# Coastal Blues

TOURISM UNDER BLUE ECONOMY IN INDIA

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Equations

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# Introduction & Context

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## BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

Humans are heavily dependent on the oceans, which provide livelihoods to more than 200 million people involved in fishing, and contribute $3-6 trillion annually to the world economy[1]. Oceans are often perceived as a limitless resource, and some believe that the oceans have even more to offer in terms of resources and money, and that these resources have not been exploited enough. In the last decade, global international bodies started encouraging increasing extraction of ocean resources. Thus, was born the idea of the 'Blue Economy'.

The concept of 'Blue Economy' was first introduced during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held at Rio in June 2012, also called the 'Rio+20'. During Rio+20, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), highlighted the need for a Blue Economy on the same principles of the Green Economy but modified to suit the needs and circumstances of countries whose resource base is marine[2]. Initially, the Blue Economy framework was articulated as a way of decoupling socio-economic development from environment degradation, and to promote development through sustainable utilization and development of ocean resources, national and gender equality, employment for all and good governance.

But soon the concept was adopted by other UN bodies. Since it was proposed in 2012, the Blue Economy framework has been receiving wide support and acceptance from different international forums, primarily the World Bank. The World Bank's adoption of this idea came for instance, through a multi-donor fund called PROBLUE, worth USD 5 billion, to be used for management of fisheries, marine pollution, development of oceanic sectors like tourism and maritime transport, and for management of seascapes[3].

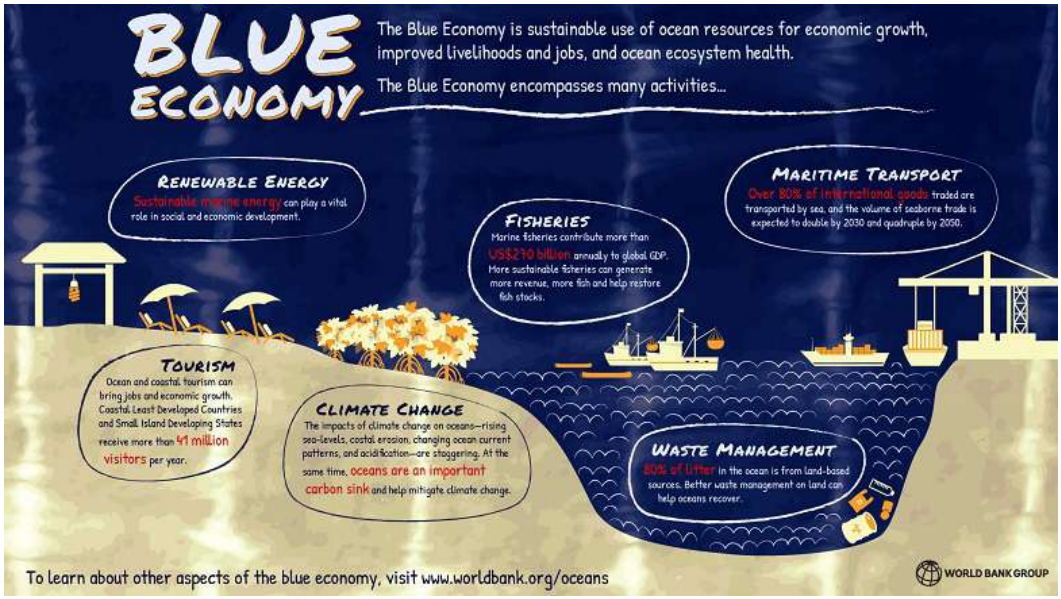
The World Bank's adoption of this framework gave it a strong economic impetus, and this economic base currently forms the fundamental aspect of the Blue Economy framework.

Glaringly missing in the discourse, however, are representatives of small-scale fishworkers, the primary stakeholders with regard to the oceans. Contrary to the acceptance shown by other international organizations, the World Forum for Fisher Peoples (WFFP) has remained strongly critical of the Blue Economy and stated that the Blue Economy model constitutes another form of ocean grabbing[4].

Fishworkers around the globe state that the narrative is simply a way of 'bluewashing' what is essentially a way to "Expand, Explore, Exploit" ocean resources. Research from different countries shows that the Blue Economy is simply a model that massively expands industrialisation of coastal and marine spaces through systematic and large-scale private investments.[5] As one fishing leader from Kerala succinctly explained[6]-

> ***"They first destroyed the forest and land, now their eyes are on the water. There are crores worth of wealth in the sea which they want to sell to corporates."***

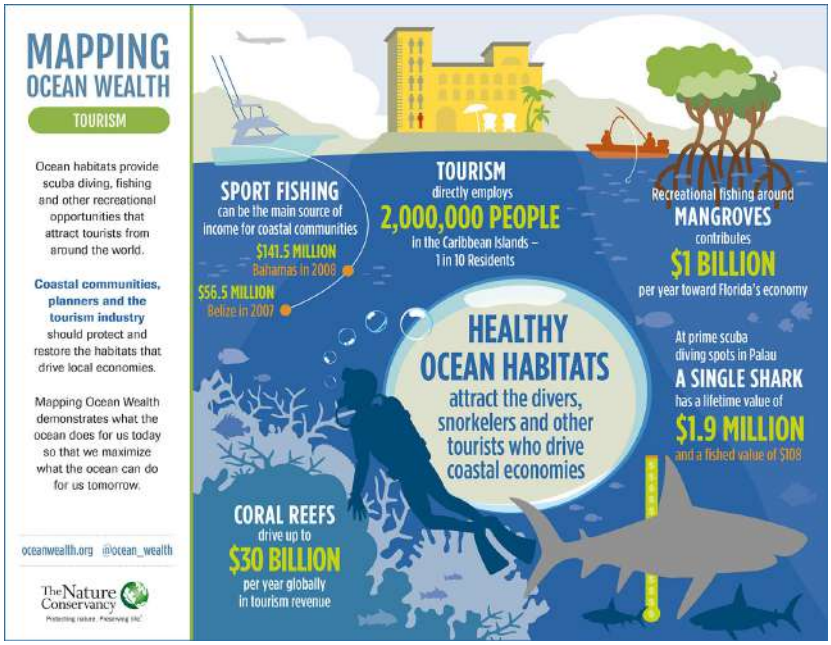
One of the key ways in which the Blue Economy is promoted is through sectoral investments. This is done through expanding existing industries like shipping, fisheries, aquaculture and tourism, while also finding ways to systematize and encourage investment in new industries like deep sea mining, carbon trading and others[7]. One of the industries envisioned within the Blue Economy framework is 'Tourism'.




*Blue Economy sectors, Source: World Bank*

## Tourism under the Blue Economy

Under the Blue Economy framework, 'tourism' has been pitched as a way to ensure economic benefits, environmental conservation and poverty alleviation. Many big conservation organizations have also bought into this narrative, stating that "investing in ocean health is synonymous with generating ocean wealth[8], a concept of neo-liberal conservation. This is promoted through ideas like 'the million dollar reef" which claims reefs would rake in billions of dollars every year from actual "on-reef" tourism like diving, snorkeling, glass-bottom boating and wildlife watching on the reefs, and from "reef-adjacent" tourism, which encompasses everything from enjoying beautiful views and beaches, to local seafood, paddleboarding and other activities.[9]




*Visual representation of million dollar reef, Source: The Nature Conservancy*

Tourism is also positioned as a way to generate employment, as it is claimed to be a labour-intensive industry. For example, during World Tourism Day 2019, the General Secretary of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), stated that[10]

> ***"The true potential of tourism, both as a creator of jobs and as a driver of equality and sustainable development, is only just being realized. Providing decent work opportunities and contributing to developing professional skills are at the heart of this."***

Along similar lines, the development of tourism under Blue Economy is positioned as a driver of jobs for coastal communities. This articulation of tourism under the Blue Economy imagines a picturesque situation where tourism increases economic benefits, ensures conservation of our natural world and improves the livelihoods of local communities. However, contrary to the harmonious, win-win situation being visualized, research has shown that tourism has serious negative impacts both on the ecological landscape of a place as well as on the lives and livelihoods of the communities living there.

Mainstream tourism has often completely altered the physical, ecological and social environment of a place. Tourists consume on average 5-10 times the water that residents use[11], and also generate large amounts of garbage[12], and plastic pollution[13]. In Goa, the inequality over sharing of water resources[14] means that households get only limited water supply. Shimla faces a water shortage situation every year, which got particularly acute in 2018[15]. Places like Mahabaleshwar and Kodaikanal have tourist numbers that far exceed the population[16]. The destruction and loss of lives due to the massive floods in Uttarakhand in 2013 has largely been attributed to unplanned constructions of roads, hotels, shops and multi-storey housing in the fragile mountain slopes[17].

Moreover, in the coastal space, the interests of small scale fishworkers are often in direct conflict with the interests of the tourism industry. Tourism is known to have pushed local communities out of landscapes traditionally used and managed by them, and further worsened livelihood options. As Pluemarom points out,[18]

> ***"While income and jobs created by tourism are counted, the losses that occur in other economic sectors or in public services as a result of tourism development never appear in the calculations. An appropriate cost-benefit analysis***

> ***would state how many farmers, fisher-folks, and non-tourism workers and entrepreneurs would have to give up their economic activities as a result of tourism development, and how much income would be lost from non-tourism activities."***

The current imagination of tourism under the Blue Economy works on a false supposition that all tourism, irrespective of size and texture, creates a win-win situation. It does not acknowledge the social, environmental and political costs of tourism. Rather, what we see on the ground is an inextricable relationship between infrastructure development and tourism.

*Representative image of infrastructure in coastal spaces.*
*Image design by Manvee Bhandia and Avinash Kuduvalli for EQUATIONS.*

The Blue Economy is primarily concerned with the economics of wealth generated from the ocean and coastal areas, and large infrastructure development in marine and coastal areas is a catalyst for global investment. Tourism projects also take this same form and shape - focused entirely on large investments, mostly through infrastructure development. This form of the tourism industry does not acknowledge the customary rights of governance of coastal communities to the coastal and ocean commons, nor does it recognize that tourism ventures are created by displacing fishing and other communities. In this imagination, the Blue Economy sees fishworkers and other coastal communities as simply 'service providers' to tourism. It creates a fundamental change of communities identities from being 'rights-holders' to simply 'job-holders'.
Dr. Aparna Sundar validates this idea saying[19] -

> ***"The people from the communities go from being rights holders to job holders at best and most of the time, not even being job holders but job seekers. Not only do they undermine the traditional rights of fishing communities, but they are premised on the weakening or undoing of hard won legislations that gave communities some form of protection."***

Rather than a shift to carefully thought-out, environmentally conscious, community-led operations that keep socio-political and ecological contexts at its centre, tourism under the Blue Economy is simply old wine in new bottles, furthering the inequalities, injustices, environmental degradation and undemocratic decision-making that has plagued the tourism industry.

