

- d. Inter-stakeholder meetings
- e. Meetings with local self government
- f. Preparation of frequently asked questions and answers as a prelude to management plan.

Socio Economic Assesments and Bioresource potential identification of selected islands in Lakshadweep islands
The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network along with the National Bioresources Board conducted a detailed study of the coral islands of Agatti and Minicoy. The documents prepared has been extremely useful in interpreting scientific and technical data for the lay person in the islands and otherwise.

Environmental issues in the Coast and involvement of women
A detailed study and analysis was conducted about various environmental issues and involvement of women in them from different coastal parts of Kerala. This information was used to highlight the role of women in bringing vital issues of survival to the fore along with the need for women to be included in the decision making process. This was done with support from the Centre For Development Studies, Thrivandrum,Kerala. The study became part of popular articles in journals and was presented in some national for a also.

Preparation of a video documentary on Lakshadweep and a Book on the islands

In two independent ventures, a video documentary on the islands was prepared with support from the State Institute of Educational Technology with a strong conservation message. This has been shown in many educational institutions as part of several awareness programs.

The State Institute of Children's Literature has published a narrative on the islands recently which has been accepted by the Education Department for communicating about the islands and conservation of ocean habitats among children in the mainland. This anecdotal version in the local language has been very effective as a communication tool.

The above experiences that has been a result of almost two decades of research and communication has shown how diverse and multi pronged communicating about ecology and environment is. The way though simple and straight is often riddled with hurdles as we are addressing complex issues of development and life style changes. The response of the communities that are directly and primarily dependent on the marine world around show the need for more hands- on programs. This is the only way we can hope to create an atmosphere in which human beings and natural ecosystems coexist.

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COMMUNICATING ABOUT oceans possibilities and challenges

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The Oceans have held the imagination and fears of the human mind since time immemorial. That life first originated on Planet Earth in the organic aqua- realm of the oceans is as fascinating a fact as the realization that three fourths of the Earth is covered by oceans. The diversity of life in the oceans along with the multitude of wonderful ecosystems like coral reefs, seagrass and kelp beds, mangroves and tidalflats, that it provides has been the subject of many discussions. The Ecosystem services of Oceans that goes much beyond the palpable ones like food and livelihood has come to the fore recently. The abuse of the oceans by humankind has reached undeniable proportions with over fishing, destruction of habitats and natural homeostatic cycles and pollution. This has been highlighted in the context of Climate Change crisis and the role of oceans in amelioration and mitigation.

This is the context in which the need to communicate more about this biome has been felt. The Tsunami and other shocking natural disasters in different parts of the world along with the almost total unpreparedness of the human world to cope with this also led to the need to know more. This is a chronological assessment of various communication tools and strategies that were adapted since two decades to convey and share more about the oceans and its various services.

The Area

The focal area has been Kerala in the southern most part of India. The narrow strip of land with an area of 38863 sq.km and a population of 318386 has a 590 km long coastline along the western side bordering the Arabian Sea. There are 999 local self government bodies following a decentralized scheme of governance. There are 222 fishing hamlets in Kerala with a coastal population density of 816/sqkm. The associated habitats along the coasts are wetlands, mangroves, tidal flats and estuaries.

The second area is the Lakshadweep islands located about 220-440 kms off the south west coast of Kerala designated as an Union Territory under the Government of India. With a land area of 32sqkm and a reef area of 816 sqkm the coral archipelago has 10 inhabited islands and a population of 60,750.

The target group

The target group in most cases has been students and youth in various educational institutions. The need to built up the capacity of the local self governments (Panchayats) especially sensitization about environment resulted in developing communication strategies for them too. Various conservation groups and

community based organizations which has a youth- student component were also addressed. There was involvement with certain research organizations and institutions with a conservation education component to evolve modules on various ecosystems.

