, H., **Samad, I., & Shanker, K.** (2025). Interdisciplinary approaches to understanding sustainability in nearshore fisheries along the west coast of India. *Regional Studies in Marine Science. 91.*
7. Patre, M. V., **Bora, G.**, Jakhete, S., Dsouza, S., & **Shanker, K.** (2026). Microplastic accumulation in marine organisms across trophic levels along the west coast of India. *Marine Pollution Bulletin. 222.*
8. Petchiappan, A., **Swaminathan, A., Samad, I, Namboothri, N, and Shanker, K.** 2025. Across the Indian Ocean: post-nesting migrations of leatherback turtles from Little Andaman Island in the Bay of Bengal. *Endang. Species. Res. 58:417-433.*
9. **Samad, I., Sutaria, D.**, Hines, E. and **Shanker, K.** (2025). Drivers of elasmobranch catch are site and fishery specific: Insights from a comparative assessment of fisheries across the east and west coasts of India. *Ocean and Coastal Management. IF 5.4*
10. **Samad, I.**, Patil, H., Cantor, M., Farine, D., **Sutaria, D. & Shanker, K.** (2025). Human activities drive novel behaviours and transitions in dolphins. *Marine Ecology Progress Series.*
11. **Shanker, K., Sridhar, A., Mondal, M., Manuel, M., Oommen, M. A., & Namboothri, N.** (2026). Unifying Human Well-being and Ecosystem Health: Future Directions for Civil Society. *Ecology, Economy and Society–the INSEE Journal, 9(1), 41–50.*
12. Sequeira, A.M.M., Rodríguez, J. P., Marley, S.A., Calich, H.J., **Namboothri, N., Shanker, K.** et al. (2025). Global tracking of marine megafauna space use reveals how to achieve conservation targets. *Science. 388. 1086-1097.*
13. Shukla, R., Eslava, A. F., Dahanukar, N., Raghavan, R., Johnson, J. A., Atkore, V., Bhat, A., Dornelas, M., Magurran, A. E., & **Shanker, K.** (2026). Geographical heterogeneity in how endemics shape ecological processes in a biodiversity hotspot. *Proceedings*

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14. **Udayashankar, N., & Sridhar, A.** (2025). Between Utterance and Action: The Shaping of Social Accountability in India's Coastal Commons. *Journal of Law and Public Policy, 9(1), 7.*

15. Wallace et al., including **K. Shanker** (2025). Updated global conservation status and priorities for marine turtles. *Endangered Species Research. 56. 247–276.*

Reports, books, and book chapters

1. **Abraham, A. J., Rao, A., Khot, I., Mahaboob Khan, C. P., Mondal, M., P. K., M., Gawde, P., Sen, R., Sahayaraju, K., Mukherjee, S.** & **Namboothri, N.** (2025). *Reimagining fisheries in India's oceanic islands: Building resilience and sustainability in a post-Covid world (April 2021–August 2024)*. Dakshin Foundation, 101 pages.

2. **Bysani, R., Chakraborty, A., Rao, A., Mondal, M., & Oommen, M. A.** (2025). *Seasonal Water Scarcity in South Andaman*. Dakshin Foundation, Bengaluru.

3. **Dakshin Foundation.** (2026). *Comprehensive Social-Ecological Assessment of the Shrimp Aquaculture Sector in Andhra Pradesh, India.* Dakshin Foundation, 34 pages.

4. **Dakshin Foundation.** (2026). *Scoping Study of the Shrimp Aquaculture Sector in Andhra Pradesh.* Dakshin Foundation, 20 pages.

5. **Dakshin Foundation.** (2026). *Understanding the Dynamics of the Dried Fish Sector in Maharashtra.* Dried Fish Matters and Dakshin Foundation, 90 pages.

6. **Dakshin Foundation.** (2026). *Beyond the Nets:Building participatory pathways for Andaman's fisheries.* Dakshin Foundation, 37 pages.