## OBJECTIVES

In this context of a growing focus on increasing investment in marine tourism through the Blue Economy framework, it becomes important to understand the real consequences of these developments on the communities living in these spaces and on the resources that sustain them.

From 2016, in collaboration with civil society organisations and fishworkers' movements, EQUATIONS has reoriented its work on coastal tourism to reflect the changes brought in by the Blue Economy model in India. We have been part of a collaborative research study, led by SNEHA, Nagapattinam to document the implications of Blue Economy model of development on small scale fishworkers in the Indian Ocean Region. This study has brought together more than 25 civil society organizations from 5 countries - India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand and Indonesia.

As a part of this collaboration, EQUATIONS has undertaken research to critically examine 'Tourism' as a sector under the Blue Economy framework. Our research takes the lens of environmental justice. Keeping the plurality of the understandings of 'environmental justice' in mind, we clarify our own position on environmental justice for this work. Specifically, when we say 'environmental justice', we mean, firstly, distributional justice, i.e. that poor and marginalized communities must not bear the burden of environmental harms.

We believe that fishworkers are the primary stakeholders in coastal and marine space, and therefore their needs and aspirations must be prioritized in the development of these spaces. Secondly, we also take environmental justice to mean democratic decision-making, and therefore, that fishworkers should have a key role to play in the decision-making process around coastal and marine development. We looked closely at the ground realities of how this framework has impacted fishworkers. Specifically, we aimed to answer the following research questions:

- In what ways are ocean-based tourism being developed under the Blue Economy framework in India?

- What policies and plans guide tourism development along the coasts and in the waters of India, and how have they changed under the influence of the Blue Economy?

- What are the impacts of these policies and plans, and of tourism development on coastal communities, particularly fishworkers?

To answer these questions, we have worked closely with fishworker unions, citizens' groups and other civil society members between 2018 and 2020 to undertake three detailed case studies in the following places -

- **Dharavi Bet (Gorai-Manori-Uttan) in Maharashtra**
- **Kanniyakumari and Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu**
- **Digha-Mandarmani in West Bengal**

As a culmination of the larger research project, People's Public Tribunals have been organised in each of the 5 countries, as well as at the international level, with eminent jury members. Submissions to the Tribunal jury have included case studies, testimonials and research papers on different aspects of the Blue Economy.

The final verdicts of the Jury are available on the Blue Economy Tribunal website.[20] Since the concept of the Blue Economy, and the privatization of coasts within it are an on-going process, our research will also be constantly evolving.

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**Summaries of the case studies along with summary notes of the context, Blue Flag and cruise tourism are provided in this booklet. A detailed context note, as well as more detailed case studies, note on Blue Flag and a working paper on cruise tourism are available on our website.*

# CONTEXT - BLUE ECONOMY AND TOURISM IN INDIA

In 2019, India ranked 34th out of 136 countries in tourist footfalls[21], with nearly 11 million foreign tourists visiting India.[22] Coastal tourism forms a significant part of India's plans for tourism development. With a coastline of ~7,500 km and an Exclusive Economic Zone of 2.1 million sq. km., investors stand to gain significant monetary benefits from the Blue Economy framework in India. In 2014, India signed on to the Seychelles Declaration on tourism[23], which declared that the "Indian Ocean Blue Economy promises development in various marine sectors and should enhance the potential for tourism activities and services in the region".

The narrative of tourism development in India has no recognition of the rights and customary governance of fishworkers and other coastal communities. All along the coast of India, more than 3200 villages are populated by nearly 39 lakh people who are directly and indirectly dependent on fishing; more than 60% of fishworkers are still below the poverty line.[24] These communities, therefore, are some of the most marginalized in the country, and it is their lives and livelihoods that are in direct conflict with tourism under the Blue Economy. With an increasing interest in "sun and sand" tourism, the tourism industry is looking to find areas on the coast as close to the sea as possible, each of them vying for the 'room with an ocean view'. But these same stretches of the Indian coastline are traditional fishing commons, the place that fishworkers use to store their boats, repair their nets, dry their catch, auction their fish etc.

Since the late 1980s, small-scale fishworkers in India have been fighting to maintain the legitimacy of their needs against more powerful industrial actors[25] - there have been rampant violations of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification 1991 by industries, including aquaculture, real estate and tourism[26]; the CRZ notification itself was amended more than 18 times between 1991 and 2003[27]; and a new form of governance, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) was brought in through a World Bank project[28] when attempts to pass a new Coastal Management Zone notification failed[29]. This pattern

of disempowerment and displacement of small-scale fishworkers and other coastal communities through legal and illegal ways continues with the Blue Economy, prompting fishworkers and civil society to call Blue Economy an "occupation" of the coast[30].

The interests of the tourism industry are being given priority over fishworkers and other coastal communities, with both the central government and state governments supporting programmes that push them out. Over the years, tourism development along the coast has taken up much of the coastal and marine commons, leaving little for fishworkers. A fishing leader from Tamilnadu said to us -

> ***"The government wants to tidy up the coast - tourists on one side and fishworkers on one side. That's why they are pushing us out from our villages."***

This marginalisation has been happening in two important ways -

1. Changes in coastal governance through executive decision making
2. Implementation and expansion of tourism projects along the coast and in the ocean

*Tourism under the Blue Economy has further marginalised fishworkers*
*Image design by Manvee Bhandia and Avinash Kuduvalli for EQUATIONS.*

## Changes in governance

Globally, approx. 78.9% of the Blue Economy investment is from the private sector[31], mostly by companies based in Europe[32] and coastal governance now aims to facilitate this investment. Once rooted in community institutions like Kadakoddi of Kerala[33] or Ur Panchayats of Tamilnadu[34], based on traditional knowledge, coastal governance has now become a tool to ease capture of space and resources by a few private companies.

Despite continued protests and movements, government committee recommendations, state government objections and citizen feedback, the CRZ 1991 has been heavily diluted. In 2019, a new Coastal Regulation Zone notification, 2019 (CRZ 2019) was brought out which made serious dilutions to the 2011 notification.[35] CRZ 2019 has undone almost every prohibition on industrial activity put in by the CRZ 1991.

For example, dilutions for the tourism industry alone include, among others -

- reducing the no-development zone from 200 metres to 50 metres, thereby allowing construction of beach shacks, toilets and showers and other 'temporary structures' on the beach;
- allowing for "eco-tourism" activities in eco-sensitive areas without any acknowledgement of the issues with ecotourism[36];
- dilution of regulation on groundwater withdrawal and waste discharge, thereby making it easier for hotels to continue to pollute the oceans and deplete existing freshwater sources.

The tourism industry has always seen the CRZ regulations as a barrier, but more recently, even government departments talk of the CRZ as an 'issue' to be solved for tourism development[37] -

> ***"On the issue of CRZ, the representative from MOEF informed that they are working on the revision of CRZ notifications.... The notification has provisions for relaxation in laws related to development of tourism related activities/infrastructure in the coastal zone".***

The CRZ 2019 notification was also brought in with little consultation, and without considering citizens' objections. According to one article, there were more than 3600 objections to the CRZ 2019 from the general public, which were disregarded and the draft notification was finalized anyway.[38]

Other than the 2019 notification, plans (like the Coastal Zone Management Plan, the Sagarmala Perspective Plan, the Detailed Project Reports under the Swadesh Darshan scheme etc.) and policies have guided coastal tourism. At the state level, while policies have not been made specifically for coastal tourism, tourism policies apply to coastal areas as well, driving a de-facto management of the coasts.

For example, in 2016, the Odisha Tourism Policy was brought out which, among other things, promoted the creation of land banks for tourism.[39] A year later, the Odisha government launched GOSWIFT - Government of Odisha Single Window for Investor Facilitation & Tracking to facilitate land acquisition, clearances and licenses for private investors.[40] By June 2018, the Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO) had reportedly filed for and acquired possession of more than 69,000 acres[41], of which about 1000 acres were set aside for tourism projects[42]. Several of these land banks are in coastal areas, including several clusters in Jagatsinghpur, Konark in Puri and in Ganjam.[43] This kind of creation of 'land banks' is a straightforward capture of public land for private use, and has seen severe conflicts with local communities.[44]

This proposal has been seemingly continued in the draft Odisha Tourism Policy 2020, along with a slew of other incentives.[45]

Similarly, the West Bengal Tourism Policy of 2016 focuses on encouraging large investments in tourism, and provides incentives for star hotels, amusement parks, cruise boats and others.[46] All of the proposed developments are heavy on private investment, and has been devastating for local communities. This approach has been continued in the 2019 policy of the state, which envisages the role of the State as responsible for:

- Approval of projects, incentives, policies and monitoring of implementation of tourism projects
- Assisting potential investors and removing bottlenecks in project implementation
- Facilitating training of human resources needed for the tourism sector

The policy essentially sees the role of the State as limited to promotion of tourism and facilitating the investment environment of tourism. The 2019 policy continues this approach.[47]

Needless to say, this kind of rampant industrialisation and privatisation and the changes in coastal governance to accommodate it goes against several Constitutional principles and established environmental jurisprudence. It blatantly violates the right to livelihood under Article 21 of the Constitution, established in several cases, for example Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation [1986 AIR 180], where the Supreme Court held that -

> ***An equally important facet of that right is the right to livelihood because, no person can live without the means of living, that is, the means of livelihood.***

It also violates the right to environment under Article 21, established in landmark cases[48], including Indian Council for EnviroLegal Action v. Union of India [1996 AIR 1446] in the coastal context. The ecological impacts of tourism are massive and often unrecognised[49]; with other industries included, the Blue Economy has the potential to completely destroy the coastline.