The Communication Strategy for Oceans

The basic attitude has been based on the need to develop a Sense of Belonging to the Oceans. For this the concept of Citizen of the Ocean was adopted from the World Ocean Network with variations and changes that are locally more relevant. This was adapted and modified depending on the target group. The most basic strategy if it is a one time interaction will be to introduce the concept of ECOLOGY by taking each alphabet and elaborating on a word that will have ecological relevance. In this case the focus is on Oceans- so O- Oceans and C- Citizen of the Ocean will be highlighted. In the case of long term interactions and full-fledged programs with groups, the development of more elaborate methods is sought.

1. Development of Modules

a. Environmental Education input on Coral Islands :

This was developed in 1996 for schools in the Lakshadweep archipelago along with environmental NGO Kalpavriksh with support from the Human Resources Ministry, Government of India. The book called Our Island Lakshadweep has been in circulation in the islands and is being used as a reference material by schools. Produced in the local language the book has sections on both the natural and human made systems within the islands.

b. Know Your Island Program:

The Centre for Environment Education and CARESS initiated the Know Your Island program in schools of the 10 inhabited islands in the coral archipelago. The program with a unique educational approach collated information about the knowledge base of teachers and students to key concepts and issues relating to ecology and environment. There was a very strong creative component with the students being part of poetry writing, drawing and essay writing exercises. This along with the valuable ideas about projects created a comprehensive education module for the islands.

2. Environmental Education module on Wetlands

The module called Water Lesson was produced in 2008 by the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) for the Ramsar site Vembanad lake in Kerala. Based on the school curriculum this module combines various concepts relating to Wetlands with activities and curricular links for 50 schools along the lake. Introduced to teachers and students through a hands- on approach the program has the support of the Department of Education, Government of Kerala.

3. Conservation Education module on Oceans SAVE OUR SOULS/ CITIZEN OF THE OCEAN.

This module specific to the coast was done along with few NGOs in Kerala like SAKHI, Protsahan, KABANI- the other direction and government departments like the Mahila Samakhya Society. This was evolved over a period of four years especially finding focus after the interaction at World Ocean Network Conference. The module has now been put together as a publication called Turn of the Tide- Turn off.

Communication Strategies

- Location specific collection of data from the local experts like fishers, women gleaners and elders.
- Dialogue with educators and officials especially about curricular inputs
- Teacher's Training programs with inputs about the content and concepts to be included.
- Interactions with students about the various themes of interest and involvement.
- Development of activities, games and play that will accompany each concept.
Indoor, Outdoor and Creative are the 3 strategies that were used.

Sustainable Development Plan for Coastal Areas in Kerala

As an extension of preparing the curriculum for a certificate course on Sustainable Development that was offered for Local self government representatives by the Kerala Institute of Local Administration, a few coastal regions were selected for deeper analysis. The most vulnerable and valuable of natural resources in the regions were identified and attempts were made to formulate a Sustainable Development Plan based on this. The most significant attempt was made in an area where fresh water was scarce and lacked quality. A participatory analysis of the freshwater status in the region was done which had water quality analysis, mitigation measures and solvable aspects of the problem. This study also brought to the discussion process other environmental issues like impact of mining and sea erosion.

Communication Strategies :

- Rapport building with the Local self governments and Community based organizations.
- Focus group discussions with various stakeholders in all the smaller administrative units within the panchayat.
- Use of water testing units as a communication tool.
- Dissemination of data from the tests of all water sources from all the wards.
- Preparation of the Sustainable development plan with the local representatives.

Introducing the Concept of a Conservation Reserve in Agatti island, Union Territory of Lakshadweep

The Giant Clam Conservation program that was set up in Agatti island in Lakshadweep was to lead into the establishment of a Conservation Reserve in the islands. The process involved understanding the perceptions and attitudes of the community towards conservation and management of resources. It also had a strong component of involving the local self government which will ultimately hold responsibility for the reserve. The process involved a series of meetings with various stakeholders within the community and collation of their perceptions. The program was coordinated by the Bombay Natural History Society with support from LEAD-UK and Darwin Initiative.

Communication Strategies:

- Direct communication about the program informally
- Focus group discussions with various stakeholders
- Semistructured interviews and questionnaires