7. **Dakshin Foundation.** (2026). *Riya's little island (Hindi).* Dakshin Foundation, 26 pages.

8. **Dakshin Foundation.** (2025). *Navigating livelihood diversification for small-scale marine fishworkers.* Dakshin Foundation, 49 pages.

9. **Dakshin Foundation.** (2025). Riya's little island (English). Dakshin Foundation, 26 pages.

10. Directorate of Education, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Kalpavriksh, **Dakshin Foundation**, The Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, **Andaman Nicobar Environment Team**, Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology. (2025). *Treasured islands: A handbook for teachers of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Classes 6, 7 and 8) (4th ed.)*. 133 pages.

11. Gaynor, A., & **Oommen, M. A.** (2026). *Oral History and Our Planetary Future.* In The Bloomsbury Handbook of Oral History (pp. 409-424). Bloomsbury Publishing.

12. **Namboothri, N.,** Krishnan, P.**, Eswaran, H., Teerthala,M., Sharma, A., Mukherjee, S.**, John, A.S. (2026). *Report of the Regional workshop on fostering stewardship for sustainable Indian marine ingredients.* Dakshin Foundation, Bengaluru, & Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation, Chennai, 20 pages.

13. **Oommen, M.A.** & Morrison, K. (2026). *Famines, floods and flagships: historical and contemporary identities of Central Travancore's eastern forest frontier.* In India's Forests: Revisiting Nature and History. Luna Books.

14. **Oommen, M.A.** (2025). *Catfights and crocodile tears: conflict, charismatic species and nature professionals in India's conservation history.* In Tropical Nature: Colonial and Post-colonial Conservation in Africa and Asia (pp. 243-264). Berghann, New York, Oxford.

Outreach materials

1. 9 lessons from 16 years - Hindi (brochure)
2. 9 lessons from 16 years - Malayalam (brochure)
3. 9 lessons from 16 years - Marathi (brochure)
4. 9 lessons from 16 years - Odia (brochure)
5. Anatomy of Octopus (postcard)
6. Beyond the shore (photo exhibit)
7. Beyond the shore - Sugandhi's story (photo exhibit)
8. Caught in the Filter: Are Marine Sponges Silent Witnesses to Microplastic Pollution? (poster)
9. Circular economy solutions for fish waste (booklet)
10. Did you see a turtle? Here is what to do and not - English (brochure)
11. Did you see a turtle? Here is what to do and not - Tamil (brochure)
12. Fish for the Future Calendar 2026- English (calendar)
13. Fish for the Future Calendar 2026 - Mahal (calendar)
14. Fish for the Future Calendar 2026 - Malayalam (calendar)
15. From Drifting Nets to Shifting Horizons: Is transformation to tourism always a sustainable step? (poster)
16. Investigating green turtle movements in Lakshadweep (poster)
17. Lakshadweep's tuna fisheries & Dakshin (poster)
18. Ocean stewards: Coastal youth leading the future of sustainable fisheries (brochure)
19. On the vanishing shore (photo story)
20. Sea grasses and sea turtle distribution in Agatti, Kadmat and Kalpeni - English (brochure)
21. Sea grasses and sea turtle distribution in Agatti, Kadmat and Kalpeni - Malayalam (brochure)
22. Strengthening the dried fish value chain (booklet)
23. The daily struggles of women fisherfolk (photo story)
24. Towards Zero-Waste Islands 2026 (calendar)

25. Upcycling crab waste for sustainable livelihoods (booklet)
26. Where Women Hunt The Reef: Knowledge Stewardship In Lakshadweep's Octopus Fishery (poster)
27. World Fisheries Day (poster)

Documentaries

1. Misrav: A story of Lakshadweep's fishing legacy
2. Olaikal Ulagam | Securing Palk Bay's Blue Crab Fishery
3. The Humpbacks of Goa
4. Turning the Tide | Empowering coastal women through the Coastal Grassroots Fellowship
5. What the tide left behind | Part 1: Muthulakshmi's journey to restore her shoreline
6. **What the tide left behind | Part 2: Josephine's efforts to restore Tamil Nadu's Aatruvaai**