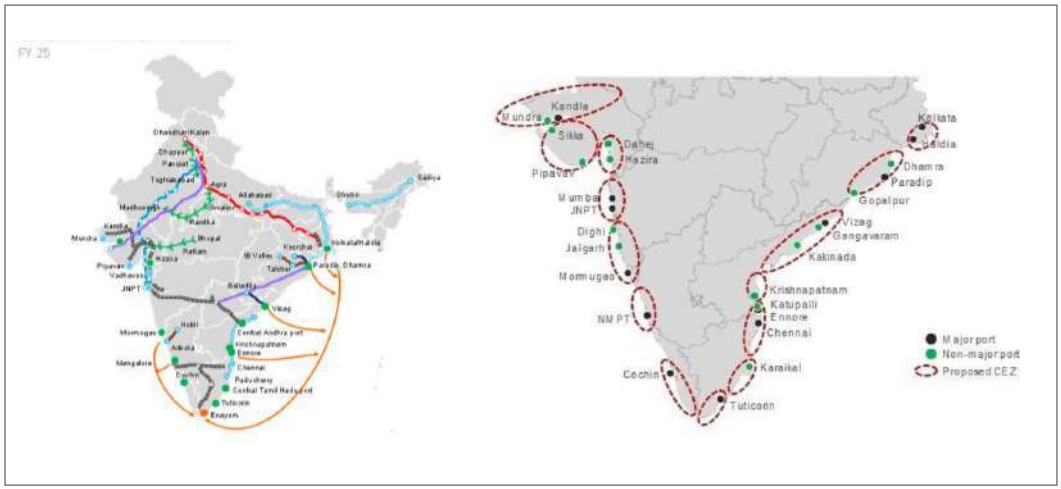
Importantly, this form of industrialisation represents a conversion of public lands to private lands. In some cases, this has been done through the direct transfer of public land. For example, in Gorai, common lands, called khazaan lands, which were being used by the community for fishing activities, was handed over through an executive order to a private company. The order was only stayed after the community went to court.[50] In other cases, this is done indirectly, like in Blue Flag beaches as mentioned above, where barricades and entry fees are used to create exclusionary and restricted access to public beaches. This kind of direct and indirect privatisation goes against the Public Trust doctrine which guides the governance of natural resources, as laid down in MC Mehta v. Kamal Nath [(1997) 1 SCC 388) -

> ***Public at large is the beneficiary of the sea- shore, running waters, airs, forests and ecologically fragile lands.... But in the absence of any legislation, the executive acting under the doctrine of public trust cannot abdicate the natural resources and convert them into private ownership or for commercial use.***

## Projects and Schemes

The most significant way in which tourism development has been undertaken is through a multitude of government funded projects and schemes at the national and state levels that have led to de-facto changes in the use of coastal spaces.

In 2016, the government of India launched 'SAGARMALA, with the main objective to ensure "port-led" development. Under Sagarmala, the entire coastline of India is envisaged as heavily industrialized through major and minor ports, manufacturing clusters, and harbours for deep sea fishing, which are further connected inwards through a network of inland waterways, railways and roadways. More than 150 projects have been identified with infrastructure investment of Rs. 4 lakh crore and investment in industry of Rs. 7-8 lakh crore.[51]




*Coastal Economic Zones and transport lines as per Sagarmala Perspective Plan 2016*

Several industries form a part of this port-led growth, one of them being tourism. Tourism has been placed under the pillar of "Coastal Community Development". This pillar primarily envisages that coastal communities will become labour for the industrial clusters, large boats doing deep sea fishing and tourism. This is the clearest articulation by the government itself of converting fishworkers from right holders to job holders.

The Sagarmala Perspective Plan captures the different components of tourism under Blue Economy in India -

- Development of Coastal Circuits
- Port and lighthouse development
- Beachfront development
- Development of infrastructure for promoting Cruise tourism

## Coastal tourism

In 2014-15, the central government launched a major tourism-related scheme called 'Swadesh Darshan' to promote tourism in India. Among other circuits, it also created a coastal circuit comprising of 11 stretches of the coast in different states, with a total investment of more than Rs. 770 crores by the Ministry of Tourism.[52]

Contrary to the way the Blue Economy has been projected and promoted, an examination of the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) submitted by the states for Swadesh Darshan[53] shows that there is little examination of the social and environmental costs of tourism or any solutions to fundamental problems that already exist in tourism in the chosen destinations. Almost all of the investment has been used only for infrastructure development - building toilets, drinking water, lights and promenades on the beach.

Coastal tourism development under different projects has led to displacement of fishworkers, barriers to livelihood, resource scarcity and increased ecological degradation.

*Examples are provided in the case studies attached with this booklet, and in full case studies available on our website.*

## Beachfront development

Both under the Sagarmala and under the World Bank's coastal zone managament project[54], developing beachfronts has been proposed. In 2018, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched a new project with the proposal to develop certain identified beaches to attain the 'Blue Flag'.[55] In October 2020, 8 beaches in India were awarded the Blue Flag certificate.[56] The 'Blue Flag' program is a certificate/label awarded by the Foundation for Environmental Education based in Denmark[57] for fulfiling criteria like water quality, waste management, environmental education on beach ecosystems for visitors, and others.[58]

While they sound like legitimate criteria, experience from Blue Flag beaches shows that the label is largely to attract tourism[59] and in India, it has been pushing out local communities.[60] Early presentations by the SICOM showed 'fishing net/activities' included under the title 'Littering in India.[61] All the focus on Blue Flag in India has been on constructing promenades, fences and other such infrastructure.[62] The Blue Flag is delegitimzing the use of beaches by fishworkers and other local communities.

*More details are given in the note on Blue Flag beaches attached with this booklet and available on the website.*

## Cruise tourism

Worldwide, cruise tourism has been growing exponentially, estimated to have grown from 17.8 million passengers in 2007 to 25.8 million passengers in 2017.[63] India has also been bringing in infrastructure and policy changes to promote cruise tourism.

Several relaxations have already been provided for cruise tourism.[64] In 2017, the first international cruise docked in India with the blessings of the Ministry of Shipping.[65]

Since then, cruise tourism in India has been increasing multi-fold - in the fiscal year 2017-18, 138 cruise ships called on ports in India, with 1.76 lakh passengers.[66] And more ports are being developed for cruise ships.

While the impacts of cruise tourism have not been well studied in India, globally, the social, economic and environmental costs of cruise tourism are well established. Each cruise ship can carry between 3000 and 5000 passengers[67], and have restaurants, swimming pools and more.[68] Environmentally, cruise ships are basically "floating cities", and are huge guzzlers of fuel.[69] Reportedly, in the UK, local environmental groups have demonstrated that a single cruise ship emits particulate matter equivalent to 1 million cars.[70] Cruises also add almost nothing to the local economy.[71]

Cruise tourism did take a major hit with the COVID-19 pandemic, with ships like the Diamond Princess and others seeing major outbreaks of the virus. But the cruise industry has been working hard to salvage its reputation and looks poised to restart operations as soon as it can.[72]

*More details are given in the note on cruise tourism and in the working paper available on our website.*

## CONCLUSION

Many of these projects are being brought in an undemocratic manner, without public consultations and in some cases without any project documents being made public, and in direct contradiction to the demands of citizens. Fishworkers, other coastal communities, and civil society organizations have all been left out of the conversation around these policies and projects. Even as all these changes are taking place, the government has taken no account of the impacts of such developments on coastal communities.

What we have from the tourism component of Blue Economy is a capital intensive model of tourism that brings with it several negative impacts of displacement, loss of access to resources, dilutions of environmental norms and dilution of labour laws among other things. By definition, a capital intensive, investment heavy model of tourism, is structured and designed to exclude marginalized communities like fishworkers - completely contrary to the rhetoric for tourism that promotes local involvement and maximizing benefits to the local communities.

***But alternatives are possible - of a people-centred approach to tourism with environmental sustainability and decmocratic decision making as key principles.***

What we need is a re-imagination of tourism that recognizes the customary governance of coastal communities to their commons and allows for participation of fishworkers in decision making and ownership of the tourism. It is also important to acknowledge that tourism is sensitive to several external factors like natural disasters, the state of the global economy among others. The pandemic, which severely affected the tourism industry is a case in point. So we need to firmly place tourism as a means of additional source of livelihood (not a primary one). Fishing and allied activities have to be linked to the tourism industry and not sacrificed for the sake of tourism.

Coastal and ocean commons are not just a 'physical resource base' to stake claim and share - it is not a pie that can be cut up into neat little slices. So we will need to replace this current model of tourism under Blue Economy with models that acknowledge commons as community and not as marketable products.

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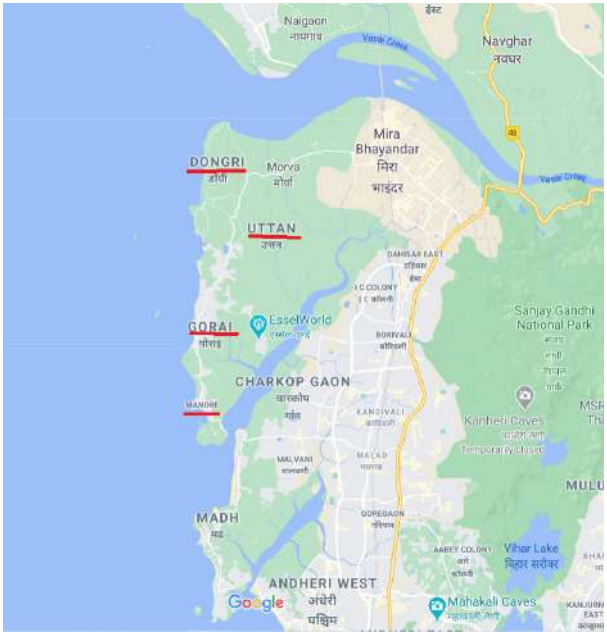
# Konachi Kharfuti?

# Case Study - Dharavi Bet, Maharashtra

## CONTEXT

Lying on the outskirts of Mumbai, Dharavi Bet is a peninsula protruding from the north-west of what used to be the Salsette islands, the region that now has Bandra, Juhu and Marve.[1] The Manori and Gorai creeks in the south and Vasai creek in the north form the eastern boundaries of Dharavi Bet; on the west is the Arabian sea. To the north is the hinterland, including the Mira-Bhayandar townships, about 7-8 km away.




Running along this coastal strip are hills, forests and farmland, which produce rice and a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Numerous ponds and lakes dot the land. Thick mangrove forests run along the creeks. There are also long stretches of marshy land and salt pans along the creeks.

*Gorai, Manori and Dongri form part of Dharavi Bet*

Dharavi Bet is home to the East Indian community, catholic christians with a unique culture and lifestyle, regarded as the original inhabitants of Bombay.[2] The East Indian community has their own unique forms of clothing, food, dialect and religious traditions.[3] Traditionally the East Indian community were involved primarily in farming, fishing and salt pans.[4] According to the community, much of the community in Dharavi Bet continues to engage with the same traditional livelihoods of fishing and farming.

*Mangroves of Dharavi Bet*

Dharavi Bet falls within two districts, the southern part of it within the Mumbai Suburban District[5] and the northern parts under Thane District[6]. An area comprising the 8 villages of Manori, Gorai, Utthan, Pali, Chowk, Gongri, Tarodi, Morva, with a total area of 43.13 sq. km has been notified as the Manori-Gorai Uttan development area.[7]

We have observed that tourism in the Dharavi Bet is currently limited primarily to day visitors and weekend visitors from Mumbai. However, for many years, there have also been plans to redevelop the area to increase tourism in the region. While many of these plans are as old as the early 2000s[8], new plans continue to be made for the region. These plans have been strongly resisted by the community through protests[9] and legal cases[10] by the Dharavi Bet Bachao Samiti and the Gorai Machimaar Sahakari Sanshta, making it very clear that the community has no interest in these developments.

