



Sustainable Fisheries

Equitable blue food systems
and community-centred
fisheries management



India's fisheries sit at the intersection of many systems and pressures

India's marine fisheries sit at the intersection of livelihoods, food systems, marine ecosystems, markets and governance. As seafood value chains grow, the wellbeing of small-scale fishing communities and ecological sustainability remain central to sustainable blue growth.

Across coastal and island systems, fisheries are shaped by limited long-term data, fragmented governance, changing markets and uneven participation in decision-making. These challenges show up in different ways. Some fisheries depend on critical habitats and resource relationships that remain poorly understood. Others are under pressure from overfishing, habitat degradation, export demand, weak management measures and limited community participation in decision-making.



Photo credits: Bhavanesh Singaravelu

The growth of the aquaculture sector, fuelled by wild-caught fish, is also raising ecological, nutritional and livelihood concerns. Together, these pressures affect fish stocks, local food systems and the livelihoods of communities that depend on them.

Dakshin's Sustainable Fisheries Programme works to build evidence, strengthen community participation and engagement, and support fisheries management approaches that sustain both people and marine ecosystems.

Science, community knowledge and participatory governance

Dakshin's Sustainable Fisheries Programme draws from scientific research, traditional ecological knowledge, community participation and engagement with government agencies and market actors to support inclusive and locally grounded fisheries management.

Our approach follows four linked steps:

Monitor changing fisheries systems

Build long-term, place-based evidence on trends in fisheries, value chains, food systems, fishing practices, ecological change, and the social and economic systems that shape fisheries.

Democratise fisheries knowledge

Support community-based monitoring and participatory mapping to document fishing grounds, patterns of marine resource use, and changes in fish catch, effort and availability.

Strengthen shared stewardship

Collaborate with fishing communities, local institutions, government departments and civil society organisations to strengthen participatory fisheries governance and co-management pathways.

Enable evidence-based fisheries management

Use research, monitoring and community knowledge to inform fisheries management, policy engagement, co-management processes and public understanding.



● WHAT WE DO

● Research

Build evidence on fisheries, value chains, food systems, marine ecosystems and governance systems. This includes work on pole-and-line tuna fisheries in Lakshadweep, blue swimmer crab fisheries in Tamil Nadu, reef fisheries in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as well as the marine ingredients sector, small and dried fish value chains, coastal aquaculture, and fisheries knowledge systems across multiple states.

● Interventions

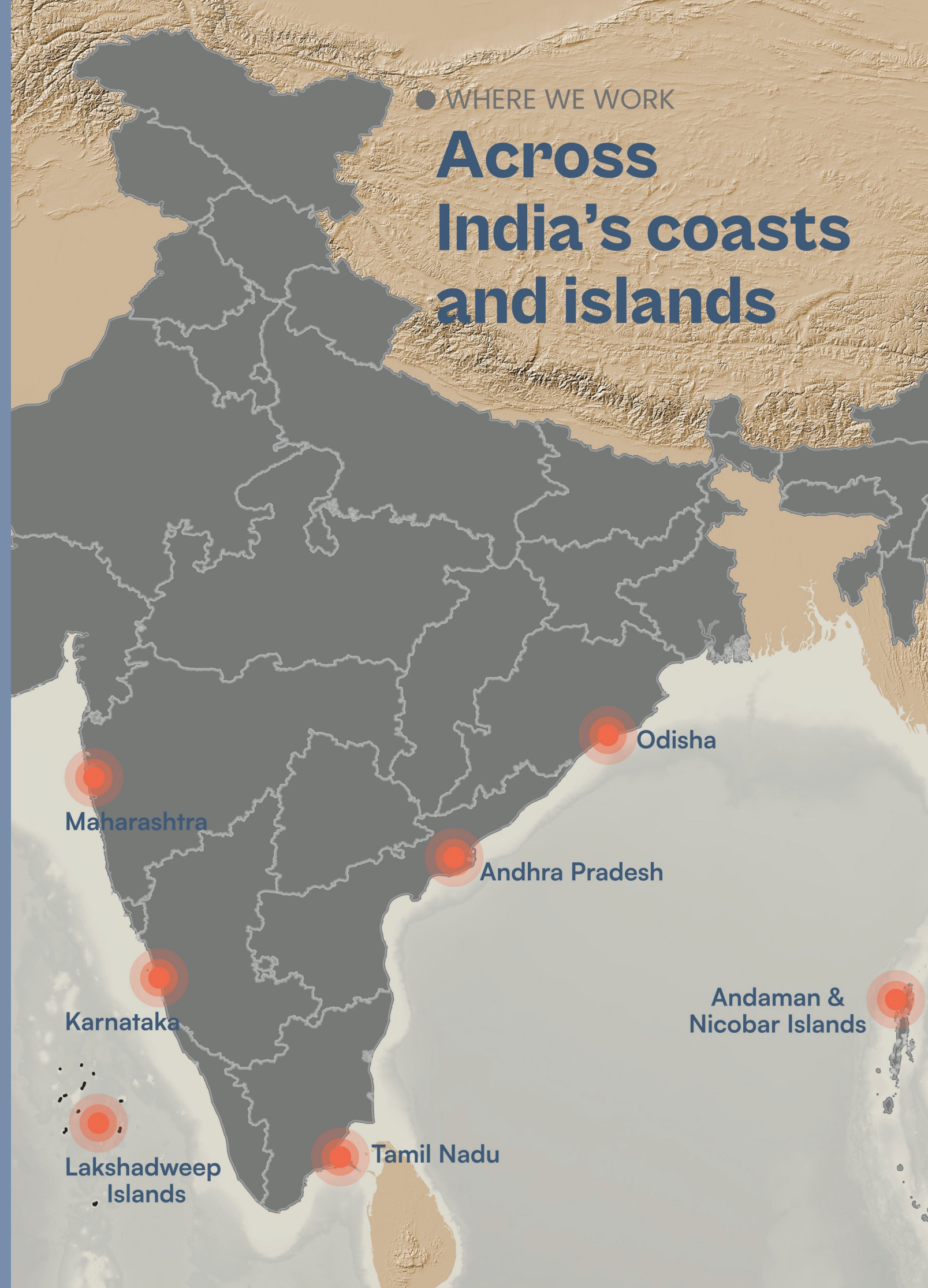
Dakshin works with fishing communities, coastal youth, local institutions, market actors, government departments and civil society organisations to support coordinated action for marine stewardship. This includes community-based fisheries monitoring across multiple coastal states, ensuring better livelihood outcomes by building better value chains, building stewardship of coastal youth through the Ocean Stewards initiative, and participatory mapping of resource availability and use by communities. We work closely with state fisheries departments and state convergence initiatives such as the Neithal Convergence Unit (NCU) in Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu, on their fisheries management targets.