4.5

Talks and presentations

Conferences and presentations

1. **Arjunwadkar, C.** (2026, February). *In the Andaman Islands, coral reef community structure and post-bleaching recovery trajectories are influenced by wave action*. World Ocean Science Congress 2026, CSIR–National Institute of Oceanography, National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Goa University, and Vijnana Bharati.
2. **Behera, G., & Behera, B.** (2025, October). *Ganjam's Coastal Biodiversity*. Coasts & Oceans of Life Festival, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru.
3. **Bhawna, K.** (2025, May). *Common health eastern regional webinar on maternal health*. Common Health.
4. **Bora, G.** (2025, November). *Long-term marine megafauna monitoring in the Eastern Ghats Seascape*. East Ghats Symposium, IISER Tirupati.
5. **Eswaran, H.** (2026, March). *Centering Evidence & Action in the Global Aquafeeds Sector from the Global South*. The Marine Social Science Conference 2026, University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka.
6. **Eswaran, H.** (2025, September). *Are fishers the only ones responsible for sustainability: A case study of Palk Bay fisheries*. Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad.
7. **Eswaran, H.** (2025, June). *Easier Said Than Done: Practitioners' Experiences of Applying Co-management Approach to Conflict Resolution in Indian Fisheries*. MARE People & the Sea Conference 2025, Amsterdam.
8. **Khan, M. C. P.** (2026, March). *Participatory fisheries monitoring and community-based resource governance in Lakshadweep*. The Marine Social Science Conference 2026, University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka.
9. **Meenakshi, A. K.** (2026, March). *Where Women Hunt The Reef: Knowledge Stewardship in Lakshadweep's Octopus Fishery*. The Marine Social Science Conference 2026, University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka.
10. **Meenakshi, A. K.** (2025, October). *Caught in the Filter – exploring how marine sponges trap microplastics in the Andaman seas*. Student Conference on Conservation Science 2025, Bengaluru.
11. **Namboothri, N.** (2025, June). *Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries: Balancing Conservation and Industry Growth*. National Conference on Fisheries & Aquaculture, CII Food and Agriculture Centre of Excellence, Vijayawada.
12. **Pavithran, M. M.**, & Lijora, P. (2025, October). *Small Nets; Big Battles: the Resilience of Small-scale Fishers*. Coasts & Oceans of Life Festival, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru.
13. **Praveenkumar, C. H.** (2026, March). *Mapping Mangroves for Supporting Coastal Protection and Climate Action*. Mangrove Workshop, Department of Environment & Forests, Andaman & Nicobar Administration. Link.
14. **Rao, A.** (2025, June). *Nomination for world heritage sites from Andaman and Nicobar Islands*. Andaman and Nicobar Administration.

15. **Ravi, A. & Muthulakshmi, M.** (2025, October). *Echoes of Ramanathapuram: Life and Legacy*. Coasts & Oceans of Life Festival, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru.

16. **Ravi, A.** (2025, December). *Struggles of Commoning - Women Fishers of Ramanathapuram Reclaim Coastal Commons Through Mapping*. The Promise of Commons.

17. **Sahayaraju, K.** (2025, July). *Shared stories grounded in the lived experiences of fishers from Kerala and Lakshadweep*. Ocean Community Pavilion, 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference, Nice, France.

18. **Shanker, K.** (2025, May). *Sharks, rays and sea turtles: monitoring and conservation of marine megafauna in India*. Marine Biodiversity and Climate Change, NCCR, Chennai.

19. **Shanker, K.** (2025, April). *Sea turtles and tourism in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands*. SANGITI 2025, Andaman and Nicobar Administration.

20. **Sharma, A.** (2025, June). *Stories of resilience and adaptability from dried fish processors in Mumbai*. MARE People & the Sea Conference 2025, Amsterdam.