Looking at these plans from a Blue Economy perspective makes it clear that the development is not meant for the community at all, but as part of the larger framework of infrastructural development along the coasts.

## TOURISM PROJECTS IN DHARAVI BET

From the late 1990s, there had been plans to develop Dharavi Bet as a Recreational Tourism Development Zone (RTDZ)[11], essentially turning the entire peninsula into an enclave for tourism alone, and potentially destroying the lives and livelihoods of all who lived there. Due to the long and sustained efforts of the community (several cases in the High Court, letters of objections and protests) for two decades, the RTDZ plan was not taken forward. However, several plans derived from the RTDZ Development Plan are being continued, including -

- **2 bridges - Borivali-Gorai; and Marve-Manori**

The idea of linking Dharavi Bet and the mainland with direct access of bridges at Gorai-Borivali and Marve-Manori has been in the pipeline for a long time. The justification is to allow greater tourist movement to the peninsula. As mentioned in the meeting minutes of 22nd and 23rd August, 2019 proposal for a bridge between Borivali and Gorai has been presented to the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority.[12]

In 2019, reportedly the Expression of Interest for the Marve-Manori bridge was floated.[13] But although these bridges are being planned, the current width of the internal roads through Dharavi Bet are too narrow to handle the traffic volume in case the bridges are built.

According to several community leaders, everyone in the community is against the bridges, and they have resisted them for many years. The community believes that the bridges are the first step to increasing tourism to Dharavi Bet, and then eventually for increasing real estate in the peninsula. Others in the community have also pointed to how the rail line in the 1850s, connecting Dharavi Bet to Mumbai, changed their lives.[14] Community leaders say that they are concerned that if the bridges come about, their homes and villages will get engulfed by the city of Mumbai.

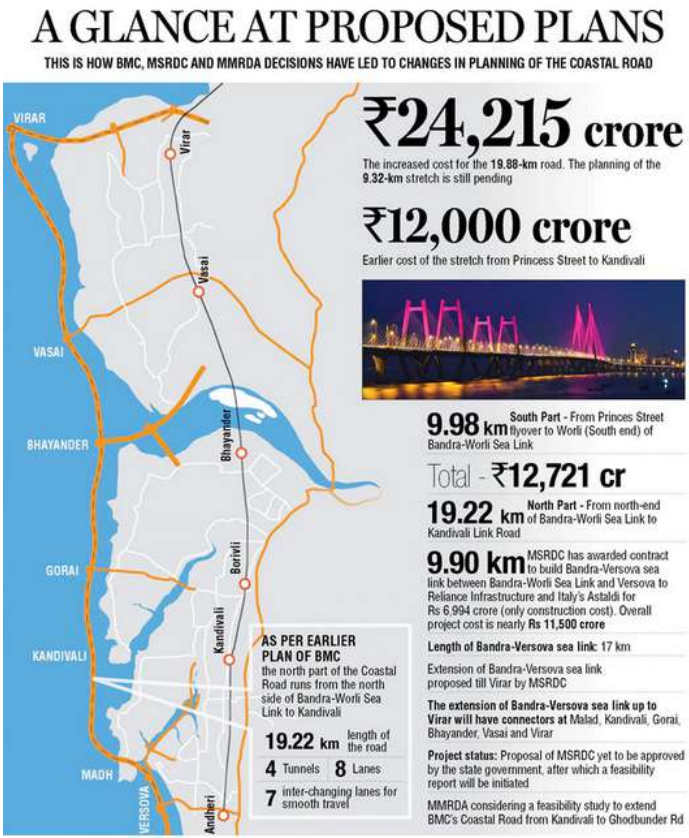
The community's worries are borne out if we look at the larger picture. These connections are part of the larger coastal road project of Mumbai.[15] Looking at these bridges in conjunction with the extended coastal road project map of Mumbai clearly shows that the bridges are mere linkages of the feeder network between the two spines.[16]

It is reasonable to expect that the feeder network will draw massive traffic movement through Dharavi Bet. These road networks are then likely to bring in increasing real estate value and shoot up the existing prices. In no time, massive buildings will shoot up[17] and wipe out the quiet and natural peninsula as urban development takes over. The bridge is just a piece of the jigsaw in the larger mosaic of things which would plough right through the community and overturn everything they have nourished and cherished.

There has already been immense mobilisation against the bridges and road widening in Dharavi Bet[18], and also against the first phase of the Coastal Road by the people in main Mumbai[19].

But despite the continued objections of the communities, it has been lunging forward. The coastal road project is a clear example of the kind of development happening under the Blue Economy model, and the bridges show how these macro ideas have effects at micro levels.

But forced connectivity of Dharavi Bet doesn't end with the bridges. Even as the community stands firm to resist the construction of the bridges, other ways of connecting Dharavi Bet to Mumbai are being envisioned.




*Mumbai Coastal Road project map*
*Source: DNA India*

## • Ropeway

Another project being proposed to connect Dharavi Bet to mainland Mumbai is a ropeway. The 3500 crore project has been given a nod by then Chief Minister Fadnavis so as to link Dharavi Bet with the Malad metro station on Metro-2A corridor and to the Borivali railway station.[20] Community members told us that they are resisting soil testing in their commons. Similar to the case of road networks, where the bridges were the feeder system to the larger coastal road, the ropeways are the last mile connectivity for the mother project of the metro corridor.[21]


*Visual representation of all the connectivity projects*

The constant attempts at forcing 'development' in the region has met with heavy opposition from the communities. The communities see very clearly the impacts that they are already facing, and increasing impacts if these new projects come up.

# ISSUES AND IMPACTS

## Environmental

The construction of tourist facilities and the expansion of coastal road and bridges will require the clearance of coastal mangroves. A mangrove park is also being planned in the area[22], diverting approximately 2.2 acres of mangrove forests.[23] Mangroves in the region have already been impacted by existing tourism, with one report quoting an FIR against Essel World amusement park for the destruction of 13-15 acres of mangroves.[24] Although the government later changed its position, community members claim that this destruction has actually happened. Satellite imagery shows that there is a definite reduction in green cover in the area between 2009 and 2019.

Mangroves are of great importance to coasts, both ecologically as well as for communities. The complex network of mangrove roots can help reduce wave energy, limit erosion and shield coastal communities from the destructive forces of tropical storms.[25] Mangrove lands are fish breeding grounds for the creek fish and are also a protection from the high tidal waves. To the fishworkers, mangroves are a lifeline that keeps them financially afloat through the monsoon season.[26]

Mangroves also provide other materials such as firewood and timber which support the lives of thousands of coastal communities. Destruction of mangroves has far reaching implications for the ecology and people.

*Satellite image as on 12.10.2009*

*Satellite image as on 15.10.2019*

## Livelihoods

Tourism plans for the area threaten to take up common lands, which are being used for subsistence farming and fishing. This will have serious implications for large parts of the community that practice these livelihoods. Ironically, the current plans for tourism will also negatively impact the already existing tourism industry here. The quiet village-like feel is one of the main charms of this area. But as one of the resort owners of Gorai pointed out - while the plans might increase connectivity with the mainland, Dharavi Bet will also lose its charm.

The tourism plans will affect not only owners of resorts, but also workers in the unorganized sector like vendors, ferry, auto and horse-cart drivers, who will have little space in enclavised tourism zones. Additionally, whereas the existing small hotels buy provisions from the local farmers and fishers, bigger tourism operators usually have bigger suppliers from whom they procure vegetables, fruits and groceries in bulk.

## Socio-cultural impacts

Community members are also worried about the changes to the community that increased connectivity and tourism will bring. Locals point out that infrastructure projects like the road will also increase traffic and restrict their free movement. Importantly, women from the Koliwada in Gorai voiced that an increase in tourism will also prove to be dangerous for the women. Right now the women go out even at the dead of the night on their own to sort fish when the boat arrives. Because of limited outsiders, the safety of women has not been under much threat. The women say that there have been a few instances of drunken driving on the beaches in the night and they have narrowly escaped being injured. They believe that with increasing tourism, such instances as well as instances of violence against women are likely to increase. Additionally, there are plans to create pedestrian walkways in the fishing zones[27], thereby creating a very voyeuristic approach to how fishing will be treated, wherein the daily activities of the fishing community will get exoticised.

## Ignoring community development

Even as the bridge and ropeway and other plans are being pushed for increasing tourism, requirements of the communities of Dharavi Bet have been ignored for years. According to community members, they have been asking for a government hospital to be built on the peninsula. One of the reasons given regarding the construction of a bridge has been that it will improve connectivity for locals in case of emergencies. Today, if there is any medical emergency in the dead of the night, the only route of reaching a hospital is traversing all the way to Bhayander by road which is more than 20km from the southernmost village of Manori. But if there had been a hospital already on the island, then the need for this emergency connectivity would not be felt. There is also no petrol pump on the island. Locals, including the auto-drivers have to travel 10-12 kms for the nearest petrol pump. Unfortunately, development plans for this region have instead focused on shopping complexes and parks and amenities for tourists, even where basic amenities have not been provided to the community.

*The case study on Dharavi Bet has been prepared by Equitable Tourism Options - EQUATIONS using information gathered from desk research and site visits done in 2015, 2016 and 2019. Local community members, fishworkers, hotel owners and small business owners were interviewed during these visits.*

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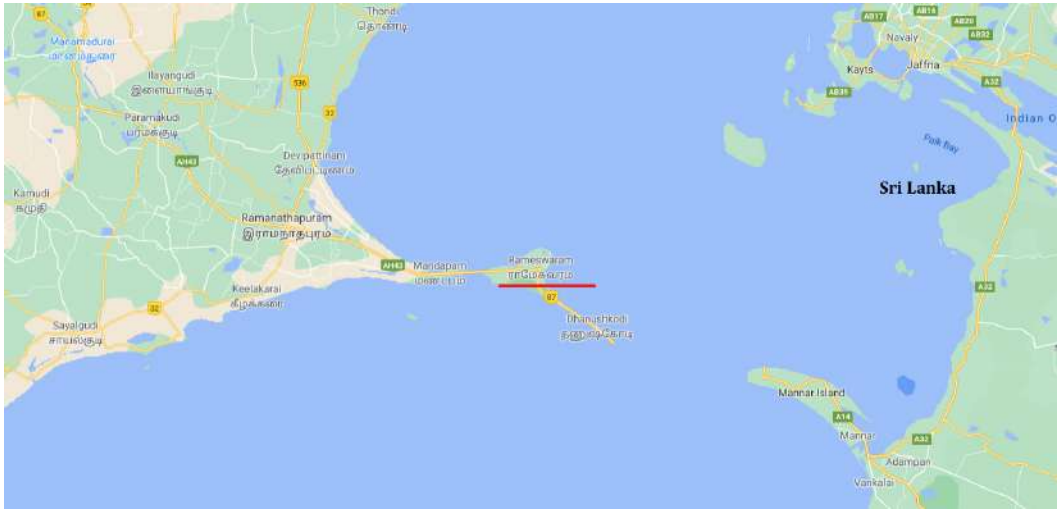
# Yaarude Poromboke

# Case Study - Rameswaram, Tamilnadu

## CONTEXT

Rameswaram is a small town within Ramanathapuram district in Tamilnadu, with an area of 53 sq.km. and 10,000 households. There are also 156 inhabited villages around the town in the same taluk. Communities of different religious backgrounds live here, a majority of them Hindu, but with significant populations of Christians (8%) and Muslim (4%) residents. The town has an SC population of ~3000 people, approximately 6% of the total population.[1]




*Rameswaram is on the edge of India bordering Sri Lanka*

Fishing is an important source of livelihood for the people of Rameswaram. As a coral island on the edge of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve, this region is rich in biodiversity.[2] According to data from the Central Marine Fisheries Institute (CMFRI), there are a total of 7000 boats in Ramanathapuram district, of which ~1900 are trawlers and the remaining are country-crafts.[3] But fishing here is not always an easy task, especially for smaller boats. The island is constantly buffeted by winds, often at speeds of 25-30 km/hr.[4] According to a local, winds are so important to the fishing community here that they have names for 15 different kinds of winds, depending on its direction and speed.

