

Project Update April 2024

In the first quarter, we conducted an extensive scoping survey across 219 km of Palk Bay, covering three coastal districts, to prioritise study sites for effective implementation of the study design. We selected Mandapam based on pre-defined criteria informed by literature and iterative discussions with Dakshin Foundation's local team members and community experts who have been working in the region. The criteria included factors such as the scale of fishing operations, availability of logistics, and support and engagement from the community. Mandapam is one of the major trawling centres in Palk Bay, which is located in the southern part of the bay. According to the [Marine Fisheries Census of 2016](#), over 456 trawlers are operational in Mandapam. The coast of Mandapam has two major fish landing centres, a north jetty facing Palk Bay and a south jetty opening towards the Gulf of Mannar. For this study, we will work with fishers fishing in Palk Bay and landing their catch on the north jetty.

In this quarter, we also identified study participants – trawl boat owners who are willing to collaborate with us. We conducted two debriefing sessions with five fishers. We discussed our project's aim, objectives, and outputs, emphasising their significant role throughout its duration. We also took the opportunity to discuss the goal of establishing a participatory fisheries management system in Palk Bay, underlining the importance of their experiences. Additionally, we highlighted the project's ethics protocol that we strictly adhere to, including free, informed and ongoing consent and ensuring the anonymisation of their identity during data analysis and publishing.

We also met with officials from the state fisheries department, explaining our ongoing projects and seeking their support and further potential opportunities for collaboration. On the east coast of India, the monsoon fishing ban lasts from April 15th to June 15th. Once the ban ends, we will continue our conversations with participants and identify and onboard the field assistants supporting data collection and analysis. We look forward to engaging with the Mandapam fishing community and collecting data with them in the upcoming fishing season.