21. **Sridhar, A.** (March 2026). *Knowing our nature*. Keynote, for the session titled 'Nature shakes: Ecologies, disasters, and climate change'. South Asia Marine Social Science Conference, Ruhuna University, Sri Lanka.

22. **Teerthala, M.** (2025, September). *From drifting nets to shifting horizons: Is transformation to tourism always a sustainable step in the fisheries landscape?*. Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad.

23. **Teerthala, M.** (2025, June). *Whether tourism could serve as a sustainable transit strategy for fisher communities in Maharashtra and Lakshadweep Islands.* MARE People & the Sea Conference 2025, Amsterdam.

24. **Udayashankar, N.** (2026, March). *Between Utterance and Action: Harnessing the Social Accountability framework to examine coastal and marine governance*. The Marine Social Science Conference 2026, University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka.

25. **Udayakumar, S**. (2025, October). *Seaweed, Shore, Sea and the women at work*. Coasts & Oceans of Life Festival, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru.

26. **Unnithan, A.** (2026, March). *Disappearing Accountability, Livelihoods and Organisms: The Aftermath of a Nurdle Spill*. The Marine Social Science Conference 2026, University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka.

27. **Udayashankar, N., & Unnithan, A.** (2025, December). *From Global to Local: Impact of Marine Plastics*. India-Norway Marine Pollution and Plastic Waste Forum 2025, Norwegian Embassy.

28. **Wagh, T., Namboothri, N.**, & Canty, S. (2025, August). *Using historical trajectories to inform small-scale fisheries management*. American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas.

29. **Wagh, T.**, Patankar, V., **Shanker, K., & Namboothri, N** (2026, February). *Differential impacts of selective fishing on reef fish populations across a gradient of market demand*. World Ocean Science Congress 2026, CSIR–National Institute of Oceanography, National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Goa University, and Vijnana Bharati.

Lectures, talks and podcasts

1. **Arjunwadkar, C.** (2025, October). *Wave action mediates coral reef community structure and divergent post-bleaching recovery trajectories in the Andaman Islands*. Student Conference on Conservation Science 2025, Bengaluru.

2. **Behera, M.** (2025, November). *Amplifying grassroots leadership*. Odisha Vikash Conclave 2025.

3. **Bora, G.** (2026, March). *Elasmobranch species identification*. Maharashtra Range Forest Office, Malvan.

4. **Bora, G., Eswaran, H., & Teerthala, M. S.** (2025, November). *This fish or that fish: Rethinking sustainable seafood*. Dakshin Foundation & Science Gallery, Bangalore. Link.

5. **Gattani, N.** (2026, January). *Guest session on SDG 14 for Grade 5 exhibition*. Eastern Public School (EPS), Bhopal.

6. **Kulkarni, V. M.** (2025, May). *Ecology & education*. Dakshin Foundation, Firki & Turtle Walker Film. Link.

7. **Meenakshi, A. K., & Khan, M.** (2025, November). *Awareness session on how corals live and protect islands (Lakshadweep)*. Dakshin Foundation.

8. **Mitra, P.** (2026, March). *Tourism development, management & regulation*. Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Goa Institute of Management.

9. **Mukherjee, S.** (2025, November). *Coasts, communities, & inclusive futures: Catalysing sustainable blue economy livelihoods in Odisha*. Odisha Vikash Conclave 2025.

10. **Oommen, M. A.** (2025, June). *Wild boar and domestic swine: Understanding conflict and power struggles from porcine entanglements in India*. 23rd Annual International Conference on History and Archaeology, Athens Institute, Athens, Greece.

11. **Namboothri, N.** (2026, January). *Community perspectives on the co-management of fisheries resources in Lakshadweep.* Farmer–Scientist Interface, Matsya Mela 2026, KVK Lakshadweep (ICAR–CMFRI collaboration).