*Tourists at Agnitheertham, one of the holy sites near the temple*

# TOURISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Tourism is a big industry here, with an average of 1 crore tourists[5] coming to Rameswaram every year to visit the Ramanathaswamy temple, one of the holiest places in India for Vaishnavite Hindus.

In 2015, Rameswaram was included as part of the Tamilnadu 'Coastal Circuit' under Swadesh Darshan, and Rs. 15.86 crore allocated for infrastructure, including construction of parking facilities, 'last-mile linkage' and a sound and light show in Rameswaram.[6] The form that tourism has taken here in the last 5 years is heavily focused on infrastructure. This aligns with the larger model of capital-intensive and infrastructure-driven tourism that is promoted under the Blue Economy. While religious tourism and fishing have co-existed in Rameswaram for many years, expanding tourism under the Blue Economy model is pushing fishworkers and other local communities away from their common lands and resources, making it difficult for communities here to continue their lives and livelihoods. A few examples of this are given below -

## • Displacement from Sangumal

Sangumal is an area running along the shore for about 1 km, stretching between Agni Theertham (an important tourist site in Rameswaram) and Olaikuda, a fishing village on the outskirts of Rameswaram town. According to community leaders, about 50 families lived in Sangumal itself, but a further 21 villages were dependent on this stretch of beach for fishing - parking boats, cleaning the fish, repairing nets etc. Community leaders say that although the residents of Sangumal had been living there for many years, they were evicted in 2005 on grounds of the area being poromboke[7].

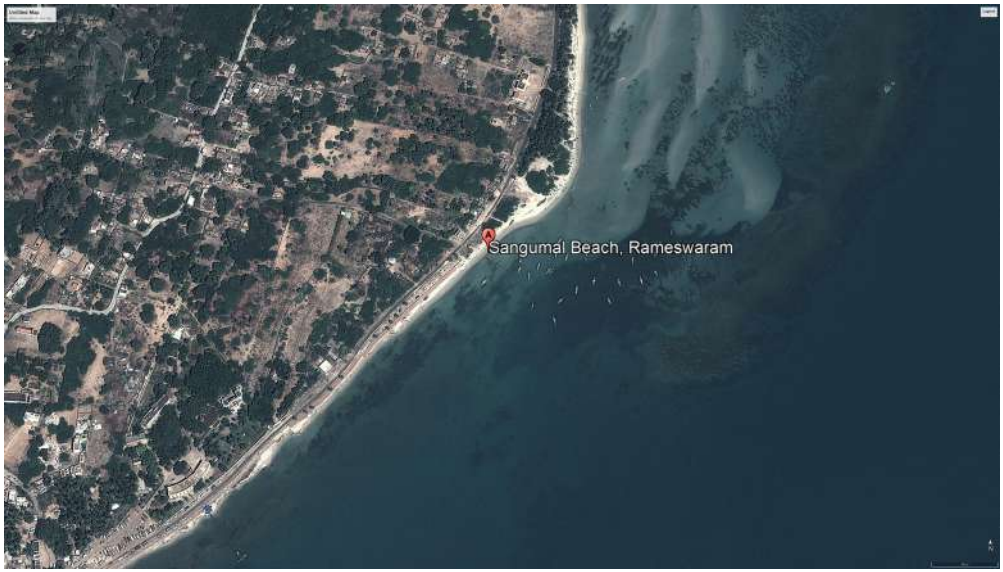
According to community leaders, in 2005, the District Collector approached the residents proposing a children's park in the region, but they were promised that the park was only going to take up a small part of the land. They were also told that the park development


would ensure that the residents got water and electricity. Community leaders say that the proposal was to relocate the families living there who were promised titles over other land. The community resisted, but were relocated despite their protests.

According to the community leaders, the park was built there and they faced a lot of issues initially. But the park itself was not maintained and soon became disfunctional. For nearly 10 years after that, nothing happened, and some of the original residents of the area returned and set up temporary houses.

*Protest against park in 2008*

In 2015, the government started building a promenade along the beach on one side, cutting off direct access to the beach. A community member we spoke to talked to us about how she used to catch crabs in the area and many other women also used that area earlier. Since there is no legal title to the area, and no recognition of the use rights of the fishworkers, we observed that most of the area has been sold to private companies - the area now has a water-sports centre (where the old park was), a new 3-star hotel, and the Tamilnadu Tourism Development Corporation has expanded its premises. Other resorts are also under construction, and several portions of the land were fenced off. We observed that only a small stretch of beach remains for fishworkers to use. We validated our data through satellite imagery, which showed clearly that of the original 1km stretch of beach, only 100 m is now left as commons.




*Satellite image of Sangumal in 2012*


*Satellite image on Sangumal in 2019 with colour coding of different developments*

## • Blocking fishing for tourism

In Rameswaram, tourism and fishing happen next to each other. Many of the temples and other holy sites in Rameswaram are located close to beaches, and fishworkers often use the same beaches. More recently however, there is a push to segregate fishing areas and tourism areas, with fishworkers being asked to move away. There are three main fish markets on the island, and the catch is transported through the Pamban bridge that connects Rameswaram. The same bridge is also used by tourists coming by road.

According to fishworkers we spoke to, issues have now arisen because of their use of this bridge. By its very nature, fish markets, fish trucks and areas around them are strong smelling. Due to limited capacity of the trucks, leakage from trucks is common between the months of December and February, when fish catch is at its peak.

Because of complaints of the smell by visiting tourists, the fishworkers say that even for this minor violation, the trucks are stopped and fined between Rs. 5000 to Rs. 10,000. Furthermore, the government has now been putting pressure on them to use a different (longer) route to transport the fish.

There is also a new fishing harbour being constructed a little distance away from the current one[8], which fishing leaders believe may be prompted by attempts to develop tourism. He says,

> ***"Right now, it is a spiritual place and the waste from the fishing goes near the temple. There are 1200 trawlers in the area and they use the seawater to clean the boats and their fish. The fish oil and grease from the boat goes into the sea and into the spiritual place. During the rainy season, the fish doesn't dry and it smells even more. There are a lot of flies/***

> ***mosquitoes.The fishers are dependent on the sea so they don't have a problem with the fishing waste but the tourists have a problem with the smell."***

Rather than providing the fishworkers with clean and accessible spaces for fish drying and other processing, fishers are simply being pushed away from the tourist sites. This approach of seeing fishing and tourism as mutually exclusive has led to further shrinking of spaces for fishworkers.

- ## Capture of water resources

Tourism in Rameswaram has affected not only the fishworkers, but other communities as well. In the ever expanding resource requirement of the tourism industry, communities are struggling to retain access to adequate water. According to a member of a local organization, there is a lot of illegal groundwater extraction in areas like Thangachimadam within the island.

According to government orders, commercial water extraction in certain areas requires a 'No Objection Certificate' (NOC), and commercial wells have to be more than 10 km from the coast.[9] But he claims that there are wells very close to the coast, and are operated without adequate licensing. He pointed out that the water tankers are bought by two main industries - shrimp farming, and tourism. According to the tourism department statistics, there are 89 hotels in Rameswaram[10], of which only 3 hotels have a valid Consent to Operate from the Pollution Control Board[11].

But according to many locals, in reality there are probably about 450 lodges in Rameswaram, of which about 150 have their own source of water. The remaining hotels have to buy water. In a conversation with one tourism operator, the owner suggested that he buys approximately 4000-7000 litres of water in a day. If these

estimates are accurate, then up to 12 lakh litres of water may be extracted and supplied to the tourism industry on a daily basis.

Fishworkers in Rameswaram are struggling with resource grab in two ways. On the one hand, common lands and resources are being freely sold to the tourism industry through legal measures like in Sangumal, on the other, the lack of adequate enforcement allows the industry to also extract resources illegally like with fresh water. Between these two forms of coastal resource capture, the local community, particularly the fishworkers are left in the lurch, struggling to hold on to traditional coastal commons, denied access to traditional fishing grounds and losing freshwater resources.


*Water tanker in Rameswaram*

# Case Study - Kanniyakumari, Tamilnadu

## CONTEXT

The tip of Kanniyakumari is categorized as a Special Town Panchayat within Agastheeswaram Taluk in the district also called Kanniyakumari. The district is home to 18.7 lakh people, and boasts an average literacy rate of 91%, higher than the state average of 80%.[12] Whereas in the interiors, paddy and coconut cultivation are important, fishing continues to be an important source of livelihood in the coastal area.[13]

*Small-scale fishworkers in Kovalam, Kanniyakumari*

According to CMFRI's marine census of 2010, there are more than 40,000 fishing families in Kanniyakumari, with 20% of Tamilnadu's total fishing population living here. There are 47 fishing villages in the district. Kanniyakumari district has a total of more than 10,000 boats, of which only 645 are trawlers.[14]

Interestingly, despite the entire district being approximately 1600 sq.km. in area, tourism is largely restricted to the tip, an area of only about 4 sq.km or less[15]. Most of the tourism is focused around the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, the Thiruvalluvar Statue, and the Triveni Sangam, i.e. the confluence of the three seas. In 2015, Kanniyakumari was included in the Coastal Circuit under Swadesh Darshan, under which ~Rs. 31 crores has been allotted to develop tourism in Kanniyakumari, with much of the money allocated for building amenities, infrastructure including sea wall and promenade, and parks.[16]

According to community leaders, in Kanniyakumari, there has largely been a segregation of tourism from fishing areas, and the community has resisted attempts to bring tourism to the village areas. This has meant that conflicts over land and resources between the tourism industry and the community have been limited. But tourism has been expanding in the region, and this expansion threatens not only the livelihoods of fishworkers, but their very survival.

