

## Coral reefs of India – status, threats and conservation measures



Release of SDMIRI publication, Tamil Nadu, India © SDMIRI

and attended by government officials, natural resource managers, scientists and research students from India's four major reef areas (the Gulf of Mannar, Gulf of Kachchh, Lakshadweep, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands).

Twenty-eight papers were presented and reviewed at the conference, dealing with issues such as coral diseases, the impacts of climate change on coastal ecosystems, threats to corals, and the impact on corals of invasive alien seaweed species. The papers were afterwards compiled in the book *Coral Reefs of India – Status, Threats and Conservation Measures*.

### Target beneficiaries

National and international stakeholders with an interest in the conservation and management of coral reefs.

### Outputs

- ▶ Over 50 stakeholders attended the conference.
- ▶ Twenty-eight research papers were presented and peer reviewed.
- ▶ The papers were compiled and published in the book *Coral Reefs of India – Current Status, Threats and Conservation Measures* (edited by J. R. Bhatt, J. K. Patterson Edward and B. P. Nilaratna) in collaboration with MoEF, SDMIRI and MFF.
- ▶ The book was distributed to marine research stations and relevant government bodies, and also published on the Internet.

### Accomplishments and challenges

The shared interests of the participating group aided communication, helping members to identify the gaps between research and practice, and to make recommendations



#### LOCATION

Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, India

#### PRIORITY POWS

- Knowledge for Management
- Coastal Governance
- Marine Protected Areas

#### DURATION

29 October to 31 December 2008

#### MFF GRANT AMOUNT

US\$11,000

### Objectives

This project organized a conference bringing together researchers, managers, policy makers and forest officials directly or indirectly involved in coral conservation in India to discuss and present their experiences and findings. It aimed to produce a book based on the conference papers and other information that would serve as the primary reference for developing action plans to conserve the coral reefs of India.

### Background

Coral ecosystems in India, as elsewhere, face a number of worsening anthropogenic threats, including bleaching, destructive fishing practices, pollution and climate change. In response to this situation, and to commemorate the International Year of the Reef 2008, MFF India convened a conference bringing together key stakeholders in coral conservation to present research papers, participate in discussions, and share lessons and experiences. The event was organized by the Suganthi Devadason Marine Research Institute (SDMIRI) under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF),

on putting research at the centre of policy decisions on coastal conservation. Community participation in reef conservation was also emphasized as a priority.

The discussions and exchange of ideas at the conference were lively and thought-provoking, the number of participants was encouraging, and the event was well-organised and yielded tangible results in the form of scientific papers and a book that will serve as an important reference for coral conservation in India.

## Contributions to cross-cutting themes

### Communications and climate change

Research papers and a book on conserving

India's corals were produced by the project. Climate change was a major talking point at the conference, with participants sharing their opinions, experiences and recommendations on its impacts and response measures.

## Lessons learned

Advance planning is essential for events like this, which bring together many busy people. Conference participants agreed that the participation of local people in coral reef stewardship and conservation should be promoted on a much wider national scale. Lastly the impact of the trade in coral was not adequately addressed by the conference and should be emphasized in future gatherings.



Lighting of Kuthuvizhakku by Dr B. P. Nilaratna, Joint Secretary, MoEF, India © SDMRI

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