12. **Namboothri, N.** (2025, June). *Aquaculture growth, the health of our oceans and fisher livelihoods.* National Conference on Fisheries and Aquaculture, Confederation of Indian Industries.

13. **Rahul, M. S.** (2025, November). *An introduction to ocean ecosystems and sea turtles of India*. Mysore Zoo.

14. **Rahul, M. S.** (2025, October). *An introduction to turtles, tortoises and sea turtles of India*. Karnataka Forest Department.

15. **Sahayaraju, K.** (2026, March). *Indigenous fishers and ocean knowledge*. Centre for Landscapes, Wildlife and Marine Ecology (CLiME), Department of Life Sciences, Christ University.

16. **Sahayaraju, K.** (2025, December). *Life under the sea*. iLAB (Inspiring Innovations).

17. **Shanker, K.** (2026, March). *Sharks, rays and sea turtles: monitoring and conservation of marine megafauna in India*. Centre for Landscapes, Wildlife and Marine Ecology (CLiME), Department of Life Sciences, Christ University.

18. **Shanker, K.**, & Remesan, M. P. (2025, December). *Sea turtle conservation awareness webinar: An SDG-14 initiative*. NITTE (Deemed to be University).

19. **Shanker, K.** (2025, December). *Sharks, rays and sea turtles: monitoring and conservation of marine megafauna in India*. NITTE-NUCSER, Mangalore.

20. **Shanker, K.** (2025, September). *Sharks, rays and sea turtles: monitoring and conservation of marine megafauna in India.*

IISc, Bangalore.

21. **Shanker, K.** (2025, June). *From hatchling to hope: Turtles and tourism in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands*. Department of Tourism, Port Blair.

22. **Shanker, K.** (2025, May). *Of ridley riddles, leatherback voyages and greener pastures*. Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), Bangalore. Link.

23. **Shanker, K. (2025, May).** *Ridley riddles, leatherback voyages and greener pastures: Tracking turtles through time and space.* University of Trivandrum, Kerala.

24. **Shanker, K.** (2025, May). *Are the extinct dire wolves really back? In Focus Podcast*, The Hindu. Link.

25. **Shanker, K.** (2025, April). *Rethinking sea turtle conservation – Part 1*. Olive Ridley Project Podcast. Link.

26. **Shanker, K.** (2025, April). *Rethinking sea turtle conservation – Part 2*. Olive Ridley Project Podcast. Link.

27. **Sridhar, A.** (2026, March). *Nature shakes: Ecologies, disasters, and climate change – Keynote reflection*. The Marine Social Science Conference 2026, University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka.

28. **Topno, A.** (2025, November). *Menstruating in a changing climate*. Bhuvana Balaji & Stella James.

29. **Vasudevan, P.** (2025, December). *Supervision in community work*. Narrative Practices India Collective.

30. **Wagh, T.** (2026, March). *Policy and governance frameworks for inclusive fisheries entrepreneurship*. Fisheries Startup and Aquapreneurship Stakeholders Meet and National Policy Workshop on Startups and Entrepreneurship in Fisheries, MANAGE.

Panels, seminars and workshops

1. Arthur, E., Rauf, S. A., Kwegyiryah, N., Khausar, M., **Namboothri, N.**, & Grelombe, A. (2025, June). *Addressing bottom trawling: Solutions to an ocean emergency*. Transform Bottom Trawling Coalition, 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference, Nice, France.

2. Bakan, J. S., Dhandhania, P., & **Sutaria, D.** (2025, May). *Conserving ocean and marine biodiversity*. Alliance Française de Pondichéry, **Dakshin Foundation** & French Institute of India.

3. Bhat, N., Chatwal, J., & Kiro, R. (2025, November). *Youth interactive session on career guidance*. **ANET**, North Wandoor.

4. **Bora, G.** (2025, July). *Conservation of sharks in India – Moving ahead with the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act and CITES*. CMFRI, Kochi.

