



Harnessing Fisher Communities for Marine Litter Prevention in Cox's Bazar

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In the vibrant fishing communities of Cox's Bazar, a small yet significant transformation is taking place. Artisanal fishers who live on marine resources are now leading the fight against marine litter, particularly preventing and recovering plastic waste while fishing. The initiative is part of the "Integrated Approach Towards Sustainable Plastic Use and Marine Litter Prevention in Bangladesh" project, implemented by the Department of Environment with technical support from UNIDO and the Norwegian government, aims to protect marine ecosystems and promote sustainable plastic use.

The Bay of Bengal is home to marine fishers involving over 234 industrial trawlers and more than 67000 artisanal vessels. These fishers who were once involved in catching fish now also navigate through a sea littered with plastic waste. Since plastic products and goods came to be used for daily life in boats, fishers have been littering plastic waste directly in the sea. On the other hand, plastic waste captured in the fishing nets has been thrown back to sea. Having no awareness and lack of motivation, fishers



Fishermen at Marine Litter Prevention Seminar, Cox's Bazar



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Today, thanks to the project, he and many other fishers are actively involved in collecting and managing marine litter. The project provides training and tools for fishers, enabling them to retrieve plastic waste during their fishing trips and bring it back to shore for proper disposal and recycling.



Fishermen Participation during Cleanup Seminar, Cox's Bazar

The initiative has gathered over 12,018 fishers across multiple villages with over 500 of them now understanding the importance of their responsibility, fostering a strong community spirit and shared responsibility for the marine environment. Within three key fishing communities, each comprising over 300 fishers, seminars have been pivotal in educating them about sustainable practices and the importance of reducing plastic waste. These seminars have also facilitated the creation of a plastic value chain, allowing collected plastics to be processed and sold, thereby creating an additional source of income for the fishers.



Seminar session with Fisherman on Marine Litter Prevention, Cox's Bazar

A unique aspect of the project is its focus on inclusivity, engaging entire fishing communities, including women and youth. Over 2,000 households have indirectly benefited from the project's awareness campaigns, spreading the message of sustainability beyond the immediate fishing community. The introduction of a plastic waste registration system has further streamlined the process, allowing for accurate tracking and management of collected waste.

This growing network of fisher communities has established designated collection points and recycling partnerships, making the process more efficient and sustainable. The community's collective efforts have led to cleaner waters, healthier marine life, and improved fishing conditions.

One fisher reflects on the journey, saying, "Our sea is not just a source of livelihood; it's our home. Being part of this project has given us the tools and knowledge to protect it. We're proud of what we've achieved and committed to continuing this work."

Continued support is required in sustaining these efforts and expanding the program to more fishing communities. Together, we can empower these communities to lead the way in marine litter prevention and create a sustainable future.



Integrated Approach Towards Sustainable Plastics Use and Marine Litter Prevention in Bangladesh



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