● Outreach

Share fisheries knowledge through short films, social media posts, educational resources, publications, visual guides, maps and field-based materials. These resources make fisheries knowledge more accessible and grounded in the everyday realities of coastal and island communities.

● WHERE WE WORK

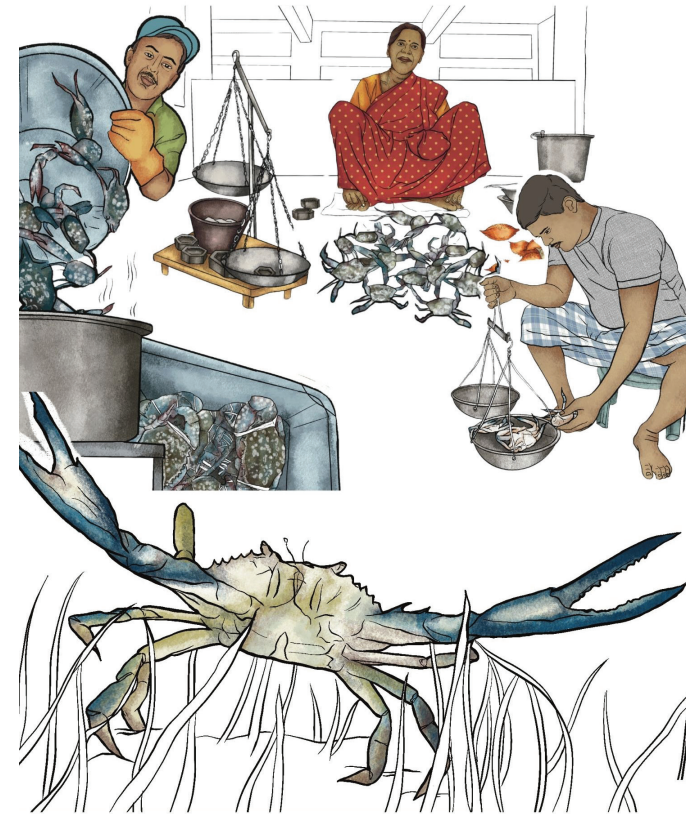
Across India's coasts and islands



From tuna to sukhua

Community-based fisheries monitoring (CBFM) in Lakshadweep

This work in Lakshadweep began as a participatory process with pole-and-line fishers to monitor tuna catch, alongside in-water surveys of baitfish used in the fishery. Monitoring protocols and logbooks were co-created with fishing communities, leading to community-contributed datasets on tuna catch and effort, baitfish resource use and other fishery characteristics from nearly 4,000 fishing trips.



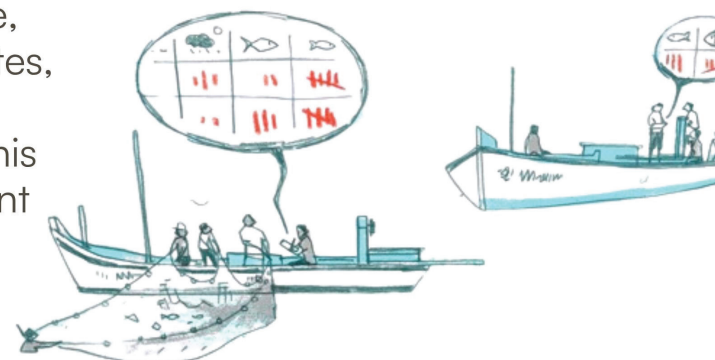
Artwork credits: Apna Kuruvilla

Blue swimmer crab co-management in Palk Bay

In Palk Bay, Dakshin works with fishing communities to build evidence around blue swimmer crab fisheries, fishing grounds, seagrass habitats and value chains. The work supports community-led monitoring, participatory mapping and co-management pathways for the fishery.