Some of the major implications of the tourism industry are highlighted below.

## • Increasing ecological vulnerability

Buffeted by the ocean from all directions, Kanniyakumari is highly vulnerable to cyclones and other natural disasters. In December 2017, Kanniyakumari was hit by Cyclone Ockhi, with death tolls reportedly reaching more than 80 and more than 500 fishermen missing.[17] In 2004, Kanniyakumari was hit by the tsunami that killed more than 800 people according to some reports.[18]

But a more systematic vulnerability that Kanniyakumari faces is also from shoreline changes. According to a 2011 paper, Kanniyakumari has seen a net erosion of 0.204 sq.km. between 1999 and 2006 and that Kanniyakumari coastline is recorded to be one of the major erosion coasts of India.[19] In our conversation with him, scientist Lal Mohan also reiterates that

> ***the coasts of Kanniyakumari are "unstable, and highly changeable". The depletion is very high, he says, and a "small change can deplete the shoreline and submerge villages".***


*Hotels in Kanniyakumari are very close to the High Tide Line*

Currently, there are already about 80 registered lodges/hotels in Kanniyakumari.[20] Although a complete survey has not been done, casual visual observation makes it very clear that several structures, especially hotel walls and promenades are less than 500 m from the High Tide Line. Not only does there appear to be no clear monitoring of CRZ violations and action taken, in conversation with the District Collector of Kanniyakumari, he talked of the CRZ as one of the "issues" that tourism has to overcome. This cavalier attitude to vulnerability is also reflected in the project development.

Under Swadesh Darshan, more than Rs. 1 crore has been allocated for the construction of a sea wall.[21] Research has repeatedly shown that sea walls, rather than stopping erosion, can further exacerbate shoreline changes.[22] Furthermore, to increase tourism in the region, ~Rs. 2 crores has been spent on laying a 'last-mile' road and a promenade that runs from Triveni Sangam until Sunset point.[23] This road and promenade, approximately 2.7 km, makes for a beautiful ride for tourists.

*Promenade to sunset point*

But we observed that the road cuts through the rocky beaches and the vegetation-covered dunes right next to them, completely destroying the dune.

*Beach vegetation in the unconstructed part of Kanniyakumari*

Dunes are extremely important for coastal ecosystems, not only acting as a filter preventing salt-water intrusion into freshwater aquifers, but also acting as barriers that protect the seashore. Moreover, plants like the beach morning glory (Ipomoea pes-caprae) are important in preventing erosion because their roots hold the sand in place.[24] For a shoreline already highly unstable, such construction completely removes all natural protection, and can further destabilize the coast by blocking wind and wave movement, and by removing vegetation that helps reduce erosion.

*Beach vegetation being cleared for promenade construction*

It seems clear from these observations that the vulnerability of Kanniyakumari is not being taken into account when tourism development is being planned. An examination of the Swadesh Darshan DPR also shows a lack of any social or environmental impact assessment or a clear vulnerability mapping, which is critical in places that already exhibit high vulnerability levels.

## • Unregulated waste disposal affects fish and fishworkers

One of the major problems identified by several interview respondents in Kanniyakumari was regarding waste, specifically, the disposal of solid and liquid waste by the hotel industry. Of the hotels in Kanniyakumari, only 6 have a 'Consent to Operate' by the Pollution Control Board.[25] All of the other hotels seem to have no regulation of their solid and liquid waste disposal. According to one of the hotel managers, the hotel has a private Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) that is used for disposal. However, locals say that all the hotels send sewage directly into the sea. They state that sewage lines run from the hotels to the beaches through their villages and empty out into the sea.

This accumulation of waste on the beaches restricts access for fishworkers in these areas since they cannot store their boats on these beaches and cannot use them for net repair, fish drying and other activities involved in fishing. Moreover, fishworkers complain that they have to wade through the waste and sludge to go out far enough to put their nets or pull their boats ashore.

The fishworkers in the nearby villages have been attempting to put a stop to this practice by petitioning local authorities, but to no avail. Community members have written letters we have seen atleast three times to the Hoteliers Association in Kanniyakumari, the MLA, the Special Town Panchayat and the District Collector, stating that there are drainage pipes leading from the hotels that discharge toilet waste directly into the sea in certain areas.[26] The letters point out that these are areas inhabited by people (7000 inhabitants according to one letter), who are being affected by this drainage. The letter states that fishermen, going into the sea through this water as well as women and children in these areas are catching diseases from the exposed drains that run into the sea. Locals also say that during the peak season of the Sabarimala pilgrimage, there are several lakh pilgrims coming to Kanniyakumari as part of their pilgrim journey every day, but due to inadequate facilities, the pilgrims openly defecate on the beach.

*Waste and sewage on fishing beach near tourist areas*

The indiscriminate disposal of garbage also affects fish and fishing in the area. One fishing leader pointed out -

> ***"Here we have corals and that is where you will find all the fish. There will be fish of different sizes that are living between the corals. But now if you go down and look, you will see that many of the corals have a layer of plastic over them, and so it suffocates them. Without the corals, the fish also die."***

*This case study has been prepared by Equitable Tourism Options- EQUATIONS using information gathered from desk research and site visits done in 2014, July 2019 and September 2019. Local community members, fishworkers, tourism industry association members, hotel owners and small business owners were interviewed during these visits. See the full case study on our website.*

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# Kothay gelo mandar?

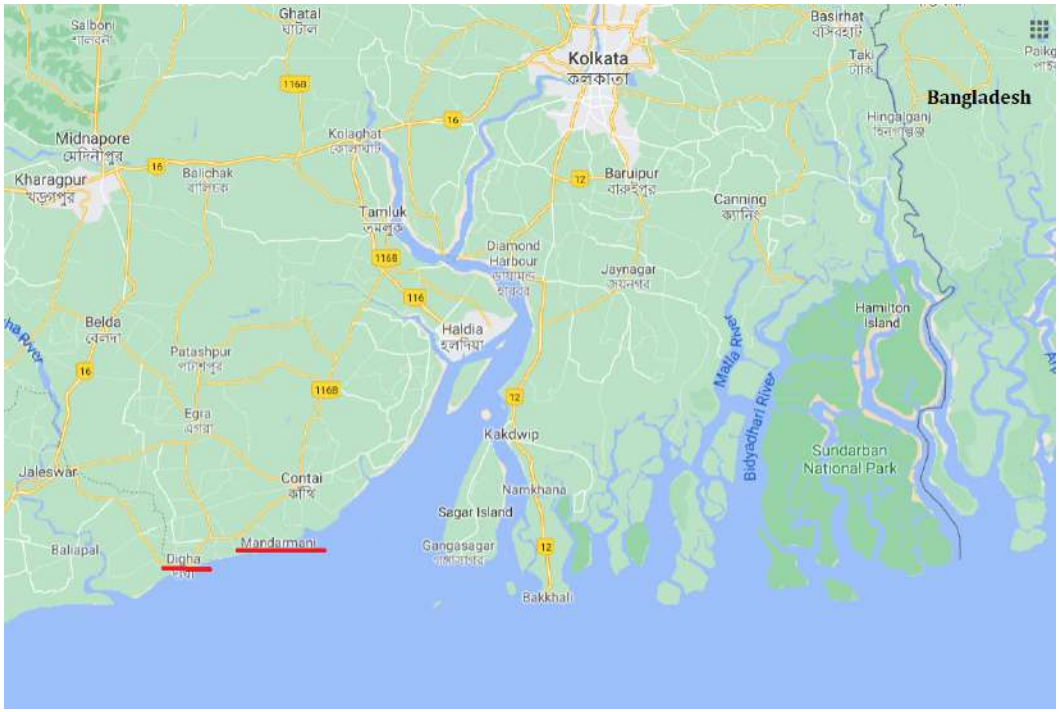
# Case Study - Digha-Mandarmoni, West Bengal

## CONTEXT

West Bengal is the fourth most populous state in India, and the coast of West Bengal has also been pivotal to the region's history and development. According to the Marine Fisheries Census 2010 conducted by the Central for Marine Fisheries Research Institute, West Bengal has ~3.8 lakh fishworkers.[1]

*Small-scale fishing in West Bengal*

Apart from fisheries, West Bengal is also known for its coastal tourism destinations. The beaches in the southern coast of the state have seen tourism development for a few decades and tourism development plans have been plenty. In this case study, we look at the coastal tourist destinations of Digha-Mandarmani.




*Map of Digha-Mandarmoni*

## Digha

Digha is in East Midnapore district, close to the Odisha border. Today, Digha is divided into 'Old Digha' and 'New Digha'. Tourism in Old Digha began in the late 1950s, while New Digha has been seeing tourism since the mid-1980s.[2] Digha receives more than 40% of the total tourist arrivals of West Bengal.[3]

Agriculture was once the primary livelihood activity in the region and fishing was also practiced. However, today tourism is noticed everywhere.

### Mandarmoni

Mandarmoni, comparatively a newer tourism destination, is situated in the Kalindi Panchayat in the East Midnapore district. The story goes that years ago, due to the presence of many thousands of small red crabs, the beach used to look like a field of the red flower mandar[4].Traditionally, the main occupation of the area was fishing and agriculture (potato, onions, chillies, carrot, beetroot). According to fishworkers, more recently, there has been intensive aquaculture cultivation in the area, which has affected the soil of the fields.

## TOURISM IN DIGHA- MANDARMONI

### Digha

Tourism to Digha grew exponentially when three trains were introduced in 2008 that pass through Digha, making it a convenient vacation spot for people from Kolkata. Digha has also been aggressively promoted by the state government in different ways. The coastal circuit which includes Digha have been identified as being part of a Priority Circuit by the West Bengal Tourism policy, 2016.

Digha was also identified for MICE tourism in the West Bengal Tourism Policy, 2019. In the year 2019-20, the state government promoted a Beach Tourism Festival of Digha.[5] The area is also one of the sites of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project (ICZMP), which has several components that aid tourism.

In the Digha-Shankarpur area, a total of Rs. 101 crores was budgeted and spent under the ICZMP for[6]:

- Plantation of bio-shields and mangroves along the beach areas
- Alternative livelihood generation by providing sewing machines, agricultural implements, pump sets etc.
- Sewage system and treatment plant and storm water drainage facilities in Digha town.
- Marine aquarium and interpretation centre in Digha
- Beach beautification and hawker rehabilitation

## Mandarmoni

The beginning of tourism in Mandarmoni can be traced to the early 2000s. An entrepreneur from Kolaghat constructed a cottage and seven rooms. The growth of tourism was gradual in the first few years, and then really picked up around 2008, when daily trains were introduced to and from Digha.[7] According to discussions with the tourism industry in 2012, there were more than 75 hotels and resorts. A few years earlier, the access to Mandarmani was only by driving on the beach (or a much longer way by road). But in 2014, a coastal road - Digha-Mandarmani Marine Drive, or Saikar Sarani - was announced and work began on it[8].