5. Doshi, S., **Mondal, M.**, Dutta, I., & Krishnamurthy, A. (2025, May). *Youth as catalysts: Are we listening?*. Alliance Française de Delhi, **Dakshin Foundation** & French Institute of India.

6. D'Cruz, G., Pradhan, S., Chandrappagari, S., & Venugopalan, N. (2025, May). *Can blue economy and social justice co-exist?*. Alliance Française de Panjim, **Dakshin Foundation** & French Institute of India.

7. Hande, S., Ananthapadmanabhan, D., Marigoudar, S. R., Sivadas, S. K., & Govindarajan, G. (2025, May). *Connected by plastic: Humans and the sea*. Alliance Française de Madras, **Dakshin Foundation** & French Institute of India.

8. **Eswaran, H.** (2026, March). *Nature-based solutions for coastal resilience: Urban communities as active guardians*. 2nd Annual Summit of Nature-Based Solutions Forum, WWF & WRI.

9. **Eswaran, H.**, Doshi, S., & Arnaud. (2025, May). *Youth as catalysts: Are we listening to the generation that inherits the planet?*. Alliance Française de Pondichéry, **Dakshin Foundation** & French Institute of India.

10. Hemalata, A., Panda, S., Behera, B., Dixit, S., **Philip, R., Babajee, B.**, & Lingaraj, N. (2025, May). *Menstrual hygiene and a period-friendly society*. **Dakshin Foundation.**

11. **Khan, M. C. P., & Sahayaraju, K.** (2025, July). *Learning climate resilience in small island fisheries through community-led data and participatory governance.* Building Community Tech for Climate Action Workshop, Aapti Institute, Aruvu Collaboratory & **Dakshin Foundation.**

12. **Kulkarni, V., Babu, A. P., & Thakkar, S.** (2025, October). *Exploring ocean and coastal ecosystems.* "Coasts & Oceans of Life" Festival, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru.

13. Kumar, A. B., Panippilla, R., & **Sahayaraju, K.** (2025, December). **കടൽ അത്ഭുതങ്ങൾ.** Manorama Hortus 2025. Link.

14. **Kumar, P. C. H.**, Kapoor, A., Madhusoodan, C., Nanda, & Biswal, M. (2025, November). *Data democratisation and digital public goods for climate justice.* Odisha Vikash Conclave 2025.

15. Majhi, S., Patel, B., Mahaling, K., **Behera, M., Behera, S.**, & Sahu, D. (2025, July). *Voices from the ground: Experiences around commons*. Communicating the Commons in Odisha Workshop, VIEWS.

16. **Mitra, P.**, Goswami, A., Srikanth, R., Dileep, G., Dhavala, K., & Chowdhary, V. (2026, January). *The next energy frontier: Scaling India's transition for a net-zero future*. 8th India Think Tank Forum, Observer Research Foundation & Nalanda University, Bihar.

17. Mohanty, R., Biswal, S., Mishra, A., & **Babu, A. P.** (2025, July). *Shared resources, shared futures: Livelihoods and the commons in Odisha*. Communicating the Commons in Odisha Workshop, VIEWS.

18. **Namboothri, N.**, & Modi, S. (2025, December). *Shared seas: Fishers, species and the future of India's coasts*. All Living Things Environmental Film Festival, Coastal Conservation Foundation & **Dakshin Foundation.**

19. **Namboothri, N., & Udayakumar, S.** (2025, July 28–30). Palk Bay blue swimming crab fishery, Tamil Nadu. National Workshop on Fisheries Management Inventory, Bay of Bengal Programme & FAO, Chennai.

20. **Namboothri, N., & Khan, M. C. P.** (2025, July 28–30). *Lakshadweep Islands tuna livebait fishery*. National Workshop on Fisheries Management Inventory, Bay of Bengal Programme & FAO, Chennai.

