



Project Title

'Conducting scuba diving professional training for local youth and eradication of ghost fishing nets from area in and around Malvan Marine Sanctuary'

Context

Ghost fishing net problem is evident in the marine environment around Sindhudurg coast. Due to presence of rocky habitat, several types of nets get entangled in rocky bottom and due to failure in retrieval of these nets, fishermen do not have option but to cut the nets which remain underwater forever. This problem has been communicated by fishermen in the region and also identified as a serious problem under the GOI-UNDP-GEF Sindhudurg project.

Presently the local youth involved in snorkeling and scuba diving are certified only in carrying out snorkeling for tourists. Scuba diving activity is more technical, organized and could be life threatening if it is not carried out by trained professionals. In the event of any unfortunate accident happening, there is a risk that the entire activity will be banned by the appropriate judicial system and also it will affect nature tourism prospects along the coast of Sindhudurg.

PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors), USA is the most popular organization in the diving industry who has a share of more than 70% alone in the scuba diving industry therefore maximum share in the scuba diving professionals.

Therefore, it is proposed that all local youth who have successfully completed snorkeling guide training under MTDC and Department of Forests (under UNDP-GEF-GOI) program be trained up to PADI Dive Master who are qualified to take tourists for guided scuba diving experience up to the depth of 12 meters. Candidates who successfully complete the Dive Master Course will also be eligible for PADI Instructor course which will help them to conduct courses for scuba divers.

At present 107 candidates have completed snorkeling guide training program under GOI-UNDP-GEF program. Out of these, it is proposed to conduct PADI Dive Master training program for 20 selected candidates. For obtaining this Dive Master training, candidates would have to pay an amount of rupees two lakh each. However, with the financial aid from GOI-UNDP-GEF Sindhudurg project and MTDC, the participant will be paying only rupees fifty thousand each and the UNDP Sindhudurg

project will fund 1 lakh rupees per candidate and rupees fifty thousand per candidate will be borne by MTDC.

Implementing Agency

Indian Institute of Scuba Diving and Aquatic Sports (IISDA)

Project Duration

December 2015- April 2016

Objectives

Capacity building of local youth in professional SCUBA diving

1. PADI certified SCUBA diving training upto DIVE MASTER course to be given to 20 local youth from Sindhudurg district.
2. Training program will equip the local youth in strengthening their approach towards marine biodiversity conservation and implement the same.
3. The occurrence of ghost nets along Sindhudurg Coast is to be mapped in consultation with local fishermen communities and the Fisheries Department, Govt. of Maharashtra.
4. Conduct removal of ghost nets at these sites while carrying out diving exercises during the training. Utilize the mandatory 30 dives conducted during the training program for eradicating ghost fishing nets from marine biodiversity hotspots in and around Malvan Marine Sanctuary (MMS).
5. Coverage of entire area under core and buffer zone of MMS and surrounding areas by providing geo-tagged photographic evidence of occurrence of ghost nets pre and post ghost net removal program.

Outcomes

- 20 candidates belonging to the Sindhudurg district have been successfully trained as Dive Master
- From the 600 number of dives conducted as part of the training program, ghost nets measuring over 2 lakh m² retrieved from various marine biodiversity hotspots around Sindhudurg
- A remarkable achievement of this training program is seen through various instances of marine life rescue which includes but is not limited to turtles, crustaceans, fishes etc

Way Forward

Through interventions like ghost net removal it is required that entities formulating similar SCUBA dive trainings make it mandatory for divers to utilize the training session dives for a larger cause by addressing removal of ghost nets which would save the marine biodiversity of that area. It is imperative that local youth understand the importance of their marine treasure and the tourism industry that sustains the economy of a particular place.

Case studies, if applicable

Dive Masters of Malvan Clean Up the Ocean

A group of 20 youth from the Sindhudurg region have been trained in PADI certified diving under the Sindhudurg Project. The goal is to train the next generation of fishing communities in Sindhudurg in alternative livelihoods like snorkeling and scuba diving, to reduce pressure on fishing and unsustainable tourism activities. Members of the group have now come together to form a non-profit group and use their newly-learned skills to protect their coastal waters and associated biodiversity in it, particularly corals. According to the local community, corals around Malvan in the present day is only 1/10th of what was in 2008 when underwater diving was first introduced as a tourism activity. Local tour operators and tourists have indulged in practices which were detrimental to the growth of corals. The group of divers conducts community-led monitoring of corals and has regular dives to remove ghost nets and plastic waste from the sea. The group pools together 6% of their monthly earnings to go on these trips. Plastic is brought back on to the shores, fish that's alive and caught in the ghost nets is released into the sea, and everything possible is sent for recycling. The group most recently found coverage in the Associated Press news wire which was used in international media like The New York Times, ABC News, [Business Insider](#) and many leading Indian dailies as well.