Participatory mapping of fisheries resources

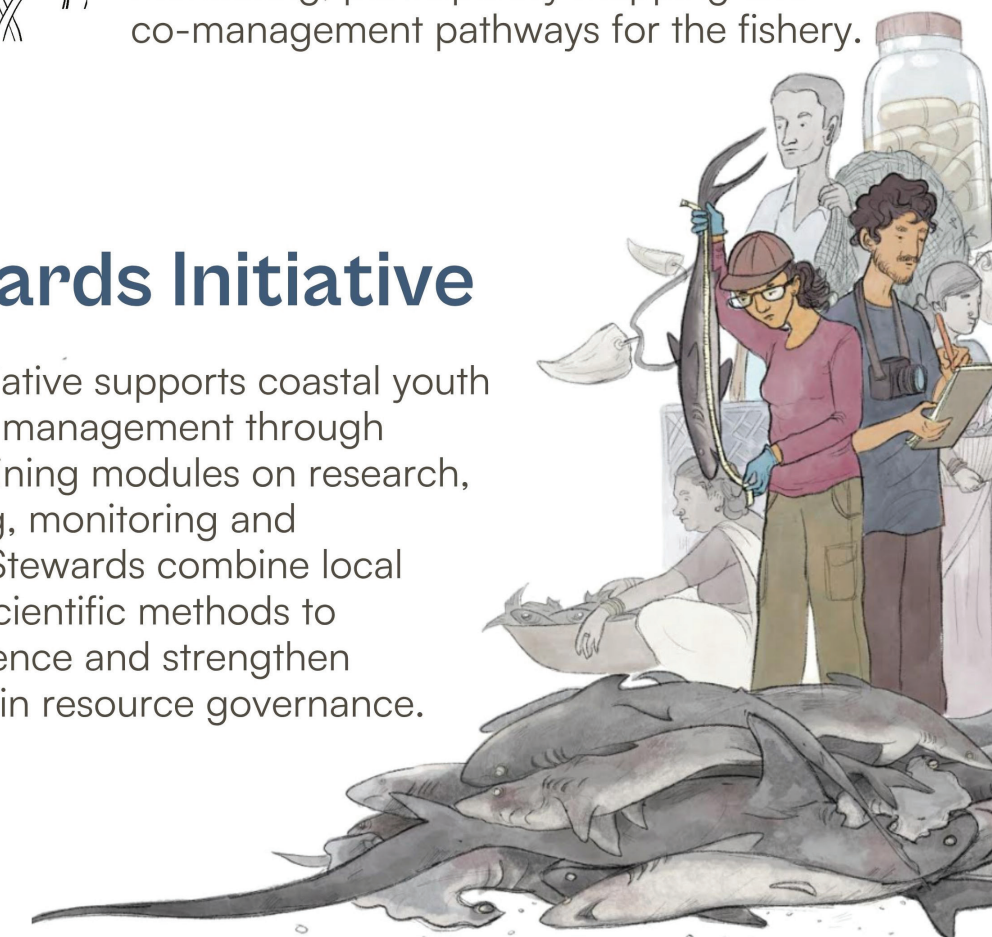
Dakshin uses participatory mapping to document fishing grounds, resource use, spawning areas, habitats, migratory routes, seasonality, fishing commons, and local and traditional ecological knowledge. This work supports better spatial management of marine spaces, inclusive fisheries management and strengthens communities' participation in governing coastal and marine commons.



Artwork credits: Kabini Amin, Mohavi Mohandas, Prabha Malliya

Ocean Stewards Initiative

The Ocean Stewards Initiative supports coastal youth to participate in fisheries management through locally contextualised training modules on research, documentation, mapping, monitoring and communication. Ocean Stewards combine local knowledge with formal scientific methods to generate grounded evidence and strengthen community participation in resource governance.



Artwork credits: Barkha Lohia and Current Conservation

Mapping dried fish value chains

Dakshin studies dried fish as an important but often overlooked part of small-scale fisheries. The work examines dried fish value chains in Maharashtra and Odisha, particularly focusing on livelihoods, gender, nutrition, trade and market dynamics, and opportunities to strengthen the sector more equitably.



Primary institutional donors



Key thematic donors

- Accenture Solutions Private Limited
- Blue Ventures Conservation
- Swiss Philanthropy Foundation
- The University of Bergen
- The University of Manitoba



Partner with Dakshin

Dakshin Foundation seeks to work with governments, research institutions, civil society organisations, philanthropic partners, practitioners and local communities who share a commitment to equitable blue food systems, community-centred fisheries management, and sustainable seafood value chains.

To explore opportunities for collaboration, write to info@dakshin.org

Artwork credits: Smitha Shivaswamy and Current Conservation