21. **Namboothri, N.** (2025, June). *Using data at scale to drive sustainability across agriculture, fisheries and urban landscapes*. Building Community Tech for Climate Action Workshop, Aapti Institute, Aruvu Collaboratory & **Dakshin Foundation.**

22. **Namboothri, N.** (2025, December). *Regional workshop on strengthening sustainable aquatic food value chains for enhanced food security and nutrition in Asia*. FAO & Bay of Bengal Programme-IGO.

23. **Namboothri, N., Khan, M., & Sahayaraju, K.** (2025, October). *Online screening of Misrav and Q&A with Dakshin's Lakshadweep team.* Dakshin Foundation.

24. **Namboothri, N.**, Menon, N., Nakhawa, G., & Lecouffe, C. (2025, May). *Sustainable seafood: Whose job is it really?.* Alliance Française de Delhi, Dakshin Foundation & French Institute of India.

25. Naser, A. T. C., Sabith, P. K., **Haripriya, E., & Khan, M.** (2025, November). *World Fisheries Day: The lives of Lakshadweep's fishers*. **Dakshin Foundation** & Atta Galatta, Bengaluru.

26. **Pratima, C. H.**, Elayaperumal, V., Chakravarty, S., & **Das, S.** (2026, March). *The impact of overfishing on India's marine ecosystem.* The Locavore & Dakshin Foundation.

27. **Ray, D., & Babu, A. P.** (2025, May). *Amplifying island voices: A social media starter kit for youth ambassadors.* Dakshin Foundation.

28. Saravanan, Venkatesan, R., Ravichandran, V., & Hariharan, S. (2025, May). *Sea level rise and fragile ecosystems: Is coastal planning up to the task?*. Alliance Française de Madras, **Dakshin Foundation** & French Institute of India.

29. Saxena, A., Kurup, S., Fernandes, M., & Pereira, C. (2025, May). *Playground or home? Rethinking tourism and sport in coastal zones.* Alliance Française de Panjim, **Dakshin Foundation** & French Institute of India.

30. **Shanker, K.** (2025, November). *Panel on biodiversity and climate change*. Dharitri Youth Conclave, Bhubaneshwar, Odisha.

31. **Shanker, K.** (2025, April). *Nature writing for children*. Barcelona, Spain. (Organiser)

32. **Sharma, A., Eswaran, H., & Teerthala, M.** (2025, June). *Round table discussion on the global fishmeal and fish oil sector.* MARE People and the Sea Conference 2025, Amsterdam.

33. **Sharma, A., Eswaran, H.,** Pandian, K.**, Teerthala, M.S., Namboothri, N., Mukherjee, S.** (2026, Feb). *Regional Workshop on Fostering Stewardship for Sustainable Indian Marine Ingredients*. **Dakshin Foundation**, BoBP, FAO, MPEDA, NFDB, IMIA, CMFRI & CIBA. World Seafood Congress, Chennai.

34. Shiva, N., & Sivarasu, R. (2026, January). *Coastal local governance (CLG) workshop*. **Dakshin Foundation.**

35. **Srikanth, Y.**, & James, S. (2025, October). *Using forum theatre as a tool for environmental justice education*. Student Conference on Conservation Science 2025, Bengaluru.

36. **Sutaria, D.**, Manoharakrishnan, M., & Lobo, A. (2025, May). *Saving our seas: One solution at a time*. Alliance Française de Delhi, **Dakshin Foundation** & French Institute of India.

37. **Udayashankar, N.** et al (2025, November). *Public spaces for climate resilience: Enabling young people as urban builders*. Odisha Vikash Conclave 2025.

38. Vivekanandan, E., Dash, S., **Sridhar, A., & Pratima, C. H.** (2025, November). *Marine ecosystems: Moving towards a sustainable & inclusive blue economy.* Odisha Vikash Conclave 2025.

39. Zacharias, T., Fernandes, M. J., **Sahayaraju, K., Mary, J. J., & Manuel, M.** (2025, December). *Ocean dialogues: Securing nature and culture.* **Dakshin Foundation** & All Living Things Environmental Film Festival.

5. PEOPLE

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