There have also been large sums of money spent under the Swadesh Darshan scheme in both Digha and Mandarmani. The area of Digha-Shankarpur-Mandarmani is one of the coastal circuits proposed for Swadesh Darshan for development of beachfront beautification, seating and gazebos, toilet blocks, tourist amenities, and houseboats among others with a total cost of ~87 crores[9]. Apart from Swadesh Darshan and the ICZM project, the Tajpur beach, a beach midway between Digha and Mandarmani has also been proposed for Blue Flag certification[10].

# IMPLICATIONS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

## Coastline destruction

One of the most glaring and visible impacts of tourism has been the rampant violation of the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 2011 and the other regulations linked to tourism. In 2006, the state pollution control board imposed a closure order on eight resorts, which had just opened or were under construction, for violating CRZ rules. When the resort owners challenged the order in an appellate authority, the authority recommended demolition as Mandarmani falls under CRZ I category[11]. In a PIL filed in the High Court of Calcutta[12], an order was issued banning further construction along the beach. But little was done in terms of actual implementation until 2016 when a demolition drive was also carried out by the district administration and four hotels were demolished[13]. The vestigial remains of the demolitions are evident on the beach. However, there continue to exist several visible violations on the beach.

*Construction along the coastline*

Residents in Mandarmoni pointed out,

> ***"If tourism happens, it should not be in the CRZ area. It should not impact fishing and it should not spoil the environment."***

Small shop owners too knew that several of the resorts and tourist establishments built along the beaches are illegal according to the CRZ with regulations not being followed. They believed these were destroying the sea and the coastline.

## Flattening sand dunes

According to the fishworkers we spoke to, there has also been flattening of sand dunes along the Mandarmoni coastline, partly for sand mining and partly for tourism. A tea vendor and a fishworker along the Mandarmoni coast recalls the large sand dunes of the area which were flattened to build hotels and resorts. The flattening of these sand dunes has meant that water now comes into the village.

To mitigate the coastal erosion, a part of the ICZM project has been to plant trees along the coast as a bioshield.[14] While bioshields could be effective mechanisms, the plantations have been carried out without consultation to understand local usage of commons. In a focus group discussion with the fishworkers in Digha, they shared that since the plantation had been put all along the coast, even in places that were being used by the fishworkers, there were restrictions placed on 'plantation areas' which has cut off access to the commons.

*Beachfront in Mandarmoni, where constructions are right along the water*

## Pollution of water and land

All the tourist locations visited as part of the study were exposed to large-scale pollution. Untreated water by the resorts was also going directly into the sea, until setting up the sewage treatment plant. In 2012 and 2013, the resorts and hotels interviewed, whether privately managed or managed by the Fisheries Department admitted to releasing untreated waste water from the establishments into the ground or into the sea.

Under the ICZM project, it was proposed to take up both solid waste management and sewage treatment of Digha. According to the ICZMP reports, 400 of the 550 hotels of Digha have now been connected to the sewage treatment plant.[15] Hotel managers also confirmed that hotels had been connected to the sewage treatment facilities.

There was also a plan for solid waste management in Digha but the project was abandoned, according to the website of West Bengal ICZMP. No such measures have been taken in Mandarmoni, which is on the track to becoming very popular, or any of the other emerging destinations along the coast.

Solid waste management continues to be a matter of concern. We observed that large amounts of plastic and other waste are lying around in Digha beach. The fishworkers, in a focus group discussion, also shared that solid waste is usually dumped in a dumping site a little away from the beach or sometimes burnt. Fishworkers in Mandarmoni also shared that the sea is full of plastic and other waste. This is more evident early mornings when fishworkers bring the day's catch in and sort out the fish from mounds of waste.


*Fishworkers have to sort out fish from waste during the morning catch in Digha*

## Difficulties to fishing

One of the main struggles of the fishworkers has been the taking over of the beaches by the tourists. Community members told us that along this coastal belt, the traditional method of fishing is that of a veti system[16]. The fishworkers require an empty stretch of beach area to be able to pull in their catch, sort out the fish and dry out the net etc. They also put up temporary huts for sorting out the fish, resting, storing their assets, cooking etc. The fishing is usually done according to the time of the tide - it usually starts in the night and ends in the mornings. However, the tourism in the area has created a hindrance for the fishworkers.

We observed that particularly in Digha, the tourists flock to the beach as early as 4 am, when the fishers are yet to pull in their catch from the sea. The presence of a large number of people, who crowd the beach has meant that the fishworkers are unable to get access to adequate space on the beach. It is the general practice of the fishworkers to pile up the fish from one catch in a corner on the beach before going in for a second catch. Some of the fishworkers also reported that there have been instances of tourists snatching up the fish that has piled up on the beach.

Even though it is best for fishing to be done according to the tide, fishworkers say that this has been changed and fishworkers prefer to complete before 9 am in the morning because of tourists on the beach. This becomes a problem when the tide is in till noon on some days. In Digha, the fishworkers say that they have been stopped from building temporary huts for fishing activities, because of which they are seen sorting out the fish in nooks along the walkways created for tourism.

*Women fishworkers sorting out smaller catch for selling, as a few tourists walk along the promenade*

In Mandarmoni, the fishworkers still have the area in which temporary structures have been put up, but their area for fishing has significantly reduced because of the violations and land encroachment as previously mentioned.

## Impact on women

The women fishworkers bear a huge cost of the tourism development in the area. Women fishworkers work as labourers in drying and packaging. They told us that they have an oral agreement with the owners of fish processing units in the landing centre,

which lasts for about 6 months. The daily wage rate is set at 180/- rupees per day and on rare occasions it may vary between 200-230/- rupees per day.

But according to the fisherwomen, the reduced fish population coupled with the tourism development has hastened the reduction in fishing activities, which means that boat owners stop their own fishing and join as labourers in trawlers and other daily wages. This has meant that women find it harder to find labour in the fishing industry. Two women fishworkers near Mandarmoni explained that often they don't even get the money spent for their travel to work. The fish landing centres also don't allow the women to get fish from some other place for sorting, drying and packaging. But even if they were allowed to do so, they could run into losses due to high prices and the logistics involved in bringing the fish from different places. They also expressed how the removal of sand dunes for tourism establishments have snatched their vegetable growing grounds, and smaller fishing grounds on which they earlier depended for their nutritious diet.

Their loss of livelihoods is not made up for in any way by the expanding tourism industry as women in the area do not find any employment in the hotels or resorts. They can only put up small shops, which only a few of them are able to do.

# IN A NUTSHELL

## Fishworkers in Digha

Mandarmoni are struggling with resource grab, ecological degradation and rampant pollution. The major issue is the lack of any serious implementation of laws and regulations, which allows the industry to encroach on the coastal commons in many different ways. The plans for tourism have failed to address the issues in any sustainable and long lasting manner. As a result, the local community, particularly the fishworkers are left in the lurch, struggling to hold on to their livelihoods.

*This case study has been prepared by Equitable Tourism Options- EQUATIONS using information gathered from desk research and site visits done in November 2012, June 2013 and August, 2018. Local community members, fishworkers, tourism industry association members, hotel owners and small business owners were interviewed during these visits.*

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# Blue Flag Beaches - A Short Note

As part of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project (ICZMP) of the World Bank in India, the central government has started a project (BEAMS) within the larger ICZMP plan, with the main aim to strive for 'Blue Flag' certification for beaches in India.[1] The 'Blue Flag' program is a certificate/label awarded by the Foundation for Environmental Education based in Denmark, and supported by a variety of UN organizations, that certifies beaches that fulfill certain criteria.[2] These criteria include water quality, waste management, environmental education on beach ecosystems for visitors, safety for visitors (for example, with lifeguard presence and flags for tide) and accessibility for persons with disabilities.[3]


In India, Blue Flag is being used to attract tourism at the cost of local communities. Beaches in India are traditionally used by fishworkers to anchor boats, store and repair nets and clean and dry fish, and by other coastal communities as a place to gather socially. In India, in the attempt to get Blue Flag, all these uses are being restricted. Much can be learned from the presentation made by MoEFCC on the Blue Flag project in India, where one of the slides titled "littering in India" includes 'fishing net/ activities' and 'seaweeds'.


*Presentation of SICOM on the Blue Flag project Source: SICOM website (no longer available online)*

On 11th October 2020, the MoEFCC announced that 8 beaches in India have been awarded the Blue Flag certification[4] for this year. These are:

1. Shivrajpur (Dwarka, Gujarat)
2. Ghoghla (Diu)
3. Kasarkod (Karnataka)
4. Padubidri (Karnataka)
5. Kappad (Kerala)
6. Rushikonda (AP)
7. Golden beach (Puri, Odisha)
8. Radhanagar (A&N Islands)

A further 6 beaches had been originally identified in 2018[5]-

1. Kovalam (Chennai)
2. Bhogave (Maharashtra)
3. Bangaram (Lakshadweep)
4. Eden beach (Pondicherry)
5. Miramar (Goa)
6. Tajpur (West Bengal)

An examination of all the tenders given out for Blue Flag show that it has focused on construction on the beach of the same few things - promenade, toilets and drinking water, artificial lighting, CCTVs and parking.[6] This has changed the face of these beaches entirely. Padubidri was a small local beach in Udupi, Karnataka before Blue Flag certification, which was completely covered after Blue Flag.

*Padubidri beach before Blue Flag. Source: Mangalore Taxi*[7]

*Padubidri beach after Blue Flag. Source: Daiji World*[8]

According to reports, it has been proposed that the government will aim to get Blue Flag for 100 beaches in India.[9]

# ISSUES WITH BLUE FLAG

## Undemocratic process

The approach of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management was rejected by traditional fishworkers and other civil society, because of which the Coastal Management Zone notification was allowed to lapse in 2010.[10] Despite the complete rejection of this approach and the lapse of the Bill, the ICZMP project came in through the backdoor entry.[11]

To date, there has been little or no public consultation on the Blue Flag beach. From what we were told, in Kappad beach, Kerala, some of the Panchayat members were consulted, but no larger consultations were held with the community. In Kasarkod, Karnataka, fishworkers have said that they were not told of any such project on the beach.

The implementing agencies in both Kappad and Kasarkod are the respective District Tourism Departments (Kozhikode District Tourism Promotion Council, and Uttara Kannada District Tourism Department).[12] These departments do not have adequate community representation, nor have they conducted public consultations.

