

National and Regional Coral Reef management Task Force in South Asian Seas Region.

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South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) is an inter-government organization for furthering the cause of environmental conservation and protection in South Asian region. SACEP has developed a South Asia Coral Reef Task Force (SACRTF) to develop a Regional Communication Strategy for Coral Reef Management in South Asia. The need for a communication strategy was also felt for enhancing awareness and sensitizing stakeholders so that they can have their active participation in the management and conservation of coral reefs in South Asian Seas Member Countries which include Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.



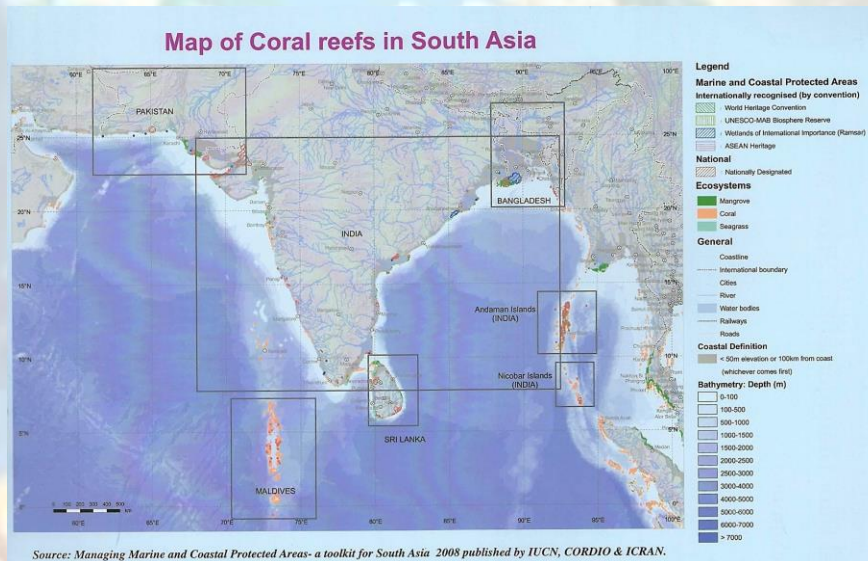
Coastal and marine ecosystems support very rich species diversity in south Asia as the region has numerous estuaries, lagoons, mangrove areas, coral reefs, sea-grasses and coastal wetland that provide essential habitats for many rare and valuable species, which in turn provide vital goods and services to millions of people. In South Asian region, countries like Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have coral reefs, which are facing numerous threats due to natural and anthropogenic factors. This region are characterized by extensive river deltas and diverse marine and coastal habitats. Supporting some of the richest concentrations of marine biodiversity in the world. Encompassing globally significant mangrove, sea grass, and coral reef habitats. South Asia is the home to around 10 % of the world mangroves. More than 250 species of coral species, over 1200 reef associated fish species. Maldives-Chagos-Lakshadweep Atolls is the largest atoll system in world. Over 100 Globally threatened species are recorded from coastal and marine habitats. South Asia has 19,210 km² of coral reef (Wilkinson, C. 2008) which is about 6% of the world's coral reefs. India has 5,790 km, (i.e., 2.04% of the global reef area), Maldives has 8,929 km², (i.e., 3.14 % of the global reef area), and Sri Lanka has 680 km, (i.e., 0.24% of the global reef area) coral reef areas. Bangladesh and Pakistan have small coral reef areas.

The livelihoods of many reef dependent communities are at risk as the coastal resources are rapidly shrinking. Increasing demand and declining productivity of coastal bio-resources make the issues more complex. The management and conservation of coral reefs is one of the most challenging tasks for conservationists and marine bio-resource managers in South Asia. This region was ranked

the lowest in the world in terms of declared marine and coastal protected areas in the 2003 United Nations list of protected areas. These valuable sources are threatened from various

factors. Despite current protection measures degradation of coral reef resources continues. Nearly one third to half of coral reef resources of South Asia are now effectively dead and further 30 percent are threatened. In addition, the inclusion of essential coral reef habitat in Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPA) provisions is minimal, making the Indian Ocean with its wealth of coral reef, seagrasses and mangrove forests, perhaps the most poorly protected ocean. The anthropogenic factors have further aggravated the degradation. Such as unplanned

human settlements, improper industrial growth, improper infrastructure over exploitation of resources. Open access nature of these resources. 2004 status of coral reefs of the world report identified the major factors contributing to the continued resource degradation at MCPA sites encompassing coral reef habitats, prior



to the Indian Ocean Tsunami event.

The South Asia Coral Reef Taskforce (SACRTF) was developed to facilitate and coordinate in the management of coral reefs and associated ecosystems at a national level and to promote collaborative action at the regional level, encouraging trans-boundary responses to shared environmental challenges and raising the political and public profile of coral reef related issues in the South Asian region which was endorsed by the country governments of the 5 maritime nations of South Asia at the SACEP 10th Governing Council (GC) meeting. The developed initiative among coastal communities in the 5 participating countries was developed and test globally appropriate approach to sustainable livelihood enhancement, diversification and change in the context of coral reef management. There are two communication strategy was developed which include: Communication System for Partner Organizations (CSPO) and Communication System for Generating Awareness (CSGA). SACEP is the regional coordinating agency of the South Asia Coral Reef Task Force (SACRTF). Concerned Ministry/Department in the respective country is the National Coordinating Agency. Non-government organization (NGO), Researchers, Reef-dependent local communities, Reef-dependent industries is the major stakeholders of the taskforce. The Coral Reef Task Force (SACRTF) has been completed in 2008 by the series of stakeholder consultation, regional and national workshops.

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