



On Fisher's Watch: Fishers lead the way in Lakshadweep's fisheries monitoring through community science initiatives

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THE CONTEXT

Current resource monitoring systems often have little or no direct impact on resource management and also lack opportunities for dialogue with scientists, policymakers & other stakeholders to resolve socio-ecological challenges. It ignores the immense potential local communities have to inform ecological and social sustainability.

THE INTERVENTION

Engaging with direct stakeholders

- Fishers are the direct stakeholders in this initiative and their livelihoods are dependent on the resources being monitored. They interface with the ocean daily and have tremendous knowledge and observations about their fisheries and resources.
- Dakshin Foundation co-created a fisheries monitoring initiative with the local fishing community in India's Lakshadweep Islands.
- Since January 2014, Dakshin has been running a community-based fisheries monitoring programme in 4 islands of the Lakshadweep archipelago.

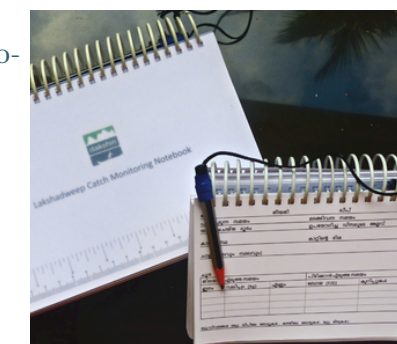
THE SETTING

The Lakshadweep Islands are relatively socio-ecologically homogenous, have small administrative units and traditionally practice the sustainable pole & line tuna fishery. This gives an ideal ground to pilot unconventional approaches to fisheries monitoring and management.

THE APPROACH

Community science for monitoring

- ✓ CBFM is based on *Community science* and goes beyond Citizen Science as it involves local communities whose livelihoods depend on the state of the natural resources. It goes on to address real-world challenges with greater transparency and accountability.
- ✓ *Inclusive.* Protocols and logbooks for monitoring were co-created with the fishing community in the local languages – Malayalam and Mahl.
- ✓ *Driven by collective action.* Participation is voluntary, without monetary incentives attached.
- ✓ Collected data are aggregated, analysed and shared with the community through simplified reports and outreach materials.

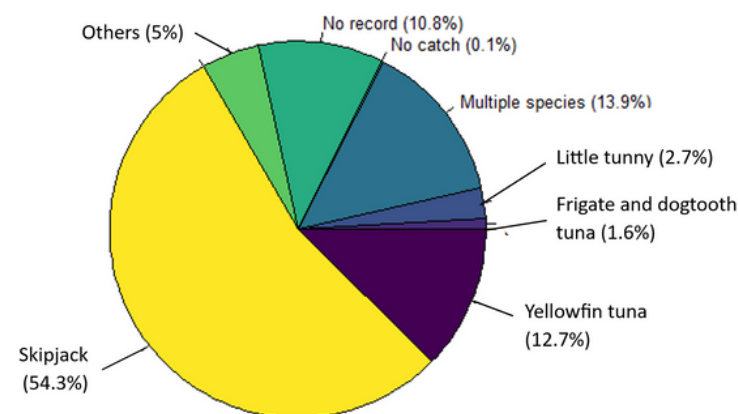


Monitoring logbook



POWER OF THE PEOPLE

Fishers have demonstrated the potential to generate data on different aspects of their fisheries - limiting factors to fishing, inter-island differences, patterns in catch, and fuel consumption over time.



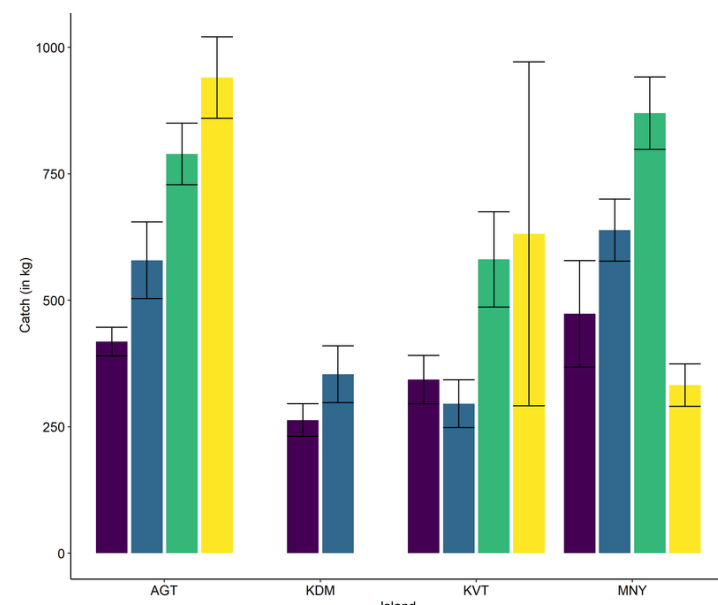
Species-wise tuna records (%)

4 YEARS

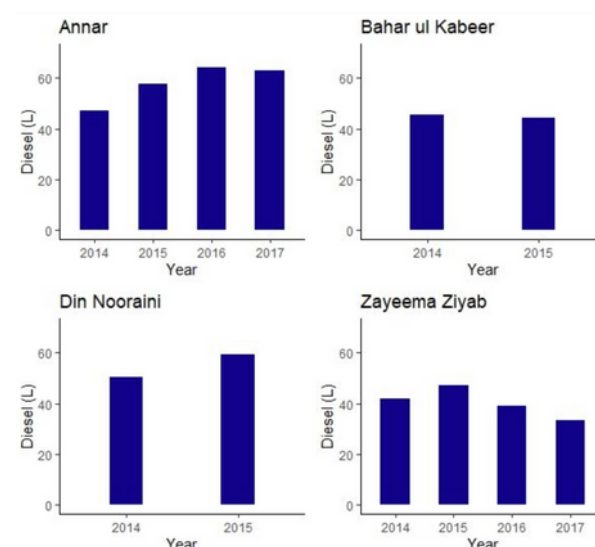
4 ISLANDS

44 BOATS

4037 FISHING RECORDS



Yearly skipjack tuna catches across islands (Kg)



Yearly diesel consumption of participating boats (L)

BEYOND DATA

Knowledge to foster participatory governance

CBFM aims to

- bring fisher knowledge and observations into the mainstream within an acceptable modern science framework in their common language
- decentralize knowledge generation to create community-generated data repositories that fishers and resource managers can use to understand trends in fisheries without relying on external agencies
- be a cost-effective approach to planning fishing activities better and an inclusive exercise that connects fishers and other stakeholders through science
- empower the community and serve as an entry point for them into the system which can lead to larger conversations for fisheries co-management in Lakshadweep.

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