## Capture of coastal commons

The Blue Flag certification assumes that beaches are single-use systems, meant for 'visitors' who come there for sports and recreational activities. The Indian government is well aware of the use of beach space by traditional fishing communities. However, the MoEFCC has chosen to adopt this tourism approach in its project and completely delegitimize the rights of coastal communities, especially fishworkers, to their traditional territories. This is simply a way for the ministry to grab coastal lands that have been managed as commons for thousands of years to create 'private government' lands - lands that "belong" to the government that the public may "visit" for "legitimate uses", i.e. tourists. In India, several of the beaches that have received the Blue Flag certification

are being fenced off, and entry fees charged. In Kappad, there is an entry fees of Rs. 20 to enter the beach with barricades having been placed to prevent entry into the beach commons.[13] According to locals, Golden beach in Puri also has an entry fee and barriers. According to observational information, Kasarkod currently does not have entry fees, but there are charges for using facilities like toilets; it is not a leap to imagine that entry fees may soon be charged in Kasarkod as well. Fishworkers no longer have any space here at all, nor do tourism service providers like the vendors and local informal lifeguards, or any locals or tourists who cannot afford to pay the ticket charges.

*Blue Flag pushes fishworkers out to make way for tourists.*
*Image design by Manvee Bhandia and Avinash Kuduvalli for EQUATIONS.*

## Further damaging fragile coastal belts

Beaches are home to diverse ecosystems of plants, animals and birds like sandpipers, crabs, clams, barnacles, mangroves and morning glory and so much more. The construction of concrete structures and increasing tourists can significantly damage these important ecosystems. This is the situation found in Spain where in one study the authors conclude that[14]

> ***"..in the Spanish case, the beaches awarded by Blue Flags over the period 2007-2012 are characterized by a poor state of their environment, and they are linked with a high rates of human occupation, which have increased their degradation."***

## CONCLUSION

Before promoting and adopting this approach, the MoEFCC has done no assessment of what the environmental and social impact would be of increasing tourism on the beaches through the promotion of Blue Flag. Increasing pressure on beach biodiversity due to greater footfall of tourists, increasing erosion due to constructions on the beach, change in soil dynamics due to mechanical beach cleaning, displacement or loss of access to beaches for fishworkers, changes in the local economic structures that would in turn affect fishworkers who are employed in allied sectors etc. are potential threats to the coastal ecosystem if the Blue Flag is adopted in India. Hence it is important to rethink the Blue Flag project in India.

*This note has been prepared by Equitable Tourism Options - EQUATIONS using information gathered from desk research, as well as from anecdotal and observational on-site information received from Alphonsa Jojan (Kappad, Kerala), Mahabaleswhar Hegde (Kasarkod, Karnataka) and Saswat Mohapatra (Golden Beach, Odisha). Further research is planned on the Blue Flag beaches.*

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# Cruise Tourism - A Short Note

Cruises in modern times are very different from the 19th century. They are much bigger - some of them are five times the size of Titanic, and can carry up to 5000 people[1]. They are essentially large floating cities. Modern cruises provide a hint of luxury and a multitude of activities at cheap prices. Everything from fine dining, bars and swimming pools to rock climbing, go karting, and roller-coasters are found in modern day cruises. This has made cruising very popular with an estimated growth from 17.8 million passengers globally in 2009 to 28.5 million passengers in 2018.[2]

*Cruise tourism is wildly popular with almost a doubling of passengers in the last decade. Image design by Manvee Bhandia and Avinash Kuduvalli for EQUATIONS.*

India has a few cruise lines running in the country, both ocean liners and river cruises. Some of these are run by Indian companies like Jalesh, Angriya and Nefertiti, and run between Indian ports, particularly Mumbai, Goa and Kochi. There are also river cruises, ferries and luxury houseboats that operate within the country in the Sundarbans, Kerala backwaters, Kochi, Ganges river, and Brahmaputra river.[3] More recently, international cruise ships have also begun to be allowed in India.

In 2017, the first international cruise ship docked in India with the blessings of the Ministry of Shipping.[4] Since then, cruise tourism in India has been increasing multifold from 138 ships and 1.76 lakh passengers in 2017-18 to an estimated 580 ships with 5.65 lakh passengers in 2019-20.[5] The Ministry of Shipping, and the Ministry of Tourism have been promoting cruise tourism, and the development of cruise infrastructure is a part of the Sagarmala project, and the Blue Economy Policy 2020. Under the regulation of fishing by foreign vessels act 1981, the entry of foreign vessels is prohibited in Indian waters. But many of these rules were relaxed by the Directorate General of Shipping to accommodate cruise ships.[6] This includes allowing foreign flag vessels to call at Indian ports without licenses until the year 2024, setting up of e-visa facilities in ports like Mumbai, Goa, Chennai and others, preferential berthing to homeport cruises and others.[7]

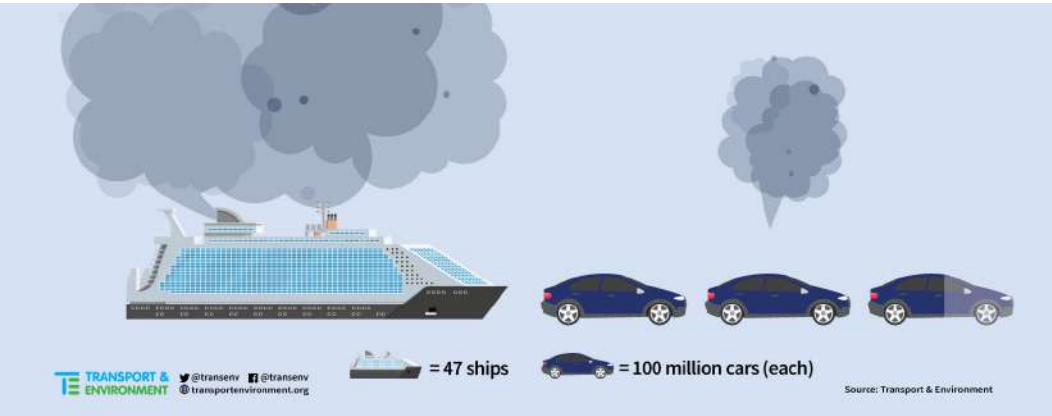
With increasing interest in inland waterways, cruises are also being promoted in rivers. Odisha is planning to start cruises along 5 major rivers and lakes that include Chillika, Satkosia, Bhitarkanika, Hirakud and Mahanadi.[8]

However, globally there is more and more research establishing the environmental and social costs of cruise ships. These costs have not been considered in India while promoting cruise tourism.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The environmental impacts of cruise tourism are higher than even the global shipping industry, which contributes 3.01% of carbon dioxide emissions annually.[9] Even though cruise ships only account for a small proportion of the global shipping fleet, they have a disproportionate impact on air quality, habitats and the climate. One reason is that cruising is concentrated in only certain regions, like the Caribbean and the Mediterrean.[10] Additionally, since cruise ships travel close to the coastline (moving from one coastal destination to the next), large amounts of fuel are burnt in close proximity to coastal

habitations. Most cruise ships burn heavy fuel oil (HFO), known as the dirtiest fossil fuel available. Simultaneously, most of these ships do not have any diesel particulate filters or catalytic converters to clean the exhaust.[11] In addition to this, cruises, when compared to other ships, require more fuel due to the constant high energy demand of the hotels and various leisure facilities provided onboard. The contribution of the cruise industry to global CO2 emissions was estimated to 19.3 M Tons annually in 2010, hence it is the most carbon intensive form of tourism currently practiced.[12]




*Study shows pollution from cruise ships. Source: Transport and Environment*

The UNEP has noted that tourist ships are one of the principal sources of pollution in marine ecosystems.[13] Estimations of waste from cruise ships vary from 2.6 to 3.5 kg/person/day as opposed to 2.08 kg/person/day by Americans and 1kg/person/day by Europeans while on land.[14] Waste from cruise ships includes all kinds of food, domestic and operational waste, all plastics, cooking oil, fishing gear etc, all of which is disposed of at ports of arrival.[15] Additionally, organic waste can only be legally disposed of beyond 12 nm from the coast.[16] When various types of waste are dumped at sea, there are serious consequences such as  eutrophication, hypoxia and bio-accumulation of toxins.

Eutrophication happens when streams of untreated water flow into water bodies, and causes the growth of a thick layer of algae, which blocks sunlight, blocking light and oxygen for underwater plants and animals.[17] Additionally, it can also lead acidification, which slows the growth of fish and leads to reduced catch for fishers also.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS OF CRUISE TOURISM

Cruise tourism does not help the local economy as it does not engage with local communities by creating job opportunities. In general, while tourism claims that it creates jobs, this is a twisted claim. Models of tourism like cruise tourism, based on heavy capital alienate communities from their resource base. Most jobs available are menial and low-paying.[18] With cruises, this gap between local communities and tourism is even wider. Local communities do not gain much from cruise tourism anymore as the cruise passengers do not eat at the local restaurants or explore local tourist activities. Cruise ships are usually all-inclusive holidays, which means that passengers generally eat their meals on board, and purchase little to no local food or supplies. Most of the local destination visits are often organised by the cruises itself leading to tourists spending almost nothing at the destinations. As one article points out[19] -

> ***"Cruise ships are notorious for depositing thousands of tourists in crowded cities who, Prof Agarwal says "spend very little, look around the place for five or six hours with a packed lunch, and then go back on board for dinner"***

With the burden that it places on the environment as well the ecosystem that provides livelihood for the local communities, cruise tourism is highly detrimental to the social and economic development of the host community.

An analysis of environmental costs to local economic benefit done among a community in Croatia suggested that ecological costs are upto seven times higher than the local economic benefit.[20]

These costs are particularly important to consider in the Indian context. Coastal communities make up 20% of the total population and the sector provided about 13 million jobs (4.1 million in aquaculture, 6.3 millions in inland capture, 1.9 million in marine capture and 0.5 million for others including subsistence) according to 2017 estimates.[21] When cruise tourism enters the picture, fishing activities will be restricted in terms of space, coasts that are being used for other activities apart from tourism such as small local businesses, storing and cleaning fishing equipment and so on will be deeply impacted. It is evident that these activities cannot coexist as the beaches and ports will be altered to the requirements of cruise tourism, like infrastructure, labour and space.

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The 'Blue Economy' has become the buzzword of the last decade, promising economic growth, environmental conservation and community development through focus on ocean resources. But contrary to the win-win-win narrative, our research in India shows that the Blue Economy is all about increasing investment, taking industrialisation farther and deeper into the oceans. Tourism is one of the sectors promoted under the Blue Economy, and we find that tourism under the Blue Economy is proving disastrous to the ecology and to coastal communities, particularly fishworkers. Rather than the current capital driven model of tourism that is being practiced under the Blue Economy, we need a complete reimagination to a community and ecology centered form of tourism for coastal and marine spaces.

This booklet summarises the findings of more than three years of our research in 5 sites across 3 states, as well as secondary research on coastal and marine tourism under the Blue Economy in India.

*More information is